

## **HIS2M: Germany, 1933-45**

### **A: The Nazi Consolidation of Power, 1933-1934**

#### **The coming to power of the Nazis in January 1933**

- To understand the issues associated with Hitler and German politics, it is essential to be aware of the main parties that operated in Germany in this period. From left to right, the key parties were:
  - KPD – the German Communist Party (previously the USPD)
  - SPD – the German Socialist Party,
  - DDP – the German Democratic Party; liberal
  - ZP – Centre Party; largely Catholic
  - DVP – the German People's Party; moderate conservatives
  - DNVP- German National Peoples Party; right-wing conservatives
  - NSDAP – German Socialist Workers Party; the Nazis
- The President of the Republic, who had been elected in 1925, was Paul von Hindenburg. He was 83 years old in 1930 and influenced by a small clique around him that included his son Oskar and Kurt von Schleicher, a senior official in the Defence Ministry who was concerned to promote the interests of the Reichswehr (German army).
- The Nazi Party made little progress politically between 1924 and 1928. The Party was one of a number of small parties with a radical nationalist outlook.
- In the 1928 election, the Nazi Party gained 3% of the vote giving it 12 seats in the Reichstag. This poor result suggested that the Nazis had failed to convince the working class to support them despite the fact that many of their policies were directed at them.
- Between 1928 and 1930, Germany was governed by a 'grand coalition' that included members of the SPD, DDP, ZP and DVP under the Chancellorship of Muller. This was to break down in disagreement when strategies to deal with the economic crisis triggered by the Wall Street Crash could not be agreed upon.

#### **The Anti-Young Plan Campaign**

- The Nazi Party only saw an improvement in its fortunes in the period after 1929 as Weimar Germany's fragile stability was undermined by events beyond its control.
- In the early part of 1929, details of the revisions being made to reparations under the Young Plan were released. This meant that payments stretched 59 years into the future, although in periods of economic hardship, it would be possible to defer the payments.
- In July 1929, the DNVP and the Nazi Party joined together in a campaign for a referendum on the acceptance of the Young Plan. The DNVP was under the leadership of Alfred Hugenberg, head of a major media company.
- The campaign did succeed in bringing about a referendum, but the vote was a disaster for the Nationalists with only 13.8% of the electorate siding with them. Nonetheless, the incident was to have important results for Hitler:

### **Why was the Anti-Young Campaign important for Hitler?**

- It enabled the Nazi Party to break onto the national scene for the first time since 1923 and brought Hitler forward as a leading Nationalist politician.
- It gave Hitler access to the Hugenberg media empire.
- It provided Hitler and the Nazis with valuable contacts with the financiers and industrialists who supported the Nationalist cause.
- Being members of the Nationalist alliance enabled the Nazis appear respectable and acceptable to the Establishment in spite of their more radical policies.
- The above points were to translate into electoral success when the Nazi Party made gains in the provincial elections of 1929 and saw their first minister appointed in Thuringia in that year.
- Once the campaign had finished, Hitler broke with the alliance.

### **The Wall Street Crash**

- In October 1929, the Wall Street Crash took place. This was to bring the apparent prosperity of the mid-1920s to an end. America stopped providing loans and began to demand the repayment of outstanding debts.
- The USA also introduced tariffs to protect its own industry. All of this had an adverse effect on the German economy. Industrial production fell, bankruptcies and unemployment increased.
- By late 1929, 3 million were unemployed with the peak reaching 6 million in the winter of 1932. These figures do not include part-time workers, those who had their hours reduced and those who were not in receipt of benefits – thus they underestimate the true extent of the impact of the depression.
- Mass unemployment gave rise to a sense of hopelessness amongst the unemployed workers. Many of them turned to the KPD to solve their problems.
- This growth in the support for the KPD exacerbated elite and middle class fears of the possibility of a Communist uprising.
- The lower middle class, comprising of people like small businessmen and shopkeepers felt threatened on all sides economically. Their profits were being undercut by big business and the large department stores whilst organised labour was trying to extract wage increases.

### **How did the Nazis take advantage of the Depression?**

- Hitler and the Nazi Party were able to skilfully exploit the combined anxieties of the Mittelstand regarding the Communist threat and their financial insecurity by appealing to the suffering of the people and providing them with both scapegoats and utopian solutions to the complex problems that Germany faced.
- It was this combination of factors that enabled the Nazi Party to achieve 18% of the vote in the 1930 election, giving them 107 seats in the Reichstag and making them the second largest party.

- Electoral success increased the level of support for the Party – its membership grew to 400,000 in 1930.
- Under a succession of increasingly conservative Chancellors, Germany moved away from democracy and towards more authoritarian forms of government. These developments were to provide Hitler with his opportunity to seize and consolidate his position.
- Between 1930 and 1932, Germany's Chancellor was Heinrich Brüning. He wished to avoid a recurrence of the inflation of the early 1920s and so pursued deflationary policies that included the reduction of government spending by measures such as wage cuts to government employees and reductions in unemployment benefits.
- These reductions were accompanied by increases in taxation. Such measures were deeply unpopular and earned him the nickname of the 'Hunger Chancellor'.
- Brüning's policies did not have the support of the Reichstag. He was only able to stay in power and pursue these policies as long as he had the support of President Hindenburg, who was prepared to use Article 48 to push through Brüning's laws. This approach thus marks the beginning of a period sometimes known as 'presidential government.'
- Brüning's policies failed to resolve the economic problems that were facing the country. People drifted to the extremes and street violence between the left and right became commonplace.
- In 1931, there were 300 political murders in Prussia alone. Such a level of lawlessness created a demand for more authoritarian forms of government.
- To many people, the SA appeared to offer the prospect of a disciplined and well-organised buffer against the dangers posed by Communism.
- In 1931 Hitler supported the creation of the Harzburg Front whose aim was to remove Brüning from power and to prevent a communist takeover.
- This was the result of a meeting between Hitler, the DNVP (who were linked to a paramilitary organisation of ex-servicemen – the Stahlhelm) and industrialists.
- Key individuals who attended this meeting included Hugenberg and Fritz Thyssen.
- In 1932, Hindenburg's seven year term as President came to an end. In the ensuing election, he was re-elected after two ballots with Hitler achieving 13.4 million votes to Hindenburg's 19.3 million votes on the second ballot.

### **What effect did the election have in Germany?**

- Hindenburg was angered by Brüning's failure to arrange for his continuing as President without the need for an election.
- Hitler was now clearly the main opposition leader within the Republic.
- The Nazi vote was sustained in the State elections of April 1932 where they made further advances. They had become the leading party in every state except Bavaria.

- Fears regarding a possible Nazi coup (takeover of power) led to the banning of the SA and SS by emergency decree in April 1932.
- Brüning further antagonised Hindenburg by his proposal that the estates of the Junkers (Prussian land-owning nobility) should be broken up to provide smallholdings for the unemployed.
- Von Schleicher (a member of the clique around Hindenburg) argued that Brüning should be replaced by a right-wing coalition government of which the Nazis would be a part.
- He believed that the Nazis could be tamed and in negotiations with Hitler had received assurances of their support in return for lifting the ban on the SA and calling fresh elections.

### **Von Papen as Chancellor (June to December 1932)**

- Von Schleicher had little difficulty in persuading Hindenburg to demand Brüning's resignation in May 1932.
- Brüning was replaced by Franz von Papen at the head of a cabinet dominated by the elites of German society – the landed aristocrats and industrialists. This was known as the 'cabinet of barons'.
- The ban on the SA was lifted in June 1932 and fresh street violence erupted. This led to over one hundred deaths in Prussia alone.
- The violence in Prussia gave the government the excuse to declare a state of emergency there and to overthrow by decree the Prussian state government.
- This was popular with right-wing groups including the Nazis because key departments were headed by members of the SPD. Von Papen took over the position of Minister-President of the Prussian state. This meant that Germany was no longer a federal state.
- In July 1932, elections took place, as promised by von Schleicher. These were a triumph for the Nazi Party who won 37% of the vote, giving them 230 seats in the Reichstag and making them the largest party.
- The KPD also made gains in this election, drawing support away from the SPD. This increased elite and middle class fears of the possibility of a Communist take-over.
- Hitler refused to serve under von Papen and demanded that he should be made Chancellor because of his successful election showing. Hindenburg disliked Hitler and refused his demand.

### **Why did the Nazis face some problems after their success in the July election?**

- There was a feeling of revulsion about their use of violence, particularly following the Potempa murder (a young Communist killed in front of his family).
- They were facing financial difficulties because of the amount of electioneering they were undertaking.
- There were internal divisions about whether they should have accepted the posts that had been offered in a coalition government.

- Von Papen continued as Chancellor, but his position was impossible because of a lack of support in the Reichstag. Following a vote of no confidence, the Reichstag was dissolved by Hindenburg and new elections were called.
- In the November 1932 elections, the Nazi vote dropped to 33% and their seats in the Reichstag went down to 196. They also performed badly in the local elections.
- The KPD continued to gain seats at the expense of the SPD although it should be noted that at no time did the number of seats gained by the KPD actually exceed those gained by the SPD.
- Von Papen still lacked support within the Reichstag and only remained Chancellor due to Hindenburg's support. He wanted Hindenburg to use the army to put down opposition so that he could implement a new authoritarian constitution.
- Von Schleicher opposed this plan which he believed ran the risk of a civil war. He persuaded Hindenburg to dismiss von Papen and took over as Chancellor himself.

