

Power and Authority in the Modern World

Ken Webb





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Power and Authority in the Modern World

Ken Webb



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1st Edition

Ken Webb

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CONTENTS

| | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| About this book | iv |
| Acknowledgements | vi |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Key figures and organisations | 2 |
| Key terms and concepts | 6 |
| Key documents | 7 |



| | | |
|----|--|---|
| 01 | The post-World War I peace treaties and their consequences | 8 |
|----|--|---|



| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 02 | The rise of dictatorships after World War I | 22 |
|----|---|----|



| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 03 | The rise of Nazism and collapse of the Weimar Republic | 54 |
|----|--|----|



| | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|
| 04 | Nazi consolidation of power 1933–34 | 80 |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|



| | | |
|----|---------------|-----|
| 05 | Nazi ideology | 103 |
|----|---------------|-----|



| | | |
|----|--|-----|
| 06 | Control and opposition in Nazi Germany 1933–39 | 126 |
|----|--|-----|



| | | |
|----|--|-----|
| 07 | The impact of the Nazi regime on life in Germany | 144 |
|----|--|-----|



| | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 08 | The search for peace and security 1919–46 | 172 |
|----|---|-----|



| | | |
|--|------------|-----|
| | Conclusion | 185 |
|--|------------|-----|

| | | |
|--|-------|-----|
| | Index | 190 |
|--|-------|-----|

The Poetries

On 12 March 1938, Joseph Goebbels presided over the Munich Conference on the Anschluss of Austria. The purpose of his propaganda speeches was to convince the German people that the Anschluss was necessary for the future of the German Empire. Goebbels's speech was the first of a series of speeches that he gave in the months leading up to the Anschluss. Goebbels's speech was the first of a series of speeches that he gave in the months leading up to the Anschluss.

QUESTIONS

1. Comment on the way Hitler is being depicted in the photograph. Why is Hitler being depicted this way? Does it imply the superiority of Hitler's position?
2. Look at the Hitler in the middle of the photograph. How is he being depicted? What is the significance of this?
3. Hitler is surrounded by other men in uniform. What is the significance of this?
4. Just out of the picture are many other men, but only the faces of the men in the middle are visible. What is the significance of this?

SOURCE STUDIES of visual and text primary sources and secondary literature appear frequently throughout the text and are combined with questions and activities to aid your evaluation and interpretation of evidence from the past.

BENITO MUSSOLINI (1883-1945)

The son of a blacksmith and a teacher, Benito Mussolini became a school teacher in 1902. Shortly after he became a socialist and joined the Italian Socialist Party. He worked for the Italian Socialist Party as a weekly newspaper. What influenced by a group of men who were called the 'Blackshirts' and who were active in the streets. Mussolini was attracted to the idea of a 'New Order' and was an active member of the party during World War I. He was with the Italian Army and became an officer in the army. He was in the army during World War I. He was with the Italian Army and became an officer in the army. He was in the army during World War I.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe Hitler's view of art.
2. Why did Hitler believe that art was important for the Nazis?
3. How was art used by the Nazis to control the art world?
4. In what ways was language affected by Nazi control of the arts and media?
5. Language can affect the way in which a society views an issue. Can you think of any present-day examples of this?

SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUALS are biographical profiles and assessments of key historical figures and frequently include questions and activities.

D'Annunzio and Fiume

At the Paris Peace Conference, the part of Fiume (modern-day Rijeka in Croatia) was handed to the new state of Yugoslavia. Italian was outraged by the decision, as Fiume's population was mostly Italian. They believed that the town belonged to Italy, and that giving Fiume to Yugoslavia went against the President Wilson's principle of national self-determination. In the meantime, one of Italy's most famous poets, Gabriele D'Annunzio, took charge of the town. He gathered together a band of about 2000 men, and in September 1919 occupied Fiume. He was joined by more than 2000 regular Italian troops.

QUESTIONS

1. Comment on the way Hitler is being depicted in the photograph. Why is Hitler being depicted this way? Does it imply the superiority of Hitler's position?
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4. Just out of the picture are many other men, but only the faces of the men in the middle are visible. What is the significance of this?

INFORMATION BOXES contain extended discussions of key events, concepts and historical developments. Many also include questions and activities.

Steven Bach and Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl

Steven Bach was for some time in charge of worldwide production for the American film company, United Artists. He was teacher at Georgetown College and Columbia University in the United States. Steven Bach is also a writer of note, having written biographies of many Hollywood figures such as Marlene Dietrich and Helen Hunt. In 2007, Bach published a memoir on the life and work of Leni Riefenstahl.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe Hitler's view of art.
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HISTORIAN BOXES introduce key historians and schools of interpretation as a way of making historiography clearer.

CHAPTER REVIEW

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. In what ways was the German economy weakened by the Treaty of Versailles?
2. What were the reactions of most Germans to the Treaty of Versailles?
3. What happened to the Weimar Republic under the Treaty of Versailles?
4. List the two countries that appeared in Europe as a result of the peace treaties.
5. What was the Polish Corridor?
6. Name the two treaties that Turkey was involved in at the end of World War I.
7. In which countries did significant German minorities live after World War I?
8. What treaty did Romania gain in the post-World War I peace negotiations?
9. What was the 'Caucasus'?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What happened to Germany's fleet after World War I?
2. The US President Woodrow Wilson was the main supporter of the League of Nations. Why then did the United States not join the League of Nations?
3. Outline the course and results of the Rapallo Peace Treaty of 1922.

EXTENDED WRITING EXERCISE

1. Comment on the victory and joyfully greeted by the Allies in the Treaty of Versailles. 'In what extent do you agree with this statement'?

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES are included throughout the text to consolidate content knowledge and hone examination skills.



DIAGRAMS are used to visually summarise complex ideas and events and each chapter includes location maps.

Conclusion

The main reason for the failure of the League of Nations was the lack of support from the United States. The League of Nations was created after World War I to maintain peace and prevent another world war. However, the United States never joined the League of Nations. This was a major weakness of the League of Nations. Without the support of the United States, the League of Nations was unable to prevent the outbreak of World War II.

Chapter summary

- Germany was forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles after World War I. The main purpose of the Treaty of Versailles was to punish Germany for its role in the war.
- Austria signed the Treaty of St Germain, Belgium signed the Treaty of Versailles, and Hungary signed the Treaty of Trianon.
- The peace process with Turkey was not settled until the Treaty of Lausanne was signed in 1923, following the successful end of the Turkish War of Independence.
- New countries were created across eastern and central Europe.
- Minority issues became a problem for many of the new countries created by the peace treaties.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CHAPTER REVIEW ACTIVITIES conclude each chapter. They include a brief precis of the topic, suggestions for further reading, and a range of learning activities that consolidate knowledge and understanding of the chapter's content. These tasks incorporate a range of historical understandings and skills.

CHAPTER REVIEW

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. In what ways was the German economy weakened by the Treaty of Versailles?
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Getty Images/Popperfoto

A crowd gathered outside 10 Downing Street, waiting to hear that Britain has declared war after Germany invaded Poland in 1939

POWER AND AUTHORITY IN THE MODERN WORLD

The 1919 Paris Peace settlement that brought World War I to a close was a compromise that pleased no one. France believed it had been cheated and Britain was unhappy at the settlement's impact on the European economy, while the United States refused to even ratify it. Germany viewed the Treaty of Versailles as a slave treaty. It is too simplistic to argue that the 1919 settlement caused World War II. However, it did leave Europe with unsolved problems, and created new ones that would prove unmanageable.

Democracy flourished in the early 1920s, with almost every nation west of Russia possessing a democratic government of one kind or another. However, by the early 1930s, democracy seemed to be disappearing from the European continent. A combination of flawed constitutional arrangements and the perceived failure of parliamentary government, set against major economic problems that eventuated in worldwide depression, saw a series of authoritarian right-wing regimes rise to power.

Stalin's Russia in the 1930s witnessed monumental economic achievement. However, his dictatorship was characterised by the use of terror, an all-pervasive secret police presence, totalitarian party control over all aspects of life and the development of a personality cult. Such a personality cult also developed around Mussolini in Italy, whose Fascist Party gave birth to the term 'totalitarian'. Fascist rule could be brutal, but was often marked by its inefficiency and unfulfilled grandiose plans. Japan's experiment with liberal democracy in the 1920s faded against the onslaught of economic depression, the gradual militarist takeover of political life and the growth of fanatical nationalism.

Germany's experiment with democratic government could not overcome the political and economic crisis of the Great Depression. The German people's desperation during this time saw a massive rise in support for Hitler's Nazi Party. However, it was a backroom political deal, not electoral victory, that brought Hitler to power in January 1933. By August 1934 the Nazis' slender hold on power had become absolute. Throughout the 1930s, any opposition to the Nazi regime was either sidelined or brutally crushed through skilful use of sham legality, propaganda, terror and the creation of a cult of personality around Hitler.

Hitler and other key figures, such as Hermann Goering, Joseph Goebbels and Heinrich Himmler, proceeded to implement the main elements of Nazi ideology, with their key focus being on race and territorial expansion. All aspects of life in Germany were dominated by the party and its ideological demands.

Germany and Japan shared a desire for territorial expansion in their respective geographic spheres. Once in power, Hitler proceeded to tear up the Treaty of Versailles and pursue his goal of *Lebensraum*. Japan's imperialist goal was the development of what would become known as the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Hopes for continuing peace after World War I centred largely on the League of Nations. Despite minor successes in the 1920s, the League ultimately proved incapable of maintaining peace in a world dominated by economic depression and rampant nationalism. However, the dream of a world body to maintain peace and stability did not die, and in the latter stages of World War II, steps were taken to establish the United Nations.

KEY FIGURES AND ORGANISATIONS

GALEAZZO CIANO (1903–1944)

Galeazzo Ciano's father had been a founding member of the Fascist Party in Italy, and father and son both took part in the 'March on Rome' in 1922. In 1930, he married Mussolini's daughter, Edda. Ciano served in the diplomatic corps with postings in Brazil and China. In 1935 he briefly became Minister of Press and Propaganda. The following year Ciano became Mussolini's Foreign Minister, a post he held until 1943. Ciano was executed on Mussolini's orders in 1944, following pressure from his German ally.

GEORGES CLEMENCEAU (1841–1929)

Clemenceau was a leading figure of the Radical Party during the French Third Republic. He became premier in 1907, but lost office two years later. He regained the premiership in November 1917 and led his country to victory in 1918. Clemenceau played a key role at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. He sought severe terms against Germany, driven by his desires for revenge, security and compensation, and believed that Germany was let off lightly in the Treaty of Versailles.

GIOVANNI GENTILE (1875–1944)

Gentile was a key member of Mussolini's Fascist Party and was responsible for much of the party's philosophical thinking. He served as Minister of Education in the early 1920s and remained a member of the Senate until 1943. Gentile was assassinated by anti-Fascist partisans in 1944.

JOSEPH GOEBBELS (1897–1945)



Goebbels was one of the leading figures of the Nazi Party and one of Hitler's most devoted supporters. He joined the party in 1924 and became Gauleiter of Berlin in 1926. In March 1933, Hitler appointed him Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. Goebbels was a highly skilled propagandist who was able to master all forms of media. He was a charismatic orator, second only to Hitler. He remained steadfastly loyal to Hitler until the end, committing suicide the day after Hitler took his life.