### **Von Schleicher as Chancellor (December 1932 to January 1933)**

- Von Schleicher tried to build a coalition based on support from the trade unions and the radical wing of the Nazi Party led by Gregor Strasser through the development of a programme of work creation.

### **Why did von Schleicher fail?**

- The trade unions did not trust von Schleicher.
- The split that he had hoped to create within the Nazi Party by including Strasser in his plans had not worked.
- The elites were concerned by his attempts at coalition building with groups on the Left.
- In view of the difficulties that he was facing, von Schleicher asked Hindenburg to give him the power to rule by decree. Hindenburg was not prepared to give von Schleicher the powers that he had refused to von Papen.
- Von Papen sought revenge on von Schleicher for his removal from office and was prepared to form a political alliance with Hitler in order to achieve this.
- He believed that Hitler could be used and manipulated by the conservative-nationalist interests.
- They met in secret in Cologne in early January 1933. It was agreed that Hitler would become Chancellor with von Papen as Vice-Chancellor and other conservatives would fill leading roles in the Cabinet.
- Although Hindenburg personally disliked Hitler, Von Papen gained him access to the President. The deal agreed at Cologne was presented to Hindenburg.
- Combined with the support of the army and the agreement of Werner von Blomberg to be Defence Minister in a new government, Hindenburg finally agreed to appoint Hitler as Chancellor on January 30<sup>th</sup> 1933.

## Nazi ideology in 1933: the promotion of positive and negative stereotypes

- **Nazism** refers to the ideology and policies followed by **Adolf Hitler** and the **Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers Party)** from 1921 to 1945.
- Although some Nazi beliefs, such as nationalism and anti-Semitism, had existed for a long period in German history, Nazi ideology was the product of the beliefs of **Adolf Hitler** set out in his book **Mein Kampf**.
- Of fundamental importance was the belief in the racial superiority of Aryan Germans. The work of such writers as **Joseph Arthur, Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Alfred Rosenberg** was used to give a theoretical and pseudo-scientific basis to Nazi race theory.
- Nazi racial theory looked back to a period in the mists of time when the Germans were a pure Aryan race – before their racial purity was polluted by inter-breeding with inferior races, e.g. Jews
- These theories resulted in the violent hatred of the Jews. It led to the establishment of concentration camps and to the Holocaust.
- The Nazis also believed in the racial superiority of Aryan Germans over the Slav peoples of Russia, Poland and Czechoslovakia. This led later to the attack on Slav states in Eastern Europe and to the extermination of millions of Slav people. Hitler also hated Communists and Marxist philosophy.
- Hitler saw the Jews, the Slavs and the Communists as enemies of the German people. In fact, they were to blame for all the ills from which Germany was suffering. Defeat in World War 1 and the Versailles treaty following it were all blamed on a Jewish/Communist conspiracy. So too were economic troubles such as the hyper-inflation of 1923/4 and the Great Depression.
- Nazism also stressed the importance of **extreme nationalism** – Germany first in everything. This is why Hitler demanded the complete unification of all German-speaking peoples in defiance of the Versailles Treaty. It was also a justification of the Nazi occupation of Austria and of Czechoslovakia with its German minority. For Hitler, blood was much more important than language.
- Common to the idea of racial superiority and nationalism was the notion of **lebensraum – living space**. Because the German people were racially superior (**Herrenvolk-master race**), they needed extra space into which they could expand and develop. This idea provided further justification for eastward expansion and conquest.

## Nazism in practice

- Hitler and the Nazis believed in establishing in Germany **a totalitarian regime**. This is a political regime that subordinates individuals and their freedom to the objectives of the party, the leader and the state. Thus, in Nazi Germany, the state attempted to control every aspect of the life of individual Germans.
- What Germans read in their newspapers and heard on their radios was controlled by the government as was their leisure time. The burning of books written by Jews and others hostile to the regime is a good example of how this control was exerted.

- A particularly good example of totalitarian control is the way in which the Nazis created a youth cult through their tight grip on the education system and the curriculum and through the activities of the Hitler Youth.
- There were clear ideological objectives in their policy towards German youth. Boys were to be prepared for military service whilst girls were expected to become good mothers and housewives.
- Within National Socialism was the belief in some form of state socialism. Hitler mentioned this in Mein Kampf where his views were strongly anti-capitalist but left-leaning members who agreed with him were purged in 1934, e.g. Gregor Strasser.
- Nazism always claimed a close relationship with the workers but the 'socialist' aspects of National Socialism were slowly forgotten as Hitler moved closer to businessmen and industrialists.
- The Nazi Party emphasised in their propaganda the idea of **folk community**. In fact, they referred to their coming to power in 1933 as '**Volkwerdung**' – '**a people becoming itself**'. They promised a society no longer divided between rich and poor – this was not achieved.
- There are various examples of this emphasis on the idea of community. **The Hitler Youth** stressed the binding together of its members. Many of the recreational activities organised by **Strength through Joy** were arranged in groups rather than individually e.g. hiking and cultural visits.

### **The use of terror, compromise, legal power, propaganda and policies to consolidate power to August 1934**

#### **How did Hitler consolidate power to March 1933?**

- As a result of the 'backstairs intrigue' Hitler had been appointed Chancellor on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1933. There were two other Nazis in his Cabinet – Frick as Minister of the Interior and Goering as Minister without Portfolio. Goering also took over the post of Prussian Ministry of the Interior on an acting basis.
- Von Papen believed that as Vice-Chancellor, the main influence within the Cabinet lay with him. He famously commented during the 'backstairs intrigue' that "in two months time, we'll have pushed him so far into the corner that he'll be squeaking".
- Hitler's intention was to use the mechanism of the constitutional system to destroy the last vestiges of democracy that remained in Germany after the three years of presidential government.
- Hindenburg was persuaded to use Article 48 in order to implement decrees by which civil liberties were progressively eroded and the ability of the Nazis to govern without reference to the constitution was confirmed by the Enabling Act in March 1933.
- On January 31<sup>st</sup>, Hitler broadcast to the German people in his 'Appeal to the German People'.
- He reiterated a number of the themes that had been used during the previous five years – the betrayal of the Weimar politicians at the time of the Treaty of Versailles, the threat posed to the

state by Communism and the implementation of volksgemeinschaft (people's community) to counter this.

- On February 1<sup>st</sup>, Hindenburg dissolved the Reichstag and called for new elections on March 5<sup>th</sup> – this commenced a period of election activity.
- On February 4<sup>th</sup>, the Decree for the Protection of the German People was implemented. Ironically, Hitler's predecessors had drafted this in order to curtail the activities of the Nazi Party. It now gave Hitler the power to ban hostile political meetings and newspapers. Thus any reporting that favoured parties opposed to the Nazis could be suppressed.
- Goering used his powers as Minister for Prussia on February 17<sup>th</sup> to order the police to co-operate with the SA, SS and Stahlhelm.
- All parts of these organisations were now being deployed "legally" to attack opposition parties and disrupt their meetings with violence. This led to a decline in meetings held by the opposition parties, especially those on the left.
- Goering followed this up on 22<sup>nd</sup> February by making members of the SA auxiliary policemen so that they had the same powers as the police.
- On 27<sup>th</sup> February, the Reichstag Fire took place. It seems likely that it was begun by Marinus Van der Lubbe, although there is some debate about what motivated him and whether or not there was direct Nazi involvement.
- The key point here is the skill with which the Nazis exploited the situation to reinforce German fears about the possibility of a Communist take-over. Within hours of the fire, more than 4,000 Communists had been arrested.
- Using these anti-Communist fears, many of which had actually been created by the Nazis, Hindenburg was persuaded to sign the Emergency Decree for the Protection of the German People and the State using Article 48 on the day after the fire.
- This suspended all the civil liberties that had been granted under the Weimar constitution. This meant that anyone who opposed the Nazi Party could be legitimately arrested.
- This device was used to essentially repress the KPD entirely and to prevent the SPD from campaigning effectively for the election. Even members of the ZP found meetings being broken up by the SA and SS.
- On March 5<sup>th</sup>, the elections for the Reichstag took place. Remarkably, in light of the legal obstacles and violence that had been put in the path of the parties opposing the Nazis, the Nazis failed to win a majority of the seats.
- They gained 44% of the vote, amounting to 288 seats. In order to have a majority Hitler was dependent on support from the DNVP who had gained 52 seats (8% of the votes cast).
- Hitler had therefore failed to gain the two-thirds majority in the Reichstag that he required in order to change the constitution legally. He had however, implemented a procedural change that meant he needed only a two-thirds majority of those who were present at the time the vote was taken.



- The new Reichstag was scheduled to meet on March 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Kroll Opera House as a result of the Reichstag Fire. Hitler used the Emergency Decree for the Protection of the German People to prevent the 81 KPD deputies from taking their seats.
- A number of SPD members failed to attend for a variety of reasons. Members of the SA and the SS surrounded the building and shouted threats and intimidated the deputies of other parties as they entered the building.
- The balance of the decision lay with the ZP. In order to gain their support in the vote, Hitler made an agreement with them to protect the interests of Catholic schools. This was sufficient to earn their support and the Enabling Act was passed by 441 votes to 94.
- This meant that the government (Hitler) could for the next four years pass laws without reference to the Reichstag – effectively democracy had come to an end in Germany with the passage of this act.

### **Other actions taken between January and March 1933 that aided the consolidation of Nazi power**

- Prussia had already lost the rights bestowed on it under the Weimar constitution during the chancellorship of von Papen. In the early part of 1933, other Lander found their governments being removed from power.
- The excuse that tended to be used was that the state governments were unable to maintain law and order. In fact, this violence generally took the form of attacks on SPD and the KPD buildings and members by members of the SA and SS.
- By the end of March 1933, Reich governors, who were Nazi, had taken control in Bavaria, Baden, Wurttemberg and Saxony. The remaining Lander were to follow suit at the start of April.
- Two days before the vote on the Enabling Act was taken, the 'Days of Potsdam' had taken place.
- This ceremony, which was attended by Hitler and Hindenburg, at the Garrison Church at Potsdam was orchestrated by Goebbels to demonstrate that the new Germany represented by Hitler and the Nazis had the support of the establishment and could therefore be trusted with the government of the state.
- Those members of the KPD and SPD who were arrested for opposition to the Nazis were imprisoned in local jails or in the newly erected concentration camps of which Dachau was the first.
- In the two months following the Reichstag Fire, 25,000 people were imprisoned in these locations of whom 57 were executed. In addition, there were also unofficial jails and camps, such as the Columbia cinema in Berlin.

## **How did the Nazis establish their dictatorship in 1933?**

- Hitler was invited by President von Hindenburg to become Chancellor on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1933.
- The cabinet included three Nazis: Hitler himself with Frick as Interior Minister, Goering as Minister without Specific Responsibility. The others, like Vice-Chancellor von Papen, were conservatives.
- Goering, as Minister-President of Prussia, drafted Nazi stormtroopers into the police force.
- Hitler ordered new elections to be held in March and began a campaign of intimidation and propaganda.
- Newspapers and radios were censored by the propaganda ministry led by Goebbels.
- Hitler blamed the Reichstag fire on 27<sup>th</sup> February on the Communists and introduced a law 'for the Protection of People and State' which established a State of Emergency on 28<sup>th</sup> February. This gave unlimited powers of arrest of Nazi opponents, especially Communists and Socialists.
- Concentration camps such as Dachau, Munich and Sachsenhausen near Berlin were opened to imprison and torture Nazi political opponents and 'anti social' groups such as tramps, drunks and homosexuals.
- The Nazis won 43.9% in the Elections on 5<sup>th</sup> March. To secure a majority they formed an alliance with the German Nationalist Party (DNVP).
- On 21<sup>st</sup> March, the Nazis staged an elaborate Commemoration Service at the garrison church at Potsdam to demonstrate their democratic respectability and conservative principles.
- With the support of the Centre Party, Hitler secured the passage of the Enabling Act (23<sup>rd</sup> March) through the Reichstag. This gave the Nazis dictatorial powers.

## **The use of terror**

- Nazi Stormtroopers had beaten and killed their opponents in the election campaigns 1930-1932. They were drafted into the Prussian Police Force in February 1933 and continued to bully opponents.
- Concentration camps such as Dachau near Munich and Sachsenhausen near Berlin were opened to imprison and torture Nazi political opponents and 'anti socials'.
- The Secret State Police (Gestapo) was formed in April 1933 to eliminate all dissent.
- The SS (Schutzstaffel) led by Heinrich Himmler became the main instrument of Nazi Terror.
- Rohm and the leadership of the Stormtroopers were purged following the Night of the Long Knives (30<sup>th</sup> June 1934) by the SS.

## **The Night of the Long Knives**

- Hitler purged Rohm and other leaders of the Stormtroopers as well as leading Conservative opponents such as General von Schleicher, Jung and von Bose.

## **Why did Hitler purge his Opponents?**

- Hitler feared that his dictatorship was challenged by Rohm who claimed to lead three million Stormtroopers.
- Rohm's ideas of a 'Second Revolution' to destroy the social elites and to replace the army by a 'Peoples Army' alienated Hitler's conservative political and business allies who were vital at this stage of his dictatorship.
- The Generals demanded the destruction of the Stormtroopers as a precondition of their co-operation with rearmament. General von Brauschitsch gave Hitler a blunt ultimatum to this effect in May 1934.
- President von Hindenburg and Vice-Chancellor von Papen condemned the brutality and lawlessness of the Stormtroopers and threatened to declare Martial Law.
- Hitler also feared a challenge from the Conservatives on the death of Hindenburg. He was particularly alarmed by von Papen's speech at Marburg in June 1934 which denounced the lawlessness on the streets.

## **How did Hitler purge his Opponents?**

- Goering and Himmler drew up death lists of all suspected opponents under the codename 'Operation Hummingbird'.
- Hitler ordered Rohm to disband the Stormtroopers for the summer.
- Whilst on retreat at Bad Weissee in Bavaria the SS mounted a raid to arrest SA leaders.
- Goering produced fabricated evidence accusing SA leaders of political subversion and sexual debauchery.
- Conservative opponents, such as von Schleicher, were shot by SS officers in Berlin.
- The Reichstag accepted and supported Hitler's actions.

## **Why was the Purge so important?**

- It resolved Hitler's political crisis and secured his dictatorship.
- It broke any remaining moral or legal restraints in the dictatorship.
- It established the power of the SS.
- It paralysed opposition from the conservatives.

- It secured Hitler's alliance with the army. This was important following the death of President Hindenburg on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1934.
- On the death of Hindenburg, Hitler abolished the position of President and became Head of State or Fuhrer of Germany.
- The army agreed to swear an oath of allegiance to Hitler as Head of State.
- In a plebiscite on 19<sup>th</sup> August 90% of Germans voted in favour of Hitler's position as Head of State.
- The SS absorbed all police functions in 1936. The SS organised the purge of dissident Generals, Blomberg and Fritsch in February 1938.

### **Conclusion – why were the Nazis able to come to power?**

- The weaknesses of the Weimar Republic that arguably made its eventual demise inevitable and offered opportunities for right-wing parties to exploit its problems.
- The desire by the elites to revert to more authoritarian forms of government and their willingness to work with Hitler in order to achieve this. This is linked to their failure to understand that it would not be possible to manipulate Hitler as they believed.
- The skills of Hitler as leader of the Nazi Party – of judging the right moment for action, of flexibility in his attempts to achieve power and his personal charisma.
- The nature of the Nazi propaganda machine that offered both general and specific appeals to the German population that struck the right message and enabled them to increase their electoral support in the elections of 1930 and July 1932.
- The timing of the Wall Street Crash that gave Hitler and the Nazi propaganda machine an issue they could use to focus the wide range of different discontents that existed in the Weimar Republic.
- The use of violence to intimidate opposition.
- The intrigues between von Papen and von Schleicher
- The way that Hitler set about using the system that had brought him to power to undermine that very system and to give him absolute power over the German state.
- That process was well on the way to completion by the end of March 1933.

## **B: Nazi Propaganda and Mass Indoctrination**

### **The use of parades and public spectacle; newspapers and radio, popular culture, especially music and cinema; the manipulation of education; censorship**

- The main focus of German propaganda was on the areas of the population who might be most likely to oppose the Nazis: industrial workers, older men in the big cities and potential supporters of the SPD and the KPD.
- The political parties were simply banned and their members either rounded up or hounded out of Germany, but the great mass of German workers had to be wooed with persistent and persuasive propaganda.
- Nazi ideology as far as women were concerned was well known; it involved a return to a more traditional, idealised, 'golden age' picture of self-supporting families on the land.
- Women were encouraged by various forms of simplistic bribery, propaganda and downright discrimination to give up work and careers and accept the roles of homemakers and mothers.
- Education and the youth organisations sought to create a division of labour between the sexes by putting women on a pedestal and talking of the sacrifice of German womanhood. In practice, this was increasingly undermined by the need for workers.

### **Goebbels and the Hitler myth**

- Josef Goebbels became Minister of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda in January 1933. Propaganda was used to indoctrinate Nazi ideology and to enforce conformity to the regime.
- Journalists were purged and newspapers were controlled by the Nazi agency DNB, which held daily press briefings.
- Radio broadcasts offered direct access to the home. Cheap radios were produced so that all families could hear the Nazi message.
- Films directed by Leni Riefenstahl such as 'Triumph of the Will' (1935) and 'Olympia' (1938) praised Nazi virtues, but Goebbels also realised the value of entertainment and made sure that the majority of films produced were non-political.
- The Volksgemeinschaft was partly an attempt to persuade workers that the distinctions between them and their employers no longer existed.
- In practice, this was no more than a charade because Nazi plans for rearmament needed the creation of kartels and a compliant workforce.
- But superficially, the creation of Councils of Trust in factories and naming managers 'plant leaders' gave an air of equality that smacked of socialism.
- On a more practical level, the 'Labour Front' offered improved facilities and benefits to the worker.
- The 'Beauty of Labour' campaigned for and provided swimming pools and other recreational facilities at workplaces.