HERMANN GOERING (1893–1946)



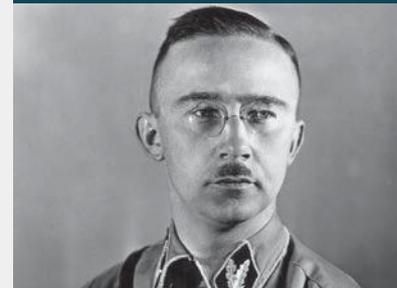
Goering was a major figure in Hitler's Nazi government. A famed fighter pilot in World War I, he joined the Nazi Party in 1922 and became a devoted follower of Hitler. In 1933, Goering was a member of Hitler's first cabinet and acting Prussian Interior Minister. He established the Gestapo, became head of the Luftwaffe in 1935 and was

responsible for Germany's four-year economic plan. His influence waned during the war as Luftwaffe failures became apparent. Goering was found guilty at the Nuremberg War Crime Trials, and committed suicide in 1946, before he could be hanged.

REINHARD HEYDRICH (1904–1942)

Heydrich was a key figure in the Nazi security apparatus and worked closely with SS Chief, Himmler. He established the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD), whose purpose was to root out any possible opposition to Nazi rule. He later became Chief of the Reich Main Security Office. During the war, he was responsible for the control of Bohemia-Moravia, organising Einsatzgruppen execution squads. He chaired the Wannsee Conference in 1942 which worked out plans for the Final Solution. Heydrich was assassinated in Prague in 1942.

HEINRICH HIMMLER (1900–1945)



Himmler was one of the most powerful men in Nazi Germany. His powers extended over all police organisations, including the Gestapo. It was Himmler who developed the elite SS into an organisation of hundreds of thousands by the middle of World War II. Himmler was the key figure responsible for the Holocaust. He was a fanatical believer in Nazi racial theory, and the main person behind the development and construction of extermination camps. He committed suicide in 1945 after being captured by British forces.

Clockwise from top left: imagefolk/Weimar Archive/Mary Evans; Alamy Stock Photo/Sueddeutsche Z; age fotostock/The Hollywood Archive

**PAUL VON HINDENBURG
(1847–1934)**

Hindenburg had left army life in 1911, but was drawn out of retirement when war broke out in 1914. His roles as commander at the Battle of Tannenberg and as Chief of Staff during the war made him a national hero. In 1925 he became President of the Weimar Republic, a post he held until his death in August 1934. Hindenburg was Germany's president during the crisis of the Depression, and appointed Hitler Chancellor in January 1933.

**EMPEROR HIROHITO
(1901–1989)**

Hirohito was Emperor of Japan from 1926 to 1989, a period known as the Showa era. He was Japan's head of state during the military's takeover of government in the 1930s and Japan's imperialist expansion, which culminated in the invasion of China, the attack on Pearl Harbor and World War II. Hirohito's role and complicity in these events remains a subject of disagreement between historians. After the war, he was seen as a symbol of a new, democratic Japan.

**ADOLF HITLER
(1889–1945)**



Hitler was the leader of the Nazi Party and became German Chancellor in January 1933. His party quickly gained total control of the country, and all opposition was brutally suppressed. Hitler's thinking was firmly grounded

in ideas of Aryan racial superiority, and German society was organised along racial lines. Hitler's goal of *Lebensraum* brought war in 1939. Early military successes ended after the Battle of Stalingrad. Hitler's vision for Germany brought national devastation and his racist thinking led to the Holocaust and the deaths of six million Jews. Hitler committed suicide in April 1945.

**LENIN
(1870–1924)**



Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, better known as Lenin, was the leader of the Russian Bolshevik Party, formed in 1903 following the split in the Social Democratic Labour Party. Lenin's goal was revolution, and the subsequent creation of a Marxist society and the spread of Marxism worldwide. The Bolsheviks seized power in a coup in October 1917, and Lenin ruled Russia until his death in January 1924.

**DAVID LLOYD GEORGE
(1863–1945)**

Lloyd George was the leading figure in British politics in the early years of the twentieth century. He was Prime Minister from 1916 to 1922, leading his country to victory in 1918. At the Paris Peace Conference, Lloyd George tried to steer a path between the idealism of US President Wilson and the desire for harsh treatment of Germany favoured by French Premier Clemenceau. Above all, he sought to protect British economic, naval and imperial interests.

**BENITO MUSSOLINI
(1883–1945)**



Mussolini was the leader of the Italian Fascist Party. Following the 'March on Rome' in 1922, he was appointed Prime Minister, a post he held until 1943. By 1925 he had established a one-party dictatorship, and proceeded to establish totalitarian control over his country, becoming known as *Il Duce*. He pursued an expansionist foreign policy in the 1930s, and in 1940 entered World War II on the side of Germany. Overthrown and imprisoned in 1943, he was rescued by German forces in September 1943. He was executed in April 1945.

**FRANZ VON PAPEN
(1879–1969)**

Franz von Papen was to play a crucial role in bringing Hitler to power. He was Chancellor from May to December 1932 before being ousted by General von Schleicher. Motivated by a desire for revenge against von Schleicher and a mistaken belief in his ability to control Hitler, he used his closeness to President Hindenburg to help orchestrate Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in January 1933, with himself as Vice-Chancellor. Von Papen was soon outmanoeuvred by Hitler and left government in August 1934, serving in various diplomatic posts.

ERNST RÖHM (1887–1934)

Ernst Röhm was an early member of the Nazi Party and a close confidant of Hitler. He relished his role as a revolutionary street fighter. Röhm left Germany for Bolivia in 1925 following a disagreement with Hitler. Six years later, Hitler recalled him to head up the paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party, the SA. Following Hitler's appointment

as Chancellor, Röhm began calling for a 'Second Revolution'. Röhm became a threat to Hitler and his long-term plans. Hitler turned against Röhm, and in July 1934 Röhm was shot.

ALBERT SPEER (1905–1981)

Albert Speer joined the Nazi Party in 1931, and became Hitler's chief architect during the 1930s as Hitler dreamed up increasingly grandiose architectural plans. Their shared interest in architecture meant Speer was arguably the closest in the party to being a friend of Hitler. In 1942, following the death of Fritz Todt, Speer became Minister of Armaments and did much to maintain the Nazi war machine. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials.

JOSEPH STALIN (1878–1953)



Following Lenin's death, a leadership struggle occurred within the Bolshevik Party. Stalin triumphed, and set about modernising his country through a series of Five Year Plans. The human cost of industrialisation and the collectivisation of agriculture was enormous, but by the end of the 1930s, the Soviet Union had become a leading industrial power. Stalin tightened his hold over the party through the use of terror and purges, creating a totalitarian system.

GUSTAV STRESEMANN (1878–1929)

Gustav Stresemann was the most influential political figure in Germany in the 1920s. He was the leading figure

in the DVP (German People's Party). In late 1923, he served as Chancellor for three months, and was German Foreign Minister for the following six years. In this role, he did much to achieve reconciliation with France. Stresemann was the key figure in maintaining political stability during the middle period of the Weimar Republic. He died just three weeks before the Wall Street Crash in October 1929.

LEON TROTSKY (1879–1940)



Trotsky formally joined the Bolsheviks in mid-1917. It was Trotsky who organised the coup that brought Lenin to power in October 1917. As Commissar of War, Trotsky transformed the Red Guards into a five million-strong Red Army, which was to prove victorious in Russia's bloody civil war. A combination of arrogance and political naiveté saw Trotsky outmanoeuvred by Stalin in the post-Lenin power struggle. Trotsky was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1929, and murdered in 1940 by a Stalinist assassin.

WOODROW WILSON (1856–1924)

Woodrow Wilson was US President from 1913 to 1921. Following the resumption of America's unrestricted submarine warfare policy in February 1917, Wilson persuaded Congress to declare war on Germany in April 1917. Wilson was a major player at the Paris Peace Conference, but his idealistic vision for the postwar world clashed with Clemenceau's demand for severe treatment of Germany. Wilson's ill health and poor political judgement led to America refusing to ratify the Paris Peace

Treaties, and it never joined the League of Nations.

BOLSHEVIK PARTY

The Bolshevik Party was formed in 1903 following the split in the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. The party was led by Lenin, who believed in a tight-knit, disciplined party dedicated to violent revolution. Following the October Revolution of 1917, the Bolshevik Party became the dominant force in Russian politics. In 1918, its name was changed to the All Russian Communist Party.

BUND DEUTSCHER MÄDEL (BDM)

The BDM was the League of German Girls. It was the female equivalent of the Hitler Youth Movement. Formed in 1930, the BDM eventually had three sections, based on age. Its purpose was essentially to promote Nazi values among young women: primarily good health and the importance of bearing children for the fatherland.

FASCIST PARTY

The Fascist Party – *Partito Nazionale Fascista* – was led by Benito Mussolini and ruled Italy from 1922 to 1943. The party grew out of Mussolini's earlier organisation, the Fascist Revolutionary Party, formed during the war. Its aims focused on Italian imperial expansion and the introduction of corporatism, which envisioned employer and employee organisations, overseen by the state, working together for the national good and the elimination of class conflict.

GERMAN LABOUR FRONT

The *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (DAF) came into existence on 2 May 1933, and was headed by Robert Ley. It replaced normal trades unions, which the Nazis had made illegal, and membership was compulsory. The DAF was not a real trade union, as it existed not to promote the interests of workers but as a means of controlling organised labour.

GESTAPO

The *Geheime Staatspolizei* – the Gestapo – became Nazi Germany's all-powerful secret police force. It was formed in Prussia in 1933 by Hermann Goering, and in the following year passed to the control of Heinrich Himmler. In 1936 it became a national organisation. During the war, 'Gestapo' became a byword for fear and brutality in Germany and throughout occupied Europe.

HITLER YOUTH MOVEMENT

The Hitler Youth Movement – *Hitler Jugend* – was formed in the 1920s. Once the Nazis came to power, all other youth organisations were made illegal. From 1936, membership of the Hitler Youth became compulsory for German boys. Its purpose was to instil unquestioning loyalty to the Führer, to enforce Nazi thinking and to train young men for future military service.

KEMPEITAI

The Kempeitai was the military police section of the Japanese Imperial Army. It was a secret police force, and once Japan had joined the Axis, it worked closely with the Nazi and Fascist equivalents. The Kempeitai was renowned for its cruelty and brutality, seen most clearly in its running of Japanese prisoner-of-war camps during World War II.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

The League of Nations came into being in January 1920, following the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. It was the brainchild of US President Woodrow Wilson. The prime purposes of the League were the maintenance of world peace and the development of international cooperation. Its goal was to defuse international conflict by providing a means for differences to be resolved or for collective action to be taken against an aggressor.

NAZI PARTY

The Nazi Party – National Socialist German Workers' Party – was led by Adolf Hitler, and ruled Germany from 1933 to 1945. Formed from various right-wing groups after World War I, the party was led by Hitler from 1921. The party's electoral fortunes grew rapidly with the onset of the Depression, and by mid-1932 it was the largest party in the Reichstag. Hitler took the party into power in January 1933 following a backroom political deal with various conservative political figures. Within a short time, the Nazi Party totally dominated all aspects of German society and political life.