- 'Strength through Joy' offered subsidised entertainment in the form of cheap holidays and concerts.
- Manipulation of Art, Music and Architecture.

### **How successful was Nazi Propaganda?**

- Propaganda was powerful because it enjoyed a state monopoly, was skilfully deployed and because it often reinforced popular prejudices.
- Propaganda was effective in securing the consolidation of the dictatorship, demonstrating state paternalism and reinforcing Nazi ideas for the family and young people.
- Propaganda also encouraged a growing sense of Nationalism and the marginalisation of the Jews.
- For many Germans, propaganda dulled their senses and lulled them into a sense of security or helplessness.
- There were, however, limits to the success of propaganda. The Germans were a highly educated and cultured nation and propaganda failed when it was crude or oppressive.
- Many Germans remained cynical or unconvinced. There was little enthusiasm for the 'Anschluss' with Austria in 1938 or for the attack on Jews during Crystal Night in 1938 or for a European War in 1939.

### **The content of propaganda; ideology and success of the regime, including the Nazi 'economic miracle' and the apparent elimination of unemployment; the Olympic Games of 1936**

#### **How did Hjalmar Schacht run the German economy under the Nazis?**

- In 1930, Schacht read Mein Kampf and in 1931 met Hitler for the first time. He was very impressed by him and his ideas and became convinced that Hitler was the man to save Germany. Schacht became a supporter of Hitler in his bid for power despite not being a Nazi.
- In March 1933, shortly after coming to power, Hitler reappointed Schacht to the presidency of the Reichsbank.
- In 1934, Hitler appointed him **Minister of Economics** with dictatorial powers over the German economy. Schacht was confident that he could direct the economy towards prosperity.
- He took over at a time when the world and German economies were beginning to recover after the Great Depression. In 1932, at **The Lausanne Conference**, reparations payments had been effectively cancelled.
- The **building of the autobahns** and **reductions in unemployment** were visible signs of economic success for all Germans to see.
- **BUT** Schacht realised that there were major problems connected to this economic recovery. The policy of reflation with work creation programmes was being financed on borrowed money.

- He also realised that rearmament was only possible if the German economy was providing the funds to pay for it. Between 1933 and 1935, the Germans spent only **4 million** Reichsmarks on rearmament. Between 1936 and 1939, they spent **42 million** Reichsmarks.

### How did Schacht pay for everything?

- Hitler and other Nazi leaders were not interested in hearing about these problems. They left Schacht to solve them whilst they celebrated the good news about falling unemployment and rearmament.
- Schacht managed to pay for rearmament by issuing '**Mefo bills**'. This was a way of financing the deficit with two advantages. It allowed the early stages of rearmament to be kept secret and it could be paid for on credit.
- He realised that this was only a short-term solution to the problem of financing rearmament. In the long-term, he knew that this deficit financing would put the German economy under destabilising and inflationary pressure. This would lead to pay freezes, exchange controls and eventually ruin.
- The long-term solution was to have well developed industries making goods which people could buy in the shops or which could be exported for foreign currency. As Schacht said in 1938, "The standard of living and the extent of armaments production are in inverse ratio."
- To achieve this, Schacht did all he could to encourage business and industry. His **Four-Year Plan** begun in 1936 aimed to give businessmen more freedom and ease them away from Party control.
- It intended to encourage private industry by maintaining business profits. Unfortunately, the escalating arms drive after 1936 and the importance of autarky brought industry more and more under state control.
- The problems in the German economy, highlighted by Schacht, led to some disagreements with Hitler and leading Nazis. He was also uncertain about the persecution of the Jews who he saw as making a valuable contribution to the German economy.
- Although he never expressed his opposition openly, he resigned as Economics Minister on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1937. He continued as President of the Reichsbank until 1939.

### What was Autarky and how successful was it?

- **The Schacht Plan of 1936** aimed to,
  - reduce imports
  - bring down unemployment
  - channel government spending into a wide range of industries
  - make trade agreements with nations.
- **Hermann Goering** succeeded Schacht as Economics Minister with the title 'Plenipotentiary for the Implementation of the Four-Year Plan' - in effect, the economic dictator of the Third Reich.
- As his influence over economic affairs increased, he wanted to go further than Schacht. He wanted to quicken the pace of rearmament at whatever the cost. The second Four-Year Plan began in 1936 with Goering in charge.

- He also wanted to make Germany self-sufficient in all industries and in farming so that as a nation she could survive a war – **AUTARKY**.
- In view of this, the concept of **Wehrwirtschaft (defence-led economy)** gained wide acceptance.
- But, this policy increased the demand for iron and steel. Whereas in 1913, **66%** of iron and steel was produced from German ore, in 1936 the percentage was only **26%**.
- In July 1937, the **Reichswerke AG Hermann Goering** was established. It was a Nazi-owned steel company set up as an iron producer.
- Goering also used phone tapping and indirect pressure to persuade private iron and steel producers to support government plans. Such methods were used to bring iron and steel working in Austria and the conquered states to the south and east of Germany under Nazi control.
- The Four-Year Plan Office forced **Krupp** to finance the Buna synthetic rubber project. It also compelled, **I.G. Farben** and other coal mine owners to invest 100 million marks in the **Brabag Company** set up to extract petrol from lignite and the textile industry set up synthetic fibre plants.

### **Other effects of autarky**

- As part of the drive for autarky, trade with countries such as Britain and the United States declined. Trade with the Balkans and the Central and South American states increased.
- The desire for self-sufficiency (autarky) led to more intensive farming, sometimes with disastrous effects. The restriction on fodder imports limited the production of livestock. This in turn reduced the supply of natural fertilisers and increased reliance on chemical fertilisers.
- The government agency 'The Food Estate' introduced rigid control over farmers and food production, very often with too many regulations.
- The Nazi League of Women instructed housewives in how to manage family diets with less food – the concept of 'The One-Pot Meal' became widespread.
- The authorities set up dietetic laboratories under The National Health Office to investigate new foods – whale meat, new fish preserves, milk-protein bread, German cocoa and new apple juice. These investigations had varying success- a new variety of black bread led to stomach disorders.

### **How successful was the Autarky policy?**

- Some of the schemes set up to produce synthetic substitutes for imported goods e.g. coffee from acorns, failed.
- In 1939, Germany still imported 33% of its required raw materials.
- Annual food consumption in 1937 had fallen for wheat bread, meat, bacon, milk, eggs, fish, vegetables, sugar, tropical fruit and beer compared to the 1927 figures.



### **How successful were the Nazis in solving the problem of unemployment?**

- When the Nazis took power in 1933, they inherited an economy with high unemployment. There were 6 million unemployed – a third of the nation's labour force. Average weekly earnings for those in work had dropped by 33% as a result of the Depression.
- By January 1939, the unemployment figure was 302,000, a spectacular reduction over six years. Hitler and the Nazis were therefore credited with an "economic miracle". Was this true or was the Nazi propaganda machine particularly successful in persuading the nation of the success of party policies?
- In reality, the peak of mass unemployment had already been passed in the autumn of 1932. The economy was beginning to revive as part of a natural cycle. In the November elections of that year, the Nazi vote declined by 2 million.
- Nevertheless, the Nazis adopted a number of strategies causing unemployment to fall. Women were no longer included in the statistics. This meant that any woman who remained out of work did not exist as far as the statistics were concerned.
- The unemployed were given a simple choice – do whatever work is given to you by the government or be classed as "work-shy" and be sent to a concentration camp.
- Jews lost their citizenship in 1935. As a result, they were not included in the unemployment figures even though they may have been without work since 1933.
- Many young men were removed from the unemployment figures when conscription was introduced in 1935 and they had to serve in the armed forces. By 1939, the army was 1.4 million strong. Supplying these men with weapons created many new jobs.
- By 1937-38, workers became a scarce commodity and by 1939 the demand for labour exceeded supply by half a million.
- Nazi propaganda attempted to convince workers that their living standards had risen since 1933. Compared to the low levels of 1932, they had. Compared to the higher levels of 1929, they had not.

### **The Olympic Games of 1936**

- The Games were organised by Goebbels and were intended as a show-piece for National Socialism.
- Anti-Semitism was toned down and the positive aspects of the Nazi regime were emphasised.
- The colossal stadia built for Nazi rallies were used for events and competitors were asked to give the Nazi salute. The English football team agreed and was photographed at one match.
- In all, the Games were intended to win support for the Nazi government, which had lost popularity internationally after the Night of the Long Knives, the Nuremberg Laws and the reoccupation of the Rhineland.
- They were the most successful of all the propaganda stunts of Goebbels.

## **The impact of the invasion of the USSR and 'Total War' on Nazi propaganda**

- There was little change in propaganda in the first two years of the war. The success Blitzkrieg and the maintenance of pre-war supplies of consumer goods ensured the support of most Germans.
- Blitzkrieg itself was a form of limited warfare which did not call for massive supplies of armaments.
- The Nazi government also did not want to scare the civilian population by making major changes to the economy.
- The situation changed when it became clear that Operation Barbarossa would not succeed.
- Hitler had banked on victory as a means of obtaining supplies of raw materials which Germany lacked.
- The survival of the USSR meant that there would be a war of attrition, for which Hitler had not prepared.
- In April 1942, Hitler assumed total to take whatever action was deemed necessary.
- Judges were ordered to follow 'National Socialist justice', in other words, put the interest of Germany above the law.
- In August, Peoples' Courts began a reign of terror aimed at rooting out opposition.
- The war increased the power and authority of the Nazi Party, which no longer needed to make any pretence of civilised behaviour.
- Torture to extract information and confessions was officially given approval by Hitler.

- The Nazi Party became responsible for the morale and well-being of the civilian population once war was declared.
- Gauleiters became Reich Defence Commissioners on the outbreak of war. They could assume the powers of martial law in emergencies.
- These changes substantially increased the powers of Martin Bormann, who was Director of the Party Chancellery, a sort of Chief of Staff for Hitler.
- In 1941, he ordered an attack on Christianity because it was incompatible with National Socialism. Churches were closed and saints' days abolished.
- In parts of Poland, more than 90% of churches were closed and many priests were murdered. In 1942
- Evacuated children were indoctrinated even more effectively when they were away from their parents. The Youth Leagues and their leaders took charge of the process.
- From 1943, Party officials were responsible for officer selection and training in the army. By 1944, soldiers could report officers who they believed were disloyal to the Party.
- After 1942, there were significant changes to the lives of the German people. Rations were maintained at a reasonable level until late 1944, but were still about 10% below the minimum required.
- Evacuation intensified in 1943, with 9 million children, women and elderly being moved from cities. This created enormous problems in rural areas.
- In 1944, a further 5 million refugees arrived from East Prussia to escape the advancing Soviet forces.

## C: Nazi organisations and the co-ordination of German society

### Youth: schools and universities, the Hitler Youth and the League of German Maidens

- Education was crucial in creating a loyal following for Hitler and the Nazis. They believed that young Germans should be loyal Nazis by the time they became adults. In achieving this, the schools were of major importance.
- **Bernard Rust**, a failed teacher, became Reich Minister of Science, Education and Popular Instruction. He had a history of mental instability and often issued contradictory policy directives.
- Enforcing a Nazi curriculum in schools depended on the teachers delivering it. All teachers had to be vetted by local Nazi officials and any considered disloyal were sacked. 97% of all teachers joined the Nazi Teachers' League.
- Many attended classes and camps in school holidays where they were taught Nazi ideas and the new curriculum was spelled out. By 1938, 2/3rd of all teachers had attended these retraining courses. For those under 50, P.E. courses were compulsory.
- All teachers had to be careful what they said in class. Children were encouraged to inform the authorities if a teacher said something that did not fit in with the Nazi thinking. There was always potential for conflict between teachers and pupils because Nazism was anti-intellectual. It emphasised physical strength and power and played down the importance of the intellect.
- Despite this, 32% of German teachers were Nazi Party members by 1936 and they made up 14% of the Nazi Leadership Corps. Party leaders encouraged the involvement of teachers because it gave a front of respectability when other members could be more violent and brutal.
- Curriculum subjects underwent major changes. **History** was based on the glory of Germany – a nationalistic approach was essential. The German defeat in 1918 was due to Jewish and Marxist spies weakening the nation from within. The Versailles treaty was a conspiracy of nations jealous of German might and power. The 1923 hyperinflation was the fault of the Jews. But, all was well because Hitler was leading a national revival.
- **Biology** became the study of the different races to 'prove' the Nazi belief in racial superiority. "Racial Instruction" started at the age of six. Hitler himself said, "**No boy or girl should leave school without complete knowledge of the necessity and meaning of blood purity**".
- Pupils were taught about the problems of heredity. Older pupils were taught the importance of selecting the right "mate" when marrying and producing children. The problems of inter-racial marriage were taught with an explanation that such marriages could lead to a decline in racial purity.
- **Geography** taught pupils about the land taken from Germany at Versailles in 1919 and the need for Germans to have living space – **lebensraum**.
- **Science** had a military bias to it. The curriculum required that the principles of shooting should be studied, together with aviation science, bridge building and chemical warfare.

- Girls followed a slightly different curriculum. They also studied **Domestic Science** and **Eugenics**, both intended to make them good mothers. In Eugenics, they learnt the characteristics to look for in a perfect husband and father.
- **P.E.** became compulsory in all schools. It took up 15% of the weekly timetable for boys. Boxing also became compulsory for boys.
- Indoctrination was common in all subjects. Teachers were expected to use every opportunity to attack the Jews. Textbooks and library books were re-written to include anti-Jewish propaganda. Books by Jewish authors were burnt. From 1935 onwards, Jewish children were not allowed to attend schools.
- In 1937, pupils were given the choice of studying **Religious Instruction** or not. The Nazis were to lessen the influence of Catholic schools. Within two years of their coming to power, 76 of the 93 Catholic elementary schools in Munich had become non-denominational.
- For boys considered special, different schools were created. Those physically fitter and stronger than the rest went to **Adolf Hitler Schools** where they were taught to be future leaders of Germany. Six years of tough physical training took place and when the boys left at 18, they went to the army or university.
- The very best pupils went to **Order Castles**. These schools took pupils to the limits of physical endurance. War games used live ammunition and pupils could be killed. Graduates from the Order Castles could expect a high position in the army or the party.
- Nazi policies on education often had detrimental effects. Whilst the grammar schools generally maintained their high status, standards in elementary and vocational schools fell.
- Teacher morale also appears to have suffered. In 1938, the size of the teaching force was 17,000 lower than in the Weimar period. Some became disillusioned by constant changes in government policy. Others were unhappy about the greater importance apparently given to the Hitler Youth.

## Universities

- In 1914, there were **69,000** students in German universities. By 1932, this number was **118,000**. The main problem for many however was finding work after the Great Depression. This explains why many students supported the Nazis – they hoped for an economic revival.
- As early as 1931, **60%** of all students supported the Nazis. In the same year, there were anti-Semitic riots in many universities.
- In early 1933, 300 university professors launched a manifesto urging a Nazi vote in the March elections. They too saw Nazism as a way of regenerating the nation and many academics supported book burning.
- Many were disappointed after the Nazis took power. 1200 university teachers were dismissed. These were mainly Jews, Social Democrats and liberals. Many faculties were weakened as a result and Germany lost its world leadership in Natural Science.
- Before this purge, Jews had accounted for 12% of all German professors and ¼ of her Nobel Prize-winners.

- University academics fared badly under the Nazis. They suffered because of the ‘anti-intellectual’ mood of the regime and were often attacked for their ‘selfish acquisition of knowledge’.
- Some challenged Nazi attempts to interfere in their academic disciplines. Many left Germany. Some were tried and some were executed. Some went along with the regime and became involved in medical experiments. Many who continued to teach faced the risk of being spied on by their students. This could lead to many leaving their jobs or losing them.
- A conference of University Vice-Chancellors in 1943 bemoaned the declining standards in German universities and blamed it on the emigration of so many academics and professors.
- Nazi policies had other negative effects. Between 1920 and 1933, 2,333 teachers trained for university teaching. Between 1933 and 1944, the figure dropped to 1,534. Many potential recruits were deterred by a compulsory six weeks training course run by the Lecturers Association.
- In 1932, there were 118,000 students at German universities - one-fifth were women. By 1938, the number had dropped to 51,000 of whom 6,300 were women. Clearly, the encouragement of women to stay at home and become good wives and mothers had had detrimental effects. By 1943, a relaxation of this policy had led to an increase in total numbers to 80,000.

### What were the main features of the Hitler Youth Movement?

- In the early years of the Nazi Party, Hitler made it clear what he expected of German children. He said, “*The weak must be chiselled away. I want young men and women who can suffer pain. A young German must be swift as a greyhound, as tough as leather and as hard as Krupp steel*”.
- Nazi education schemes fitted in with this but Hitler wanted more control of the minds of young Germans - hence The Hitler Youth. It began in the 1920s and by 1932 its membership was 35,000. A year later when Hitler came to power, it claimed 100,000 members. **Baldur von Shirach** led the Hitler Youth and was personally responsible to Hitler himself.
- As other youth organisations like the Scouts and Protestant and Catholic groups were banned, the movement grew. In 1936, it had 4 million members – in the same year, membership became compulsory. Youths could avoid active service if they paid their subscription but this became virtually impossible after 1939.
- The Hitler Youth was a collection of several movements. Boys between the ages of 6 and 10 were enrolled in the **Pimpf** (Little Fellows) where they were taught to enjoy exercise, hiking and camping and were introduced to Hitler’s ideas.
- Boys aged 10 joined the **Deutsches Jungvolk** (German Young People). Here they swore personal allegiance to Hitler and became more familiar with military discipline and military music.
- Between 14 and 18, boys were expected to devote themselves to the **Hitler Jugend** (Hitler Youth). This placed much greater emphasis on military training.