NKVD

The NKVD – People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs – came into being in 1934. It was an outgrowth of earlier Soviet secret police organisations, the Cheka and the GPU. The NKVD was a key element in maintaining the absolute power of Joseph Stalin. It was noted for its brutality, its use of torture, extra-legal arrests and its running of Stalin's concentration camp system, the Gulag.

OVRA

The OVRA – Organisation for Vigilance and Repression of Anti-Fascism – was Italian dictator Mussolini's secret police, headed by Arturo Bocchini. Its purpose was to root out and destroy opponents of Mussolini's Fascist regime. It was the equivalent of the Nazis' Gestapo. Formed in 1927, at its height it had more than 5000 operatives.

SA

The SA – *Sturmabteilung* – was the paramilitary arm of the Nazi Party. Its purpose was to provide protection for Nazi meetings and to attack the Nazis' opponents. Members wore a brown uniform and they became known as 'the Brownshirts' or 'Stormtroopers'. The

SA was thuggish, and delighted in the use of violence. The organisation was headed by Ernst Röhm, and by early 1934 Röhm boasted an SA membership of more than three million. However, Röhm became a threat to Hitler's power, and in mid-1934 Röhm and many other SA leaders were executed following the Night of the Long Knives.

SS

The SS – *Schutzstaffel* – was formed in the mid-1920s. Its original purpose was to provide protection for Nazi leaders at party meetings. It would eventually be led by Heinrich Himmler. Himmler turned the SS into an elite organisation that accepted only the brightest, physically strongest and racially purest into its ranks. Under Himmler, the SS grew into a massive organisation, which during World War II even had its own army, the Waffen SS. The SS was largely responsible for the events of the Holocaust.

TOKKO

The Tokko – *Tokubetsu Koto Keisatsu* – was Japan's civilian secret police force, the equivalent of the military's Kempeitai. It was formed before World War I, and in the inter-war period played a major role in dealing with criminal investigations, increasingly acting against those whose beliefs were seen as a threat to the government.

UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations is the successor organisation to the League of Nations. It came into existence in October 1945, following the San Francisco Conference of earlier that year. Like the League, its purpose is to ensure international peace and to encourage international cooperation. The founders of the United Nations endeavoured to structure the organisation in ways that would make it more effective and long-lasting than the failed League of Nations.

Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism is an irrational and often violent hatred of Jews and all things Jewish. It was not invented by Hitler's Nazi Party but had been a feature of European societies, from Spain to Russia, for hundreds of years. Anti-Semitism became a cornerstone of Nazi ideology, and was to underpin much of Nazi policy after 1933.

Collective security

Collective security was the notion that members of the League of Nations would unite in support of any member state that was faced with military aggression. The principle of collective security was enshrined in Article 10 of the League of Nations Covenant. It was hoped that this concept would be enough to deter any power risking military conflict.

Cult of personality

The cult of personality is a practice exercised by some inter-war dictatorships, which raised up a nation's leader to almost godlike status. The leader became the personification of the nation. His image was ubiquitous, and all actions of the regime would be justified because they were taken in the name of the leader. A cult of personality was developed around Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini.

Der Führer

Der Führer – the leader – was how Hitler was referred to within the Nazi Party, and across Germany, once he had gained power. After Hitler had combined the roles of President and Chancellor in August 1934, his official title became *Führer and Reich Chancellor*.

Fasces

Fasces were a bundle of wooden rods that had been bound together, often with an axe in the middle. During Roman times, the fasces indicated the power of a magistrate. The fasces became a symbol used by Mussolini's Fascist Party, and the term 'fascist' derives from it.

Fascism

Fascism is a political ideology that raises the nation and sometimes the race above the individual. It believes in centralised, authoritarian government that enforces strict regimentation of the people and removes their civil liberties by means of violence or strict laws. A fascist government is often led by a charismatic dictator around whom a cult of personality is constructed.

Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere

The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was a concept enunciated by the Japanese government in 1940. Its alleged purpose was to create a cultural and economic union of Asian nations that would be free of western control. In reality, it became a cover for the development of Japanese domination of the Asia-Pacific region.

Hyperinflation

Hyperinflation is a situation in which a nation's currency loses any value as prices rise to astronomical levels. Normal monetary transactions become impossible, international trade collapses and barter is often used for transactions. This occurred in Germany in 1923.

Il Duce

Il Duce – the leader – was the title that Mussolini used to indicate his leading role in the fascist regime of Italy. It is roughly equivalent to Hitler's use of *Der Führer*.

Kristallnacht

Kristallnacht – 'Night of Crystal', or 'Night of Broken Glass' – refers to the nationwide attack that was launched against Jewish people, property and synagogues across Germany on the night of 9–10 November 1938.

Lebensraum

Lebensraum was a German term that, roughly translated, means 'living space'. *Lebensraum* became the primary goal of German foreign policy during the 1930s. Hitler believed that Germany had a right

to establish a new German empire in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, ruled by his Aryan master race. The inhabitants of these regions would form a slave force in this future Aryan empire.

Night of the Long Knives

The Night of the Long Knives refers to the massacre of alleged opponents of the Nazi regime between 30 June and 2 July 1934. The main target was the leadership of the SA, in particular Ernst Röhm. More than 1000 people lost their lives at this time, including former Chancellor von Schleicher.

Propaganda

Propaganda is information aimed at developing and enforcing one particular point of view. It does not allow for doubt or alternative points of view, and often consists of spurious ideas and outright lies.

Reparations

Reparations refers to the compensation that Germany was ordered to pay to the victorious Allies after World War I. The final sum was decided in January 1921 and amounted to \$40 billion, or £6.6 billion. The equivalent figure today would be approximately \$540 billion.

Social Darwinism

Social Darwinism grew out of the evolutionary ideas presented by Charles Darwin in his book *On the Origin of Species*. It is the idea that groups in society, and nations in the international arena, are in conflict with each other and that such conflicts are resolved by the success of the superior over the inferior.

Totalitarianism

Totalitarianism is a system of political dictatorship with the features of a single ruling party led by a charismatic leader. The party seeks to control all aspects of public and private life through the use and application of state-sanctioned terror.

Covenant of the League of Nations

The Covenant of the League of Nations comprised the 26 articles for the operation of the League that were agreed to in Paris following World War I. The Covenant came into operation in January 1920. The League was the idea of US President Woodrow Wilson, though for internal political reasons, the United States would never join. The key article of the Covenant was Article 10, the Collective Security provision.

Enabling Act

The Enabling Act was passed by the German Reichstag on 23 March 1933. The Act gave Hitler the power to enact laws without the sanction of the Reichstag for a period of four years. From this point, Hitler was able to wield dictatorial power without any possible interference from the legislative branch of government. The Reichstag would cease to exercise any influence in Germany.

Mein Kampf

Mein Kampf – My Struggle – was Hitler's part-autobiography/part political exposition, written when he was in Landsberg Prison following the failed Munich Putsch of November 1923. In his book, Hitler provides a fairly coherent expression of his plans for a future Germany. *Mein Kampf* also covers Hitler's thinking on a range of topics, stretching from race to boxing to syphilis.

Nuremberg Laws

The Nuremberg Laws were announced by Hermann Goering at the Nuremberg Rally in 1935. The Reich Citizenship Act stated that Jews were no longer citizens, and were thus denied all the protections and rights that citizenship bestowed. The Blood Protection Act forbade marriage and sexual relations between Jews and Aryans. Its authors claimed this law was aimed at maintaining the purity of the Aryan race.

25 Point Program of the Nazi Party

In February 1920, Hitler announced the 25 Point Program of the German Workers' Party to 2000 followers in the Munich Hofbräuhaus. The party would soon be renamed the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi). The 25 Point Program outlined the party's nationalist, socialist and racial goals.

The Treaty of Versailles

The Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28 June 1919 between the victorious Allies of World War I and the defeated Germany. Germany had to accept responsibility for starting the war, was required to pay massive reparations to the Allies, and was also subject to various territorial, economic and military restrictions. Germany would always view Versailles as a humiliating slave treaty.

The United Nations Charter

The United Nations Charter was signed in June 1945 at the San Francisco Conference and came into operation in October of that year. The Charter sets out the rules and behaviour to which member states must adhere. Article 103 states that UN decisions will override any other treaty arrangements member states might have.

The Weimar Constitution

The Weimar Constitution came into effect in 1919. It provided the basis for the operation of Germany's post-WWI democratic regime, the Weimar Republic. Arguably one of the most democratic constitutions in history, it provided for basic political liberties, two houses of parliament, universal male and female suffrage, proportional representation in parliament and a democratically elected head of state.

01

The post-World War I peace treaties and their consequences

SYLLABUS OUTCOMES

In this chapter, students will examine post-World War I settlement.

Aspects to be covered include:

- the main terms of the peace treaties,
- the impact of the treaties,
- the debate over the treatment of Germany.



SOURCE 1.1 The signing of the Treaty of Versailles

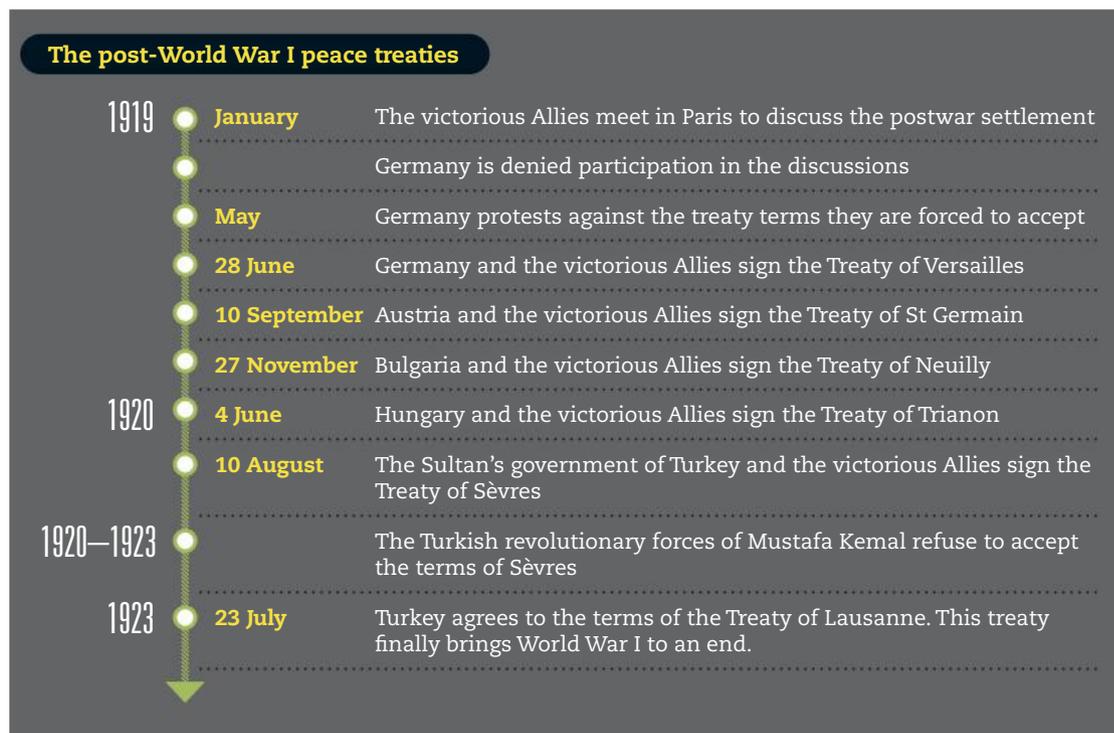


Introduction

The peace process that finally brought World War I to an end comprised five (and later six) separate treaties. The most significant of these was the Treaty of Versailles with Germany, signed on 28 June 1919. By August 1920, other treaties had been signed with Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey, although peace with Turkey would not be entirely settled until the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

The Paris Peace Settlement was a compromise that ultimately pleased nobody. Supporters of US President Woodrow Wilson considered it too harsh, while French Premier Georges Clemenceau felt that Germany had been let off too lightly. Britain's Lloyd George was unhappy with the harsh treatment of Germany, and Italy's Vittorio Orlando felt his nation had not been adequately rewarded for its sacrifices. Germany considered Versailles a slave treaty, while Russia, which was excluded from the process and embroiled in a civil war during the negotiations, saw it as a capitalist plot.