- At the age of 10, girls joined the **Jungmadelbund** (League of Young Girls) where they were trained for health and motherhood. This was taken further between the ages of 14 and 21 in the **Bund Deutscher Madel** (League of German Maidens) At the age of 17, some girls left and joined the organisation known as '**Faith and Beauty**' with its emphasis on physical culture.
- Meetings of the various sections took place in the evenings but there were also weekend activities often outdoors. These often took the form of camps. These appear to have been greatly enjoyed, as were the annual camps.
- In 1936, **100,000** members of the Hitler Youth and Girls League attended the Nuremburg Rally. Shortly afterwards, **900** girls aged between 15 and 18 who had attended the rally found themselves pregnant.
- The Hitler Youth emphasised commonality, a communal or collective approach with the individual being given less importance.
- To the outside world, the Hitler Youth personified German discipline. In fact, this image was inaccurate.
- Schoolteachers complained that boys and girls were so tired from attending evening meetings of the Hitler Youth that they could scarcely stay awake at school the next day.
- By 1938, attendance at Hitler Youth meetings was barely 25%. In 1939, it was decided to make attendance compulsory. After this, it reached 90%.

### **Workers: the German Labour Front and Strength through Joy**

- In the spring of 1933, German trade unions offered their support and cooperation to the new Nazi regime.
- On May Day 1933, they were smashed. Throughout Germany, workers were shepherded into local sports stadia whilst SA members seized trade union buildings and financial assets. Any who spoke out against this faced arrest and imprisonment.
- Strikes became illegal. In June 1936, a 17minute stoppage at the Russelheim Opel Works, during which, 262 workers protested against a wage cut, led to the immediate arrest of seven 'ringleaders'.
- The Nazis introduced new ways of organising workers. One of them was the **Reicharbeitsdienst or RAD – The National Labour Service**.
- The men of the RAD wore military style uniforms, lived in camps near to where they were worked and received what may be termed 'pocket money'.
- A period of six months in the Labour Service became obligatory for eighteen year olds. Many parents were pleased that it appeared to give young Germans some sense of purpose.
- The National Labour Service had a women's section. Its members were trained in a severe way. They were taught to do without cosmetics, to dress simply, to display no individual vanity, to sleep on hard beds and to forgo all culinary delights.

- May Day became National Labour Day and overshadowed every other event in the Nazi calendar in terms of mass participation.
- To 'protect' those in work, the **German Labour Front (DAF)** was set up, led by **Dr. Robert Ley**. The Labour Front took over the role of the banned trade unions, which it did – to an extent.
- Ley ordered that workers could not be sacked on the spot but he also decreed that a worker could not leave his job without government permission.
- Workers had to pay membership dues to the Labour Front, deducted from their wages. This method of collection was introduced after door-to-door collections were discredited as dishonest.
- By 1939, the Labour Front had increased the number of weekly hours worked from 60 to 72 (including overtime). Strikes were outlawed. However, the average factory worker was earning ten times more than those on dole money and there were few complaints.
- Dr. Ley enjoyed great influence as Labour Front leader. He amassed a personal fortune, some of which probably came from Labour Front funds.
- He was a great believer in the idea of 'folk community'. He favoured bells and fanfares in factories to start the day. He had plans to coordinate the work of country craft workers into rural cooperatives. He encouraged boycotts of department stores in favour of smaller retail units.
- In enforcing legislation on wage levels and working conditions, the Labour Front backed large firms rather than small ones when they were in dispute with workers. Wage levels remained low.

### **'Kraft durch Freude' (KdF) – Strength through Joy**

- The Nazi belief in controlling the lives of German workers extended to their leisure time. Ley and the KdF calculated that each worker had 3,740 hours per year free from work to pursue leisure activities. The state, through the KdF, would provide these.
- There was a long list of activities for workers to select from. They included, theatre performances and concerts, hikes and sporting events, holidays and cruises, museum tours and exhibitions, weekend trips and courses and lectures organised by the German Adult Education Office.
- In the Berlin area, between 1933 and 1938, KdF organised 21,146 theatre performances involving 11,507,432 people. They also arranged 61,503 museum tours for over 2½ million people.
- Workers in the Third Reich averaged between 6 and 15 days paid holiday each year. Under Weimar, the figure was between 3 and 8 days. The prospect of cheap holidays organised by KdF was a sure way to win the support of many ordinary Germans.
- A cruise to the Canary Islands cost 62 marks – easily affordable for many. Walking and skiing holidays in the Bavarian Alps and Hartz Mountains cost 28 marks. A 14-day tour of Italy cost 155 marks.



- In 1938, 10 million Germans took part in KdF holidays. The vast majority were trips of a few days or a week. Of that 10 million, 138,000 took part in longer cruises. The specially built cruise ships had identical accommodation for crew and passengers.
- The aim was to elevate the status of the workers. In reality, the number of workers participating in KdF cruises was limited. Cruise places were often filled by Nazi Party officials.
- The KdF also organised P.E. sessions and provided sports facilities in factories and workplaces. By the middle of the war, 5 million KdF certificates had been issued for sporting achievements. Belief in 'folk community' again ran through many KdF activities – the idea of individuals losing their identities within groups was very strong.
- In 1938, the KdF launched the **Volkswagen (The People's Car)**, designed by Ferdinand Porsche. It was priced at below 1,000 marks-repayable over 4 years.
- The VW would involve buyers in weekly instalments (plus insurance) of 6 marks per week, exclusive of running charges. In theory, when the account reached 750 marks, the worker would be given an order number leading to him receiving a car.
- The foundation stone of the VW plant was laid in 1938, two months after the Anschluss. Show models were exhibited at the Munich and Vienna autumn fairs.
- By November 1940, there were 300,000 potential purchasers but no cars were produced – only a few show models. No one received a car. The millions of marks invested were re-directed into the expanding weapons industries. This accelerated as World War Two approached.

### **Schonheit Der Arbeit. (Beauty of Labour)**

- This was a movement aiming to improve working conditions in factories. It introduced features not seen in many workplaces before such as washing facilities and low-cost canteens.
- **Beauty of Labour** was a section of the German Labour Front created by Robert Ley on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1934. It organised factory celebrations, folk dancing and political education. It existed alongside the similar **Strength through Joy** movement.

### **What was the role and status of women in Nazi Germany?**

- Hitler was very clear about the role of women in Nazi Germany. Their purpose was to produce babies, bring up children and care for their homes and husbands. Outside certain specialist areas, Hitler saw no reason for women to work.

### **Women and work**

- When Nazism emerged in the 1920s there was a strong women's movement in Germany. Women had the vote and there were 30 women representatives in the German parliament.
- In 1921 the Nazis banned all women from their party leadership and committees. Only 3% of Party members were women. When they came to power they dismissed all women MPs.
- In Weimar Germany, there were **100,000** female teachers, **3,000** female doctors and **13,000** female musicians. Women working for the government got the same pay as men.

- Within months of Hitler coming to power, all married women doctors and civil servants and most married teachers were dismissed. Women were barred from all involvement in the law courts, whether as judges, lawyers or jurors.
- There was some logic in the idea that, in a time of high unemployment, women should leave the paid jobs for men and concentrate on the unpaid job of housework. In 1933, women formed 37% of the labour force. In 1939, the figure was 33% but it was higher in clothing and textiles and in distributive trades and catering.
- By the start of the Second World War, there were fewer German women in work. However, such was the skills shortage that in 1937 a law was passed forcing women to do a '**Duty Year**'. This meant that they could work in a factory to help the Nazi '**Economic Miracle**'.

### Education, marriage and parenthood

- Hitler said, "***We will strangle higher education for women***". Under Nazi rule only 10% of university places were for women and one third of high school places. Girls were prevented from taking university entrance exams and the high school syllabus was changed so that girls studied mainly domestic subjects.
- Shortly after coming to power in 1933, all women's groups were merged into a single 'German Women's Enterprise', the **Deutsches Frauenwerk**. It had 6 million members. It organised Mothers' Schools to train women in household and parenting skills.
- From their earliest years, girls were taught that all good German women got married at a young age to a German man and that their task was to keep a good home for her husband and to have children.
- Soon after coming to power in 1933, the Nazis introduced **The Law for the Encouragement of Marriage**. It stated that all newly married couples would receive a government loan of 1,000 marks. This was about 9 months average income and 800,000 newly weds took up the offer. They had to agree that the future wife should give up her job.
- This loan was not to be simply paid back. The birth of one child meant that 25% of the loan did not have to be repaid. Two children meant that 50% of the loan did not need to be paid back. Four children meant the clearing of the whole loan.
- The law aimed to encourage newly weds to have as many children as possible but it had more long term and sinister aspects. As Germany grew, she would need more soldiers and mothers. Hence, a booming population was needed with young boys groomed as soldiers and young girls as mothers.
- The marriage loan system encouraged many young people to marry early but did not result in more babies.
- If '**lebensraum**' (living space) was to be achieved, Hitler needed German people to fill the spaces gained in Eastern Europe. It was therefore essential to boost Germany's population.
- To the Nazis, the family was '**the germ cell of the nation**' and increasing Germany's population was a major priority. The aim was not only to produce more soldiers but also to arrest a general decline in the birth rate.

- In 1900, the average births per thousand were **33.0**. By the mid-1920s, this had fallen to 20.3. In 1933, when the Nazis took power, it had dropped further to **14.7**.
- So important did it become to increase the German population that in 1943 Nazi leaders were considering a law that all women-married or single- should have 4 children to racially pure fathers.
- If a family already had four children, the father would be released to father more children outside the marriage. This law never became reality as it was thought that social anarchy would result.
- As housewives and mothers, the lives of German women were closely controlled. The ideal bride for an 'Aryan hero' was a blue-eyed, blonde Aryan virgin with child-bearing hips, flat shoes, no make-up, un-pierced ears and no inclination for entertainment or outings.
- Women were not expected to wear make-up or trousers. The dyeing of hair was not allowed. Slimming was discouraged - it was considered bad for childbirth. They were discouraged from smoking – it was considered un-German.
- August 12<sup>th</sup> had been the birthday of Hitler's mother. On this day each year the **Motherhood Cross** (Mutterkreuz) was awarded to women who had given birth to the largest number of children. The **gold cross** went to women who had produced 8 children; silver was for 6 children and bronze for 4 children. German women became increasingly aware of the slogan '***I have donated a child to the Fuhrer***'.
- It was not considered a social problem if an unmarried woman had a child. In fact, it was encouraged. The Nazis established **lebensborns** - buildings where selected unmarried women could become pregnant by 'racially pure' SS men. These buildings were openly publicised with a white flag with a red dot in the middle to identify them to the public.
- The government tried other schemes to increase the birth rate. It increased maternity benefits and introduced family allowances. Child subsidies were offered to families, 100 marks per child with a maximum of 1,000 marks per family.
- Not every woman was encouraged to have babies. A '**Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring**' ordered that women 'unfit' to be mothers must be sterilised. By 1937, 100,000 women had been sterilised. Women who were mentally sick or who had already produced weak offspring were often classified as 'unfit'. Those women who had been sterilised were not allowed to marry.
- **Kinder, Kirche und Kuche** (Children, Church and Cooking) sum up the Nazi view of women in German society. Their role was to produce babies, bring up children and care for their homes and husbands.
- The three Ks were closely connected to the Nazi view of family life. This was ideally a family with four children, father at work but mother staying at home to look after them. Many women's organisations supported the three Ks because they saw it as a reaction against the decadence of Weimar Germany.
- Under the Nazis, contraception and birth control clinics were banned. By 1939, the average births per thousand had risen to 20.0. despite concerns of racial purists that Aryan blood was

being polluted. There were negative aspects. By the end of World War Two, 23% of all young Germans had venereal disease and prostitution had quadrupled.

### **Peasants: the policies of Darré**

- Farmers were a particular target of Nazi propaganda because they were regarded as the representatives of the true Germany.
- Hitler claimed to draw his strength from the German farmers and workers.
- Nazi ideology included references to a golden age of small freeholders tied to the soil.
- Physical labour was encouraged as an ideal and farmers were used as examples.
- In fact, Nazi policies tended to favour kartels because of the need to increase production.
- In 1928, the first successes of the Nazi Party were in the agricultural areas of Northern Germany.
- Walter Darré was the director of the Reichsnährstand (Reich Food Estate, founded 1933), which oversaw agriculture in Germany.
- He encouraged collectives as a way of marketing and offered tariffs, tax cuts and low interest rates to encourage farmers to increase production. Guaranteed prices were an extra incentive.
- The overall aim was to make German self-sufficient in food as part of autarky.
- The Reich Entailed Farm Law guaranteed small landholdings of between 7.5 and 125 hectares.
- In fact, by 1938, productivity had increased by 25% in ten years and Germany was producing 83% of its food supplies.
- By then however, guaranteed prices were too low for farmers and there was a drift to towns despite Nazi propaganda about life in the countryside.

### **The Churches: Protestant and Catholic**

- Although born a Catholic, Hitler rejected **Christianity**. He dismissed it as a religion that defended the weak and the low. He condemned it because it was Jewish and Oriental in origin.
- In 1933, he made an agreement (**Concordat**) with the Catholic Church. He agreed to safeguard the rights of the Catholics if the Church kept out of politics. No agreement was made with the Protestant Churches.
- In fact, both churches suffered badly under the Nazis. Priests and pastors of all the churches were often imprisoned, tortured or even shot.
- Within the Third Reich, The Nazi Party exerted great influence. Germany was a one-party state. Other political parties and trade unions were banned. Becoming a party member was vital particularly when employment and promotion depended on it. More important, being a member brought the idea of **folk community** much closer.

- The party was also one of the main means of enforcing conformity to the regime. The other main agency was the police, in particular, the Gestapo and SS. In every sense, Nazi Germany was a police state
- Towering above the Party and the people was Hitler himself. Millions of Germans worshipped and idolised him as the saviour of the nation. He was their **Fuehrer** – their leader. To many, he was a god.
- A massive propaganda machine directed by **Joseph Goebbels** fostered a cult of Fuehrer worship around Hitler. His picture appeared everywhere. He received thousands of letters from female admirers. When the sun appeared in the sky, it became known as ‘Fuehrer weather.’
- The party rallies held at Nuremburg are an excellent illustration of the importance of the Nazi Party to millions of Germans. Marches and processions, speeches and a range of activities culminated with the arrival of Hitler himself. To many present, he was the embodiment of the Party and of Germany – to others, they were the same thing.
- The strongest opposition and most determined to the Nazi regime came from Churches.
- Despite the regime’s apparent acceptance of Christianity and the Concordat with the Roman Catholic Church in 1933, it became increasingly obvious that Nazism and religious belief did not mix.
- Criticisms of brutality and changes in education began in 1935 and resulted in priests being arrested, often on trumped up charges.
- In March 1937, Pope Pius IX attacked Nazis in an encyclical (open letter) and the regime reacted by arresting hundreds of priests.
- The problem that the Nazis faced in dealing with the Roman Catholic Church was that they faced, as Hitler well knew, an organisation that was better organised than the were and which had a more powerful propaganda machine than National Socialism.
- The Nazis believed that they would be able to deal more effectively with the Protestant churches, which were less structured and placed more emphasis on individual conscience.
- In all, there were twenty-eight separate ‘Landeskirchen’ across Germany. The Nazis were supported by ‘German Christians’, an organisation which believed that National Socialism and Christianity shared common values.
- In church elections in 1933, the organisation was able to take control of many churches and replace unsympathetic ministers.
- But opposition to Nazification was led by Martin Niemoller who set up the Confessional Church; this soon claimed 75% support amongst church ministers.
- When attempts at compromise failed, the Nazis reacted by declaring the Church illegal and arresting ministers; 800 alone in 1937, many of whom were sent to concentration camps.
- These tactics enabled the ‘German Christians’ to gain control of the Confessional Church but did not end opposition to the Nazi regime.

### **The role of the SS, SD and Gestapo in suppressing opposition**

- The most important figure in internal security was Heinrich Himmler.
- He was the head of the SS and succeeded in expanding its membership from 200 in 1929 to 52,000 by 1933 and in securing its independence from the SA.
- He organised the Security Service (Sicherheitsdienst, SD) under Reinhard Heydrich.
- He was appointed Munich Police President (March 1933) and became Commander of the Political Police throughout Bavaria.
- He set up the first concentration camp at Dachau and greatly extended the ranges of victims to be imprisoned.
- He became commander of all political police units outside Prussia (September 1933) and head of the Prussian Police and Gestapo (20 April 1934).
- He masterminded the purge of the SA on 30 June 1934 which paved the way for the emergence of the SS as an independent organisation.
- He took control of the political and criminal police throughout the Reich in June 1936 becoming Head of the Gestapo as well as Reichsfuhrer of the SS.
- He created Death's Head Formations (SS Totenkopfverbänden) within the SS to control concentration camps and to defend 'Aryan' supremacy.
- Suspects would usually be interrogated in a Gestapo cell and then sent to one of the eighteen concentration camps that were run by the Death's Head SS.
- In the camps, SS guards were free to act any way that they liked without fear of discipline.

### **The extent of conformity and resistance by 1939**

- There were no mass protests against the Nazis in the years after 1933. Whilst individual groups objected to specific actions, there is little evidence that the great mass of German objected in any significant way to policy from 1933 to 1938.
- Most were enjoying improved standards of living and supported Hitler's policy of destroying the Treaty of Versailles and restoration of national pride. Violence only developed gradually during the years 1933-39.
- In 1936 there was a relaxation during the Olympic Games and the real nature of the Nazi regime only became apparent after 1939. When there were violent excesses, they were attributed to Nazi subordinates, not to Hitler personally.
- Opposition to the Nazis from 1933 to 1939 was limited and largely ineffective. Those Germans who opposed Hitler did so in small isolated and uncoordinated groups.
- The speed and ruthlessness of Hitler's seizure and consolidation of dictatorship surprised and confused his opponents.