The treaty would have long-lasting consequences. Empires disappeared, and a host of new nations came into being. The attempt to achieve national self-determination left millions of people as minorities under foreign rule. The problem of German power had not been solved, causing an unstable balance of power which in turn meant that the problem of French security remained. The economic provisions of the peace settlement were arguably a factor in bringing on the Depression in the 1930s. Historians still debate the possibility that the peace settlement made another war more likely.



The postwar peace treaties

The Paris Peace Conference began on 18 January 1919 and continued for just over a year, closing on 21 January 1920. Attended by delegates from 27 nations, it addressed a broad range of issues, including undersea cables and international aviation, although its main focus was the negotiation of post-World War I peace. Dominated by the leaders of the four major victorious powers, Britain, France, the United States and, to a lesser extent, Italy, the conference laid the foundations for the interwar international order.



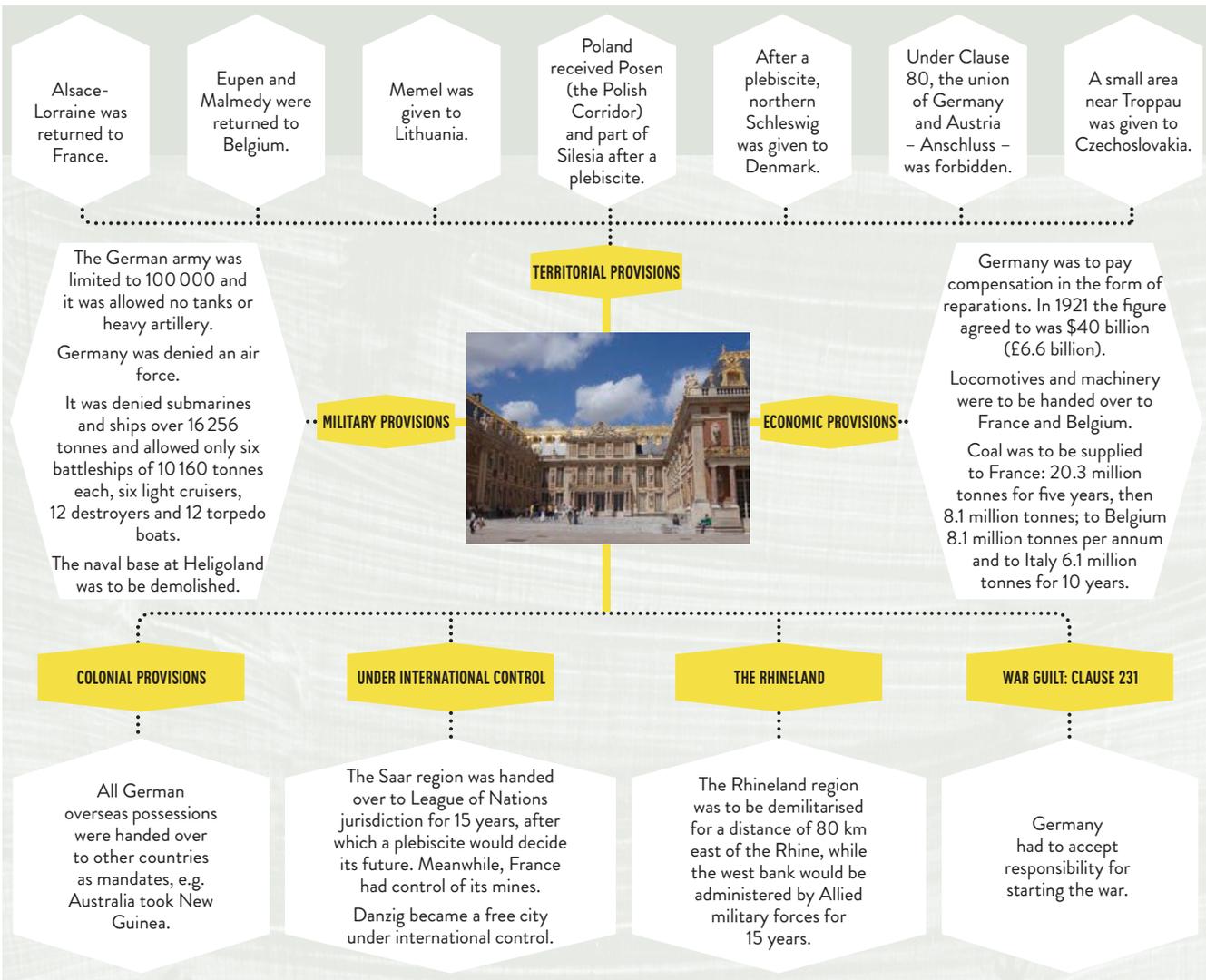


SOURCE 1.2 David Lloyd George, Vittorio Orlando, Georges Clemenceau and Woodrow Wilson at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919

The Treaty of Versailles

Adolf Hitler would later call the Treaty of Versailles ‘an instrument of boundless extortion’. These sentiments were echoed by most Germans, who saw Versailles as ‘a slave treaty’, or a ‘*diktat*’. Although there were German delegates in Paris, they were not allowed to participate in the treaty discussions. Most previous conflicts had been ended with both victor and vanquished sitting around the negotiating table, but the Germans were presented with the treaty terms in late May 1919 and effectively told to accept them or hostilities would resume. Germany had no choice, and on 28 June 1919 signed the Treaty of Versailles.

The main terms of the treaty are shown in Source 1.3. Source 1.4 shows Germany’s European territorial losses.



SOURCE 1.3 The main terms of the Treaty of Versailles



SOURCE 1.4 Germany's European territorial losses in 1919

The other Paris peace treaties

By the end of the war, the Austro-Hungarian Empire had disappeared from the map, and so separate treaties were made with the new states of Austria and Hungary.

Austria signed the Treaty of St Germain on 10 September 1919, losing significant amounts of territory. Bukovina was given to Romania, while Istria and South Tyrol went to Italy. Bohemia, Moravia and Austrian Silesia were handed over to the new state of Czechoslovakia, while Dalmatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina became part of the new state of Yugoslavia. Union with Germany – Anschluss – was forbidden. Austria's army was reduced to 30 000 men, its navy to a few Danube patrol boats, and it had to pay reparations. Austria was now reduced to a small, landlocked country of seven million people.

Hungary eventually signed the Treaty of Trianon on 4 June 1920. Slovakia and Ruthenia were given to Czechoslovakia, while Croatia became part of Yugoslavia and Transylvania was handed to Romania. Hungary's army was reduced to 35 000, and it also had to pay reparations.

Bulgaria signed the Treaty of Neuilly on 27 November 1919. Of the defeated Central Powers, Bulgaria suffered the least, and its losses tended to confirm the results of the second Balkan War of 1913. Western Thrace was handed over to Greece, including an outlet to the Aegean Sea. Southern Dobruja went to Romania, while its Macedonian territory became part of Yugoslavia. Bulgaria's army was limited to 20 000, and it had to pay reparations.

mandate

The power, given by the League of Nations, for a nation to administer a defeated enemy's colony. Such administration was expected to continue until the former colony was deemed able to look after itself.

The Straits

The waterways that connect the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, comprising the Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmara and the Dardanelles

Making peace with Turkey proved much more difficult, and in fact the peace process took longer than the war itself. The government of Sultan Mehmed VI signed the Treaty of Sèvres on 10 August 1920. As with the others, this treaty was punitive in nature. However, Mustafa Kemal's revolution against the Sultan soon invalidated the Sèvres Treaty. Kemal's forces managed to drive Allied troops out of the Straits region, and defeated Greek forces that had occupied Smyrna in Anatolia.

Kemal demanded that the Treaty of Sèvres be rewritten. Mustafa Kemal was not an Ottoman imperialist; he was a Turkish nationalist and this was reflected in the Treaty of Lausanne, which Turkey and the Allies eventually signed on 23 July 1923. Turkey surrendered all claims to the former Ottoman Arab territories, which became British or French **mandates**, but retained Anatolia, Constantinople and eastern Thrace. **The Straits** were demilitarised. There were no restrictions placed on the size of the Turkish army, and it did not have to pay reparations.

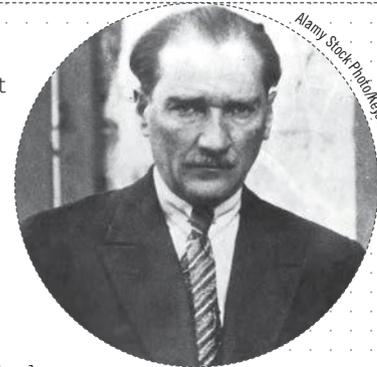
- 1 What role did Germany have in the 1919 peace negotiations?
- 2 In what ways was the German military weakened by the military provisions of the Treaty of Versailles?
- 3 What happened to the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a result of the Treaties of St Germain and Trianon?
- 4 Why did it take so long to finalise peace with Turkey?

MUSTAFA KEMAL (1881–1938)

Mustafa Kemal was born in Salonika, then part of the Ottoman Empire. In 1893 he attended the military academy in Constantinople, where he excelled in academic study, earning him the name Kemal, meaning 'perfection'. He supported the Young Turk Revolution against the Sultan's rule in 1908, and fought in the Italian war of 1911 and the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913. In 1915, he led Turkish forces during the Dardanelles campaign.

Mustafa Kemal was angered by the Treaty of Sèvres, and led forces to seek independence for Turkey. The Sultan's regime was formally abolished in November 1922, the Treaty of Sèvres was rejected and Turkey signed the Treaty of Lausanne. Kemal became the first President of the Republic

of Turkey. As president, he sought to modernise and secularise his country, establishing a clear divide between government and religion. In his attempts to westernise Turkey, he introduced the Latin alphabet and the Gregorian calendar, encouraged his people to wear western clothes, established legal equality for women and pursued the industrialisation of the economy. In 1934, he introduced surnames, taking the name Ataturk, meaning 'father of the Turks'. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk died of cirrhosis of the liver in 1938.