- Legal opposition became almost impossible following the Emergency Decree of 28 February 1933.
- Key leaders of the political opposition such as Ernst Thalmann and Otto Wels were arrested and sent to concentration camps in March 1933.
- The communists and socialists were bitterly divided and failed to present a united front. The communists were ordered by Stalin not to oppose the dictatorship but rather to await its inevitable collapse during economic crisis.
- Democratic opponents were too committed to legal methods. They were slow to appreciate that only the removal of Hitler could destroy the dictatorship.
- Conservative opponents were compromised by their alliances with the Nazis and sympathy for some of Hitler's policies.
- Vice-chancellor von Papen headed a small group of conservative dissidents which gathered information cataloguing the regime's illegality.
- In June 1933 von Papen denounced the brutality of the regime at Marburg, but Hitler was able to isolate him after the death of Hindenburg.
- Army leaders were trapped by their oath of allegiance to Hitler 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1934. Many were sympathetic to his policies of rearmament and military expansion.
- Most Germans were indifferent or non-political. They were impressed by the promises and apparent changes that Hitler brought about.
- Some aristocratic Generals feared the threat posed to the army by the SS and opposed Hitler's aggressive foreign policy after 1937 which threatened war before Germany was fully prepared.
- Von Blomberg and von Fritsch opposed Hitler's policy in 1937 and Generals Beck and Halder plotted to oust Hitler in September 1938 during the Czech crisis.
- Hitler was able to deal with both threats and used the opportunities to increase Nazi influence in the Wehrmacht.
- He created the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW) under Keitel as a new high Command, which reported directly to himself.
- Sixteen generals were sacked and a further forty-four were moved to new posts.

## **D: the Impact of War on the German People, 1939-1945**

- The outbreak of war in September 1939 caught Hitler by surprise; he had been planning for war in 1941-2. The German economy was nowhere near full production and consequently Blitzkrieg can be seen as a way of waging limited war.
- Full production was only achieved in the autumn and winter of 1944.
- For the first few years of the war, therefore, the German people noticed no significant changes in Germany.
- Furthermore, the standard of living of the German people was hardly affected from 1939 to 1942; consumer spending remained at 1939 levels until well into 1942.
- Only when it became clear that Operation Barbarossa had failed did the Nazis begin to reorganise the German economy systematically.
- German production lagged behind because rearmament had been aimed at infrastructure, new barracks, airfields and roads rather than weaponry.
- Many German companies were small or medium-sized and were reluctant to change. It was feared that the introduction of assembly line techniques would reduce quality.
- From 1939-41, British munitions factories out-produced German factories by some 50%
- One major reason for the failure to make major changes in the first year of war was Hitler's almost total lack of interest in economic planning.
- Hitler spent most of his time at headquarters in East Prussia and the Ukraine.
- In his absence, he banned attempts to hold regular cabinet meetings and forbade ministers to meet unofficially.
- Most decisions were made by Hitler on all aspects of the war, but he showed little interest in the running of the country or the war economy.
- In 1942, Albert Speer set up a Central Planning Board, which controlled the supply of raw materials. He introduced new mass production methods and replaced old-fashioned work practices with new shifts.
- But, Speer was unable to counter the control of Gauleiters, Himmler and the SS, both of whom refused to allow their fiefdoms to be integrated with the German economy.
- The shortage of labour was superficially easier to solve. But proposals to conscript women in 1940 proved very unpopular, not least with soldiers on active service.
- The shortages were temporarily overcome by the occupation of Poland and France and the use of slave labour and would also have been ameliorated by the a successful invasion of Britain.
- It was not until January 1943, Himmler announced that all men from 16-65 and women from 17-45 were to register for war work.



## **The impact on the regime and the people of the invasion of the USSR and the start of 'Total War'**

- Once war was declared, Nazis no longer considered themselves to be bound by any pretence of decency and felt that they could afford to ignore totally foreign opinion of the activities.
- In the short term, the worst effects of these changes were felt by Poles. Prisoners of war were sent to Germany as slave labour, while intellectuals, politicians and other elites were murdered.
- The use of slave labour allowed the SS to become a vast industrial organisation controlling about 150 companies by 1944 and through his control of the Waffen SS (which expanded from three to thirty-five divisions, he began to appoint senior ministers and commanders in the army.
- By 1943, the SS was in effect a state within a state, with different loyalties and responsibilities. Any attempt to challenge the men in black had to be carried out with circumspection.
- The Nazi Party became responsible for the morale and well-being of the civilian population once war was declared.
- Gauleiters became Reich Defence Commissioners on the outbreak of war. They could assume the powers of martial law in emergencies.
- These changes substantially increased the powers of Martin Bormann, who was Director of the Party Chancellery, a sort of Chief of Staff for Hitler.
- In 1941, he ordered an attack on Christianity because it was incompatible with National Socialism. Churches were closed and saints' days abolished.
- In parts of Poland, more than 90% of churches were closed and many priests were murdered. In 1942
- Evacuated children were indoctrinated even more effectively when they were away from their parents. The Youth Leagues and their leaders took charge of the process.
- From 1943, Party officials were responsible for officer selection and training in the army. By 1944, soldiers could report officers who they believed were disloyal to the Party.
- After 1942, there were significant changes to the lives of the German people. Rations were maintained at a reasonable level until late 1944, but were still about 10% below the minimum required.
- Evacuation intensified in 1943, with 9 million children, women and elderly being moved from cities. This created enormous problems in rural areas.
- In 1944, a further 5 million refugees arrived from East Prussia to escape the advancing Soviet forces.

## **Opposition to the Nazis**

- Few Germans were prepared to openly oppose the Nazis, but a great many refused to accept Nazism in toto; refusing to give the Nazi salute or display Nazi flags.
- While Churches had beliefs that opposed Nazi ideology, many priests supported Nazi opposition to communism and foreign interference in German affairs.
- Anti-Semitism was not opposed steadily in Germany by the Catholic and Protestant Churches.
- Hitler hoped to weld the Protestant Churches into the Reichskirche, which was run by Bishop Otto Müller. He failed largely because of the opposition of Martin Niemöller, who set up the Confessional Church.
- The Confessional Church was careful to avoid open conflict with the Party, but did condemn the extermination policy in 1943. Other German Protestants were prepared to co-operate with the Nazis, but retained their independence.
- The Catholic Church in general tolerated the Nazi regime, although Pope Pius had condemned racial policy in 1937.
- Bishop Galen's attack on euthanasia in 1941 was an exception rather than the rule. It generally only complained about Nazi activities when Catholics were actually involved or when it was certain that there would be public support for its actions.
- The most effective and determined opposition to Nazi policies came from ordinary parish priests and individual clergy, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Alfred Delp.
- Swing groups were widespread in the late 1930s and opposed the activities of the Youth Leagues.
- The White Rose group, headed by Hans and Sophie Scholl was idealistically Christian and distributed leaflets in Munich in 1942-3. The leaders were arrested, tried and shot in February 1943.
- The SPD managed to smuggle literature into Germany. The KPD set up an underground that was never completely eliminated. But, the KPD was controlled from Moscow and seriously discredited by the Nazi-Soviet Pact and Soviet policy until June 1941.
- The Kreisau Circle was formed in 1941 and included politicians, priests and army officers. It met at Kreisau, the estate of Count Helmuth von Moltke.
- The Kreisau Circle was a radical group which envisaged a European Parliament with European elections.
- It was reluctant to take action against the Nazis and was more interested in planning for an idealistic new order after the end of hostilities. It was broken up in 1944.
- Opposition groups in the army planned attempts on Hitler's life in 1943 but all failed.

- Operation Valkyrie was organised by Count Claus von Stauffenberg and tried twice to assassinate Hitler in July 1944.
- The conspirators failed to seize control of the communications centre and news soon spread that Hitler was alive. 5,000 people were executed in the aftermath.

### **The effects of mass bombing and military defeats from 1943**

- From mid-1943, after the defeats at Stalingrad and Kursk, it was obvious that Germany was going to lose the war.
- Heavy bombing brought home to the German people the extent of Allied dominance.
- For every tonne of bombs dropped on Britain, the Allies dropped 324 tonnes on Germany.
- However, bombing had little effect on the German economy, which was only put on a total war footing in 1942 and reached peak production in 1944.
- Bombing did however cause great damage to infrastructure, which in turn prevented the movement of supplies and reinforcements.
- Even in March 1945, German industry was still working at 90% capacity.
- However, supplies of raw materials were rapidly drying up as the Allies advanced into occupied territories.
- When the Soviet Union occupied Silesia and the Allies advanced into the Ruhr in April 1945, the war effort finally collapsed.
- The Nazis even failed to put all of their contingency plans into operation. In January 1943, all men aged 17-65 and women aged 17-45 were ordered to register for war work. But only 900,000 women were actually called up.
- There were also few examples of open defiance of the Nazis. The plots to kill Hitler in 1943 and 1944 were the work of aristocratic elites and not of ordinary Germans.
- But there were increasing examples of non-cooperation. In 1943-44, 9 million people were evacuated from the cities into the countryside.
- This created wide-spread friction because farmers were under intense pressure to produce as much food as possible.
- Evacuees were largely useless as farm workers and did little or nothing to help.

### **The state of Germany in 1945**

- Germany surrendered unconditionally on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945. As the Allies advanced they found complete chaos and devastation.
- In some towns, 75% of buildings had been destroyed along with many roads and railways.

- The old Germany was gone forever. The traditional elites had been virtually eliminated by the Nazis and what little had been left had now disappeared.
- Prussianism had also disappeared. It had survived in the officer class under the Nazis, but most had been killed in the fighting.
- German society had undergone a revolution far greater than that after the First World War or that carried out by the Nazis.
- But industry had largely survived and had continued production at a high level until the last months of the war
- Germany was now a tabula rasa (clean slate) on which the Allies were determined to build in order to prevent a further conflagration.