The consequences of the postwar peace treaties

The new map of Europe

The peace treaties that brought World War I to a close had major consequences for Europe and its future. The impact was most apparent in the dramatic changes to the political geography of Europe. The war and the postwar treaties brought an end to four empires and an end to the power of four ruling royal families. Before 1914, Europe and the Middle East were dominated by the Hohenzollern Empire of Germany, the Habsburg Empire of Austria-Hungary, the Romanov Empire of Russia and the Sultan's Ottoman Empire.

Germany's empire was reduced under the Treaty of Versailles. Germany lost about 13 per cent of its territory – 103 600 square kilometres – and seven million people. The Rhine was demilitarised and partly occupied, and East Prussia was separated from the rest of the country by the Polish Corridor (see Source 1.6). The Kaiser abdicated on 9 November and a republic was declared in Berlin the following day.

Austria-Hungary disintegrated. From the ruins of the Habsburg Empire, and the collapse of Germany and Russia, came the states of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Austria and Poland. Romania almost doubled in size. Within six months of the Bolshevik Revolution, Russia was



SOURCE 1.5 Political map of Europe in 1914 showing the four empires and wartime alliances

Curzon Line

The suggested border between Russia and Poland, proposed by British Foreign Secretary Curzon. It became a reality after 1945.

experiencing civil war and so had no say in the postwar territorial arrangements. From the ruins of the former tsarist empire came the states of Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. War between Poland and the Soviet Union (Russia's new title) in 1920–21 saw Poland take territory east of the **Curzon Line** and well into the former Russian Empire. As discussed, the Ottoman Empire ended as a result of Mustafa Kemal's revolution, to be replaced by the modern state of Turkey, while Britain and France took mandate control of the Sultan's former Arab territories. The new political map of Europe is shown in Source 1.6.



SOURCE 1.6 Europe in the early 1920s

Outside of Europe, the United States returned to its traditional isolationist foreign policy and focused on internal issues, though it maintained its domination of Latin America. It would take Japan's 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor to bring the United States to a full international role. In the Far East, Japan had emerged from the war and the peace process as a major world power. It took Germany's concessions in China and was given mandate control over Germany's former Pacific colonies, the Marianas, the Caroline and the Marshall Islands. Japan was fast becoming the dominant economic force in the region as it captured some of the western powers' markets. Within a decade, Japan would embark on its territorial expansion, which would culminate in the Pacific War. The British and French Empires grew as a result of the postwar treaties. However, western dominance was no longer taken

for granted. Nationalist groups in the western colonies, from Indochina to India to the Middle East, had begun to agitate for independence, although it would take another war before these aspirations would be realised.

The issue of national minorities

As the map of Europe was redrawn, large numbers of people found themselves living in countries in which they had become a minority. The ethnographic spread of populations in eastern Europe was so complex it defied the skills of mapmakers in Paris in 1919. There were millions of Hungarians in Romania, Russians and Ukrainians in Poland, Germans in Poland and Czechoslovakia, and so on.

There were also Jewish minorities in many countries. Anti-Semitism had deep roots in central and eastern Europe, and was further fuelled as new nations came into being. A Hungarian law of 1920 marked Jews out as a separate race. The Polish Peasant Party stated in 1935 that Jews could not assimilate and were considered an alien nation in Poland. Similar pronouncements were made in Slovakia and Romania.

The triumph of the new national states after the war meant the presence of nationalist minorities in those countries, and how they should be treated, had become significant issues. Were the minorities to be assimilated or granted special status? The new postwar states sought to impose a national and even racial stamp on their new nations. Was the international community, perhaps through the League of Nations, to have a say in the treatment of these minorities?

The principle of national self-determination was one of the key ideas US President Wilson had outlined in his Fourteen Points speech of January 1918, and it underpinned much of the negotiation in Paris. It was also expected that the new world order would be based on the idea of liberal democracy, i.e. government by popular consent in a state resting on popular sovereignty.

The complexities of Europe

Historian Ian Kershaw explains the problem this created.

... The underlying problem, however, was that precisely in the most unsettled parts of the continent the claim to popular sovereignty was based on ethnic nationalism. And most of the territories of the fallen empires contained more than one nationality staking a claim to land, resources and political representation. In the countries of western Europe the state had over time shaped the nation; association with the institutions of the state had gradually formed a national consciousness. But in most of central, eastern and southern Europe, national consciousness had emerged from the demands of a people defined by ethnicity, language and culture to establish a state that represented – often exclusively – their interests. How was self-determination to be squared with competing claims to a sovereign nation-state?

Ian Kershaw, *To Hell and Back: Europe 1914–1949*, Penguin, Milton Keynes, 2016, p. 116

QUESTIONS

- 1 What does Kershaw see as the fundamental problem regarding the issue of popular sovereignty in eastern and southern Europe?
- 2 Identify the key difference Kershaw highlights between the creation of nation states in western Europe and eastern Europe.

Along with the issue of minorities, there was another consequence of the peace treaties. The new nation states were often in hot competition for pieces of territories. Claims were made on the basis of ethnicity, but these claims often concealed these states' actual economic and strategic ambitions. Such disputes included those between Greece, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia for parts of Macedonia, and between Poland and Germany over Silesia. Other disputes had nothing to do with ethnicity, such as Italy's claims for German-speaking south Tyrol and the Slav-populated Dalmatian coast. Several of these disputes would be examined by the League of Nations, which came into existence in January 1920. (The intentions and authority of the League of Nations will be examined in chapter 8.)

The issue of German power

Before 1914 Germany stretched from Russia to France, from the Baltic to the Alps. Economically, it was second only to the United States, and in population terms it was second only to Russia, though it dwarfed the tsarist state industrially and technologically. It had become apparent that German ambitions could not be reconciled with European peace and security. In 1914, Britain's leaders had talked about defending Belgium. However, the real reason Britain went to war in 1914 was to prevent the domination of the continent by a single power: Germany. It took four years to defeat Germany, and even then, success was only achieved when help arrived from the New World.

In 1919 Germany was on its knees. It was blockaded, and it had scuttled its own fleet at Scapa Flow. Internally it was facing possible revolution, and it had to accept the Treaty of Versailles. Chaos reigned, both politically and economically.

However, this weakness was illusory. Geographically, Germany was still dominant, and its population of 70 million dwarfed France's 40 million. Despite Versailles, Germany was still potentially the economic powerhouse of Europe. In fact, much of Versailles could only be enforced with German cooperation. Germany was to be disarmed, but it had to do this itself, subject to an Allied Control Commission. It was up to Germany to collect and hand over reparations. Even the Allied occupation depended on the cooperation of the German civil authorities in the Rhineland.



SOURCE 1.7 In 1919, the German naval commander sank 52 German naval vessels at Scapa Flow to prevent them being taken by the victorious powers.



SOURCE 1.8 British troops in the Rhineland during the occupation in 1919

British historian AJP Taylor, many years ago, summed up this problem of German power:

“ ... The First World War left the ‘German problem unsolved’, indeed made it inevitably more acute. This problem was not German aggressiveness or militarism, or the wickedness of her rulers. These, even if they existed, merely aggravated the problem; or perhaps actually made it less menacing by provoking moral resistance in other countries. The essential problem was political not moral. However democratic and pacific Germany might become she remained by far the greatest power on the continent of Europe; with the disappearance of Russia, more so than before ... The immediate problem was German weakness; but given a few years of ‘normal’ life, it would again become the problem of German strength ... Germany had only to secure a modification of the treaty, or to shake it off altogether, and she would emerge as strong, or almost as strong as she had been in 1914 ... ”

AJP Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1979, p. 48

The post-treaty balance of power

Related to the German problem was the issue of the balance of power. A true balance of power makes war unlikely, as victory in such a situation would almost certainly be at too great a cost to both parties. But if the balance is upset, the weaker may fight to redress it before it is too late; the stronger may take advantage of it.

As discussed, the European balance of power had not been restored, leaving the revival of Germany a real possibility. With Russia in the throes of civil war and, for years after that, preoccupied with its internal weakness, if Germany managed to restore its pre-war position, it would be even stronger, relatively speaking, as there would be no Russian counterweight. With the United States reverting to isolationism, Europe’s fate was very much in the hands of Britain and France. However, both were now second-rate powers who had suffered greatly during the war and during the 1920s. The two were often at loggerheads over a range of issues. In the long term, this all worked in Germany’s favour.

“ ... The imbalance of power on which the Treaty of Versailles depended for its fulfilment, was rapidly being redressed in Germany’s favour. ”

David Thomson, *Europe Since Napoleon*, Pelican, London, 1974, p. 637

A resurgent Germany was feared most by France, which had been invaded by Germany (then Prussia) in 1870 and again in 1914. Clemenceau’s prime goal at Versailles had been to weaken Germany sufficiently that this could not happen again. Clemenceau had wanted to break up Germany and annex the Rhineland, but he had been denied these things by Wilson and Lloyd George. France’s insistence on reparations in the peace treaties was motivated by a need to both rebuild and weaken a future Germany. The treaties’ economic provisions disrupted the economy of Europe and were partly responsible for the continent’s later economic problems. Before 1914, France had Russia as an ally. After 1919, Russia was in eclipse. Should Germany manage to revive, France’s security would again be gravely threatened.

- 1 How does Taylor justify his claim that Germany had not been too harshly treated at Versailles?
- 2 How would Russia’s position in Europe after World War I affect the relative power of a future Germany?



Was Germany harshly treated in the Treaty of Versailles?

Germany reacted to the Treaty of Versailles with anger and humiliation, but also shock. The Germans had been expecting victory in 1918, not defeat. The country had never been invaded, and government propaganda had kept the worst of the battlefield news from the German people. After 1919, Germans of all political persuasions vowed to rip up the treaty. Germany claimed that it had only signed the armistice because it believed that a future peace would be based on Wilson's idealistic Fourteen Points. Indeed, it seemed that Wilson's idea of self-determination was to apply to all except Germany, with Germans forced to live outside the country in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria.

When in mid-1919 World War I Allied commander General Foch stood on the new German-Polish border – the Polish Corridor – he predicted that war would start again there within 20 years. As early as 1920, British economist John Maynard Keynes was arguing that the economic provisions of the peace treaties were totally unsustainable. Keynes argued that Germany would never be able to pay reparations.

“ ... At 5 per cent compound interest a capital sum doubles itself in fifteen years. On the assumption that Germany cannot pay more than \$750 million annually until 1936, the \$25 billion on which interest is deferred will have risen to \$50 billion, carrying an annual interest charge of \$2.5 billion. That is to say, even if Germany pays \$750 million annually up to 1936, she will nevertheless owe us at that date more than half as much again as she now does ... ”

John Maynard Keynes, 'The Peace of Versailles', *Everybody's Magazine*, 43, September 1920, p. 39



But was Germany really that harshly treated? AJP Taylor argued convincingly that the treaty was by no means as harsh on Germany as many claimed at the time. In more recent times, this theme has been taken up by historian Jürgen Tampke.

Jürgen Tampke and the Treaty of Versailles

Jürgen Tampke was born in Germany in 1944 and emigrated to Australia in 1964. For many years he was Associate Professor at the School of History at the University of New South Wales. In his book, *A Perfidious Distortion of History: the Versailles Peace Treaty and the Success of the Nazis*, Tampke argues it is a myth that the Treaty of Versailles was overly harsh on Germany, asserting that Germany escaped responsibility for the war, that reparations did not cause the hyperinflation of 1923 and that World War II was a continuation of longstanding German foreign policy aims.

... The Germans were presented with the Treaty in the dining room of the Trianon Palace Hotel at Versailles on 7 May. The allies had included in the 440 articles of the Treaty a clause – Article 231 – stating Germany's moral and legal obligation to accept responsibility for the damage inflicted on civilians by its aggression. Having assigned unlimited German theoretical and moral responsibility, however, Germany's liability in practical terms, as contained in Article 232 of the Treaty, was much narrower. Nevertheless the German chief negotiator, Count Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau, the physical epitome of the stereotypical Prussian aristocrat and just as arrogant, used the opportunity to produce what today we would call 'fake news' – or what traditionally went under the term 'manipulation of documents'.

Having been handed the Treaty he immediately announced that Article 231 assigned war guilt to Germany, something he vehemently denied. So began the litany of 'fake news' surrounding the Versailles Peace. The newly formed German government in Berlin soon joined the chorus of news falsifiers, claiming that the Allies were imposing a 'hunger blockade' upon Germany threatening hundreds of thousands of children with starvation.



→ In fact, though the Allies and the Germans did quarrel about the delivery of food, there was no such blockade. There certainly was undernourishment among the population at large, not just among children, but this was the result not of a ‘hunger blockade’ but of the German war leaders’ food distribution policy over the preceding four years, favouring as it did the soldiers at the front at the expense of civilians, whose food rations throughout the war were kept barely above subsistence level.

The ink on the Treaty was scarcely dry when English economist John Maynard Keynes provided his ‘alternative fact’ account. In his much-cited *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* Keynes, whose sympathies for the Germans were matched by his dislike of the French, predicted a disastrous economic future for Europe. Ten years after the war had ended none of his dire prognostications had come to pass; in fact the European economy had largely recovered. This changed with the collapse of the New York stock market in September 1929. Germany in particular sank into total economic chaos, but not due to the Versailles Peace; it was because the German budget had been financed with United States loans ...

Jürgen Tampke, ‘How Germany Used the “Unfair” Treaty of Versailles to Dodge World War I Blame’, *History of War*, 5 April 2017

Conclusion

Five treaties were signed that finally brought World War I to a close. The most important of these was the Treaty of Versailles. All Germans believed the treaty was a ‘slave treaty’, whose territorial, military and economic provisions lacked any justification. In particular, Germany resented the War Guilt clause. However, later historians have successfully argued that the treaty was far less iniquitous than German feeling at the time suggested.

Four empires had fallen and a host of new nations appeared, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, Turkey fought to have its earlier harsh treaty annulled. The issue of national minorities, the result of the map of Europe being redrawn, became a key issue in the inter-war period. In 1920 a League of Nations was formed for the preservation of peace. However, the League’s systemic weaknesses, combined with the rebirth of German power and a failure to restore a true balance of power, meant that the League would fail in its key objective.

Chapter summary

- Germany was forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles after World War I. The vast majority of Germans considered the treaty to be shameful and unjust.
- Austria signed the Treaty of St Germain, Bulgaria the Treaty of Neuilly, and Hungary the Treaty of Trianon.
- The peace process with Turkey was not settled until the Treaty of Lausanne was signed in 1923, following the nationalist revolt of Mustafa Kemal.
- The treaties saw the disappearance of the German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire.
- New countries were created across eastern and central Europe.
- Minority issues became a problem for many of the new countries created by the postwar treaties.

- President Wilson's Fourteenth Point called for the creation of a League of Nations to solve future international disagreements. Despite some minor successes in the 1920s, the League would ultimately fail in this goal.
 - Germany was in a greatly weakened state immediately after the war, though AJP Taylor argued that after a few years the country would soon be able to reassert itself.
 - Jürgen Tampke argues that it is a myth that Germany was harshly treated by the Treaty of Versailles, and that it is wrong to ascribe the problems of postwar Europe to the terms of the treaty.
-

Additional resources

- Jürgen Tampke, *A Perfidious Distortion of History: the Versailles Peace Treaty and the Success of the Nazis*, Scribe, Melbourne, 2017
- Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (Chapter 2), Penguin, London, 1998
- AJP Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1979
- Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis 1911–1918*, 1930

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

- 1 In what ways was the German economy weakened by the Treaty of Versailles?
- 2 What were the reactions of most Germans to the Treaty of Versailles?
- 3 What happened to the Rhineland under the Treaty of Versailles?
- 4 List the new countries that appeared in Europe as a result of the peace treaties.
- 5 What was the 'Polish Corridor'?
- 6 Name the two treaties that Turkey was involved in at the end of World War I.
- 7 In which countries did significant German minorities live after World War I?
- 8 What territory did Romania gain in the post-World War I peace treaties?
- 9 What role did Russia play in the 1919 peace negotiations?
- 10 Where was the Curzon Line?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 11 What happened to Germany's fleet after World War I?
- 12 The US President Woodrow Wilson was the main supporter of the League of Nations. Why then did the United States neither ratify the Treaty of Versailles nor join the League?
- 13 Outline the course and results of the Russo-Polish War of 1920–21.

EXTENDED WRITING EXERCISE

- 14 'Germany was unfairly and unjustly treated by the Allies in the Treaty of Versailles.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?

02

The rise of dictatorships after World War I

SYLLABUS OUTCOMES

In this chapter, students will examine what made possible the appearance of dictatorships between the wars.

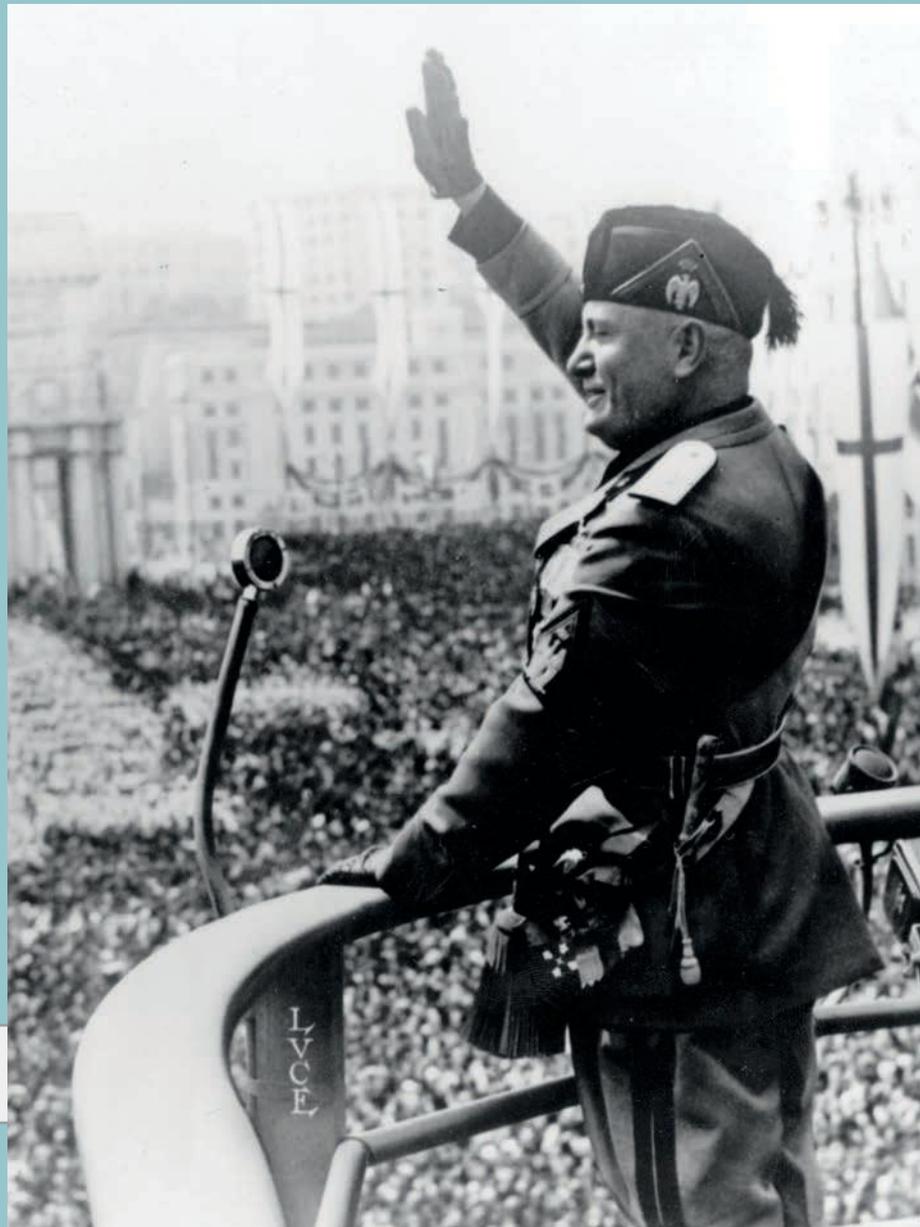
Aspects to be covered include:

- factors that assisted the rise of dictatorships across Europe,
- the growth of dictatorship and its main features in Italy, Russia and Japan.



History
syllabus

SOURCE 2.1 Italian dictator Benito Mussolini salutes the crowd during a public address on 1 January 1938.



Introduction

By the early 1930s, Europe was a continent dominated by various forms of dictatorships. These ranged from Marxist-Leninist to fascist to Nazi to a whole range of militarist, nationalist or clericalist authoritarianisms. With hindsight, it is easy to identify the factors that led to this development. However, nothing in history is inevitable. In the early 1920s, liberal democratic regimes were the norm throughout Europe, not the exception. It almost seemed that nineteenth-century liberal thinking had finally triumphed almost everywhere. With the horror of the war slowly beginning to fade, few would have predicted the destruction of European democracy within just a few short years.

Several factors combined to bring about this demise. Parliamentary democracy is not an easy form of government, and its successful operation requires many years of practice. Inter-war democracies did not have this. Democracy is difficult enough in the best of times; inter-war Europe, with the fallout of World War I, did not constitute the best of times. The rise of nationalism, the growing acceptance of racist thinking, minority issues and economic catastrophe all created an atmosphere that was not conducive to effective democratic rule. Skilled political operators, charismatic demagogues and the just plain opportunistic were all able to manipulate situations to their own advantage. Germany's democratic demise will be fully examined in chapter 3. This chapter will look at factors affecting the failure of European democracy generally.

It would be an error to casually lump together the inter-war dictatorships. Due to issues of personality, specific geographical and economic factors, past history and the impact of the war, Italy, Russia and Japan each had their own unique features, as well some common characteristics.



Forms of dictatorship

Dictatorships took various forms after World War I, and went through various stages of development. Most tended to 'evolve' rather than taking power through a violent coup.

A 'constitutional dictatorship' was one in which traditional elites maintained existing institutions and did not completely remove the opposition. Emergency measures were imposed to deal with real or alleged crises.

An 'authoritarian dictatorship' often took the form of a presidential dictatorship. Such a dictatorship pursued defensive goals in foreign policy, and territorial consolidation, not expansion. It allowed no opposition. Such dictatorships might be led by a military figure or a monarch.

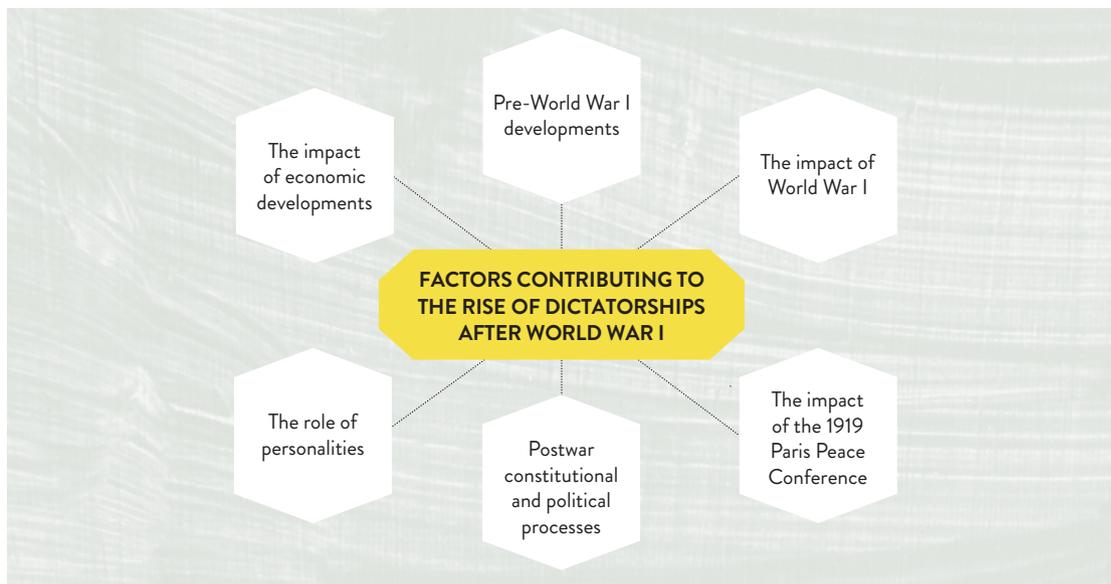
The most extreme form of dictatorship was the totalitarian. This kind of dictatorship aimed to create a new form of society, based on ideological thinking in which the private world was broken down. The nation was led through any potential crises by a charismatic superhuman figure.

The rise of dictatorships after World War I

- 1921–23 ● Constitutional dictatorships are established in Hungary, Spain, Italy, Greece and Albania
- 1925–26 ● Italy has become an authoritarian dictatorship by this time
Portugal and Yugoslavia have become constitutional dictatorships
- 1926 ● Lithuania becomes an authoritarian, presidential dictatorship
Poland becomes an authoritarian dictatorship under Józef Piłsudski
- 1928–29 ● Stalin's dictatorship in the Soviet Union is consolidated
- 1930 ● From March 1930, Germany was effectively being ruled by Presidential Decree, Article 48 (see chapter 3), though it would be wrong to suggest that the country had become a constitutional dictatorship at this stage
- 1932 ● Portugal becomes an authoritarian dictatorship under Antonio Salazar
- 1933 ● Germany moves rapidly from rule by presidential decree to authoritarian to totalitarian dictatorship
- 1934 ● Estonia and Latvia become authoritarian, presidential dictatorships
Austria becomes an authoritarian dictatorship under Engelbert Dollfuss, based on Catholic ideals
- 1935 ● Bulgaria becomes a monarchical dictatorship under King Boris III
- 1936 ● Greek authoritarian dictatorship is established under the leadership of Prime Minister Metaxas
General Franco establishes an authoritarian dictatorship in those areas of Spain he gained control of during Spain's civil war (1936–39)
- 1937 ● Admiral Horthy's regime in Hungary becomes an authoritarian dictatorship
- 1938 ● Romania becomes a monarchical dictatorship under King Carol

What made dictatorship possible?

The end of World War I was accompanied by the collapse of the autocratic regimes of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia and the Ottoman Empire. By mid-1918, Russia was in the throes of civil war, while from 1920 the Ottoman Empire experienced a nationalist revolution. However, the new nations that appeared in 1919, from the Baltic states through to Poland, Czechoslovakia and south-eastern Europe, quickly followed the lead of the more established democracies in Scandinavia and western Europe. These states had new constitutions, which had been drawn up on modern, liberal principles. It would almost seem that democracy had become the accepted form of government. However, this apparent triumph of democratic principles did not last. Source 2.2 summarises the factors that helped give rise to the spread of dictatorship after World War I.



SOURCE 2.2 Factors contributing to the rise of dictatorships after World War I

The pre-war situation

The years leading up to World War I are often viewed as an idyllic period of peace, progress and cultural vitality. To an extent this is true; Europe had not witnessed a continent-wide war for almost a century. However, just beneath the surface, developments were occurring that after the war would coalesce to weaken the chance of effective democracy.

Inter-war dictatorships were in large part the result of mass politics. In the decades before the war, Europe's population grew rapidly, particularly in the industrial cities. Life became increasingly technological. The spread of education and the franchise meant people were becoming more politicised and less inclined to accept the dictates of their 'betters'. This was seen in the mass strike action that took place in countries like Britain and Germany.

In the nineteenth century there was progress towards more representative parliamentary government, but this was accompanied by a growing attack on that system. Marxist parties had been content to achieve their aims through social democratic parties, but on the left there was a growing desire for violent revolution. This was seen most notably in the split in the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, which saw the creation of the Bolshevik Party in 1903. Spain and France witnessed **revolutionary syndicalism** as trade unions used revolutionary methods to achieve their aims.

Far-right movements that professed racist, anti-Semitic and extreme nationalist views were beginning to appear. Writers such as the Italians Enrico Corradini and Giacomo Marinetti, who in 1909 wrote the Italian Futurist Manifesto, openly glorified war and violence. Even before 1914, minority groups, particularly Jews, were under attack in eastern Europe and Russia. Millions of indigenous people were killed in places like the Congo, Togo and south-west Africa as European colonialists pursued their exploitation of these regions.

“ ... Far from experiencing underlying stability before 1914, Europe was therefore seething with unresolved problems and tensions. These were subsumed in 1914 by the greater emergency of war, only to re-emerge, considerably strengthened in the peace that followed ... ”

Stephen J Lee, *European Dictatorships 1918–1945*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2010, p. 8

revolutionary syndicalism

A form of revolutionary trade unionism that sought to have workers own and control the economy, and so ultimately gain workers' political control

The impact of World War I

World War I had a decisive impact on the development of dictatorships. In Russia it brought on revolution, and it briefly had the same impact in Germany and Hungary as well. The war destroyed economies, mobilised the masses and revealed governments unable to cope. Governments became accustomed to using authoritarian powers.

“ ... Political as well as cultural liberalism was destabilised and discredited while the authoritarian national influence grew. Citizens' rights were limited, the economy controlled. The adoption of politically organised mass propaganda and enormous mobilisation of the people in connection with the war facilitated the de-individualisation and collectivisation of society ... ”

Gerhard Besier and Katarzyna Stokłosa, *European Dictatorships: A Comparative History of the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge Scholars, Newcastle, 2013, p. 8

In some ways the war acted as an accelerator for developments that were already occurring. However, the war also added a new element. For all their faults, the pre-war dynastic regimes had been fairly peaceful and civilised, but the war brought a brutalisation to public life. After the war, it was impossible to divorce the violence and sheer brutality of the battlefield from wider society. Returning veterans could not simply erase from their minds the brutalisation of their training and the savagery of their existence at the front. At home, people had been fed hate-filled propaganda for more than four years. That could not be forgotten overnight.

Pre-war Germany was essentially a non-violent society. Though widely differing political ideas existed, these differences were argued out without resorting to violence. After 1918, things were different. The Reichstag became an arena where political opponents hurled abusive insults, shouted down speakers and showed contempt for one another. On the streets, organised gangs of thugs indulged in a frenzy of violence. For example, Richard Evans, a historian of Germany, noted that:

“ ... fights and brawls became commonplace, and beatings-up and assassinations were widely used. Those who carried out these acts of violence were not only former soldiers but also included men in their late teens and twenties who had been too young to fight in the war themselves and for whom civil violence became a way of legitimising themselves in the face of the powerful myth of the older generation of front-soldiers ... ”

Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, Penguin, London, 2003, pp. 72–3

- 1 How widespread were democratic governments across Europe in the early 1920s?
- 2 What happened to the role of government during the war? Why do you think this happened?
- 3 How did the violence of the wartime battlefield affect politics in many postwar European countries?
- 4 Compare the practice of politics in Germany before and after the war.

The impact of the 1919 Paris Peace Settlement

Debate has raged for a century about the justice or otherwise of the Paris Peace Settlement. As early as 1920, prominent British economist John Maynard Keynes was arguing about the injustice and unworkability of the reparations settlement. German commentators, unsurprisingly, railed against the unjust, slave Treaty of Versailles. Modern writers such as Jürgen Tampke (2017) have argued that in fact the peace settlement was by no means as harsh as earlier writers tried to argue.

However, two things cannot be denied. Firstly, there were many who perceived the peace settlement to be unfair. The impact of Versailles on the Weimar Republic and the rise of Hitler will be dealt with in chapter 3. Italy felt cheated. It had lost over half a million men in the war; promises that had been made to it in the 1915 Treaty of London were not kept. Dissatisfaction over the peace settlement was a key factor assisting Mussolini's rise to power. Similarly, Japan, which had fought on the side of the Allies, left the Paris Peace Conference rebuffed. True, Japan had gained former German concessions in China and colonies in the northern Pacific as League of Nations mandate territories. However, the rejection of Japan's request that a racial equality clause be included in the Treaty of Versailles was a disappointment. Some historians, such as Margaret MacMillan, argue that this rejection turned Japan towards more nationalistic foreign policy.

Secondly, the peace settlement completely redrew the map of eastern and southern Europe. An attempt had been made to align the new states that came into existence with the principle of self-determination. Instead, all the new states contained notable minority groups. These groups were disaffected, and were resented by the dominant national groups in each country, as was the case in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. In addition, the economic unity of pre-war central and eastern Europe disappeared with the collapse of Austria-Hungary, and the new states vied for economic viability in cutthroat economic competition. These new states became increasingly unstable as the 1920s headed towards the Great Depression, leaving them susceptible to political extremism.

The threat of communism

The threat of communism, both perceived and imagined, was a significant factor in the emergence of dictatorships in Europe during the interwar years. Immediately following the Russian Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Russian communists advocated a world revolution. Spurred on by the Russian model, a number of communist-inspired revolts occurred, most notably in Hungary in 1919, while others sought to mirror the establishment of soldiers' and workers' councils, soviets, in Germany and Italy as precursors to revolution. Conservatives and, as the postwar period progressed, fascists feared this communist revolution because of the threat it posed to private property and the nation. As a result, communists were frequently targeted as opponents of authoritarian regimes.

Europe's constitutions and the political process

As the war drew to a close and the process of peacemaking began, demand for constitutional reform spread across Europe, and the new states eagerly studied the systems of nations like Britain, the United States and Switzerland. The new constitutions declared that they were democratic, republican and national in character. The constitution of Lithuania's opening sentence stated: 'The state of Lithuania is an independent democratic republic'. Austria declared itself a 'democratic republic'.

However, these constitutions often contained a flaw that would harm the development of democracy. Sovereignty was usually said to rest 'in the people'. Many of these new constitutions stated that sovereignty rested 'in the nation'. This begged the question: what was the nation? For countries like France or Britain or Sweden, this was not an issue as their nations were generally ethnically homogeneous. But what did it mean for states with sizeable minorities, such as Poland, Czechoslovakia or Romania? These countries were home to large groups that were not seen as part of the nation. Such groups had much less stake in the democracy than the predominant group.

proportional representation

An electoral system in which the percentage of seats in parliament that a political party receives is equal to the percentage of votes it receives in an election

The new states were eager to embrace true democratic values in their constitutions. As a result, nearly all European constitutions contained provisions for **proportional representation**. Such a system of representation is inherently fair; if a political party gains 35 per cent of the vote, it should have 35 per cent of the seats in parliament. However, this also means that if a party gains 10, 5 or 2 per cent, it should still get its fair share of representatives. This led to massively fragmented legislatures.

- In 1929, 19 parties gained seats in the Czech parliament.
- In the 1922 election in Poland, 12 parties gained seats in the Sejm (the lower house), while 15 parties gained seats in the Senate (the upper house). Poland's parties were often 'class' or 'ethnically' based, such as 'The Radical Peasant Party', 'The National Workers' Party', 'The Polish Centre', 'The Ukrainian Group' and the 'Bloc of National Minorities'.

This system of proportional representation considerably weakened the Weimar Republic in Germany (see chapter 3).

The situation was made worse because the parties did not come to represent the nation, but rather, narrow sectional interests. There were parties for peasants, for the middle class, for artisans, for Catholics, for specific regions of a country, for different ethnic groups. Thus, national parliaments did not work to bring the country together; instead, they managed to magnify its divisions. Historian Mark Mazower illustrates the impact of ethnic conflict in the case of Yugoslavia, noting that:

“ ... To see deputies hurling chairs as well as insults at each other was not uncommon; in the extreme case in the Belgrade Skupstina in 1928, a Serbian MP shot dead the Croat Peasant Party leader at point blank range, leading King Alexander to suspend parliamentary business and revoke the constitution ... ”

Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*, Penguin, London, 1998, p. 17



SOURCE 2.3 Following the assassination of a Croat nationalist leader, King Alexander I of Yugoslavia established a dictatorship that endured until his own assassination in 1934.

King Alexander's actions did him little good in the long run. He was assassinated by a Croat extremist in 1934.

The proliferation of political parties in each nation's parliament made effective government almost impossible. In a 'first past the post' system like Britain's, a two-party political system evolved. Within each of the two major parties, there were different groups and interests. However, these different interest groups were usually prepared to compromise in order to present a united face to the electorate; failure to do this meant almost certain electoral defeat.

In a proportional representation system, especially one in which all parties that receive votes gain seats in parliament, there is no incentive to compromise. Indeed, the opposite is the case, as each party emphasises its specific image to maximise its vote. Compromise, therefore, comes after the election. The constitutional process works as follows:

- The constitutions of the new European states ensured that coalition governments became the norm.
- There is no reason why a coalition cannot operate successfully, as many post-World War II European nations have shown. However, in the 1920s, the creation of these coalition governments became an unseemly grab for power and privilege as a crude process of horse-trading followed each election.

- In effect, the democratic process seemed to exist not to deal with a nation's problems, but merely to put together a government.
- Not surprisingly, the governmental process was extremely unstable and governments, prime ministers and cabinets came and went through a revolving door of appointments.

This process had two key results. Firstly, it meant that effective government was very difficult, particularly when economic conditions worsened, as each group made demands for its own interest group. Secondly, the public perception of democracy became one of a system that served only those in the political game, and that could not grapple with a nation's issues. In many countries, this led to a desire for someone or something that could transcend all the petty bickering and put the nation first. These conditions are conducive to the rise of authoritarian leaders who are able to present a strong image and promise the people that they will get things done.



Alamy Stock Photo/age fotostock

SOURCE 2.4 Józef Piłsudski was instrumental in the reestablishment of an independent Poland after World War I. He dominated Polish politics until his death in 1935.

- 1 Outline Italy's reaction to the Peace Settlement. How did this reaction affect the Italian government?
- 2 How did the issue of national minorities complicate the writing of constitutions for the new states that appeared in Europe after 1919?
- 3 What is proportional representation? Why is it a very fair system? Why does it often not work in practice?

The importance of personalities

However, politics is not just about systems; it is about people. Democracies can navigate through significant crises if they are blessed with strong, talented, popular and sometimes charismatic leaders. In the United States, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt steered their nation through civil war, depression and world war. Britain in 1940 had Winston Churchill, who sustained the national will during the war against Germany even when all seemed lost. In 1958, France had Charles de Gaulle to pull the nation together when it seemed to be falling apart.

The tragedy of Europe in the 1920s and early 1930s was that there were no democratic leaders of any great stature. Germany had Gustav Stresemann, an able diplomat and a shrewd political operator who was able to act as a glue to keep the Weimar Republic's governments together, but charisma he did not have. Instead, the great personalities of the inter-war period were ardent critics of democracy, men who sought to undermine the democratic system and develop their own

personal power. They were men who offered simple solutions to complex problems, who succeeded in tempting the masses to follow their lead. These men were able to present themselves as being above class, above sectional interest; as men who would place the nation first. Hitler and Mussolini are the obvious examples, but there were others, such as Piłsudski in Poland, Primo de Rivera and Franco in Spain, and Dollfuss in Austria.

The role of economics

Economics also played a role in undermining liberal democracy and encouraging the move towards dictatorship in Europe. It would be wrong to say that the postwar economic crises directly brought on dictatorship, though in some countries would-be dictators certainly seized the opportunity presented by economic distress. It would be more accurate to argue that economic crises accelerated the transition from a liberal democratic system to a form of dictatorship.

Democracies in western European countries managed to survive the worst of the Depression. The period from the end of the war until the early 1930s was one of economic malaise, punctuated by an uneven burst of prosperity in the mid-1920s – one that rested on the most insecure foundations. Britain and France both experienced a short-lived postwar boom, which was swiftly followed by a recession. Economic growth in the 1920s was only modest, as European economies were unable to reassert their dominance in international trade, having been supplanted by the United States. The protectionist policies of the United States during the 1920s, which were copied by all nations except Britain, all but ensured that international trade would fail to reach its pre-war levels. Any improvement that Britain and France were making collapsed with the onset of the Depression. Despite this, neither nation succumbed to the lure of dictatorship.

Italy suffered an immediate major economic decline after the war. The country's dire economic circumstances were a key factor in the collapse of parliamentary democracy, and in bringing Mussolini to power. The catastrophic impact of the Depression on Japan was crucial in bringing about authoritarian rule there. Economic issues in Russia were bound up with the civil war and the Bolshevik Party's desperate struggle to cling to power and pursue its goal of creating socialism. Germany's economic fortunes were bound up with reparations, hyperinflation and its reliance on US loans (see chapter 3).

Europe's prosperity in the 1920s was closely tied to the fortunes of the United States. Vast amounts of American money poured into Europe, particularly Germany, but borrowing rates were at least 2 per cent higher than normal rates. US investment made investment in new plant and machinery possible, but this resulted in high **structural unemployment**, even before the Depression. By the mid-1920s, most countries had returned to **the gold standard** in the hope of stabilising the international economic system, but this did not happen, as the system had been harmed by America's accumulation of most of the world's gold reserves. Europe's economic reliance on the United States meant that any crisis that occurred across the Atlantic could have a catastrophic impact on European economies.

The Great Depression began in 1929. However, a world agricultural depression was already in full swing by 1926, as prices for farm products collapsed due to overproduction. This particularly affected the nations of eastern and southern Europe, as their agricultural sectors were larger than those of western Europe. The collapse of agriculture lowered national income and reduced the people's spending power, and so a downward economic spiral developed, even before the Great Depression.

structural unemployment

The form of unemployment that occurs when an economy moves from one system of production to a more mechanised form, requiring less labour, or when one industry declines as another gradually takes its place

the gold standard

A system of currency regulation that makes it possible for a country's paper currency to be exchanged for gold

TABLE 2.1 European dictatorships of the interwar period

| COUNTRY | DURATION | KEY LEADER | TYPE OF DICTATORSHIP |
|---------------------|-----------|--|---|
| Russia/Soviet Union | 1917–1991 | Lenin (1917–1924) Stalin (1928–1953) | Communist |
| Hungary | 1919–1944 | Admiral Horthy | Conservative authoritarian |
| Italy | 1922–1943 | Benito Mussolini | Fascist |
| Bulgaria | 1923–1944 | Alexander Tsankov | Conservative authoritarian, from 1934 royal dictatorship |
| Spain | 1923–1930 | General Miguel Primo de Rivera | Conservative authoritarian, with agreement of king |
| Turkey | 1923–1938 | Gazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha (Atatürk) | One-party state, effective personal dictatorship |
| Albania | 1925–1940 | Ahmed Zogo | Conservative authoritarian, first republic, monarch from 1928 |
| Poland | 1926–1929 | Marshal Józef Piłsudski | Military dictatorship with parliamentary facade |
| Portugal | 1926–1975 | Manuel de Oliveira (1926–1932) Antonio Salazar (1932–1975) | Conservative authoritarian |
| Yugoslavia | 1929–1941 | King Alexander I King Peter II | Royal dictatorship |
| Lithuania | 1929–1940 | Antanas Smetona | Nationalist single-party state |
| Romania | 1930–1941 | King Carol II | Royal dictatorship |
| Germany | 1933–1945 | Adolf Hitler | Nazi dictatorship |
| Austria | 1933–1937 | Engelbert Dollfuss (1933–1934) Kurt Schuschnigg (1934–1938) | Conservative dictatorship |
| Estonia | 1934–1940 | Konstantin Päts | Conservative dictatorship |
| Latvia | 1934–1940 | Karlis Ulmanis | Conservative dictatorship |
| Greece | 1935–1941 | General J Kondylis (1935) General I Metaxas (1936–1941) | Military-royal regime |
| Spain | 1936–1975 | General Francisco Franco | Military dictatorship, with fascist cooperation |

- 1 Name three European countries that did not succumb to dictatorship despite the catastrophe brought on by the Great Depression.
- 2 Imagine you were a worker living in eastern or southern Europe in the late 1920s/early 1930s. Outline the reasons why you might have been attracted to a dictatorial form of government.



SOURCE 2.5 Democracies and dictatorships – Europe on the eve of World War II

Dictatorship in Italy: An overview

Italy after World War I



In the period immediately after World War I, Italy faced a host of enormous problems. The economy was on the point of collapse. Unemployment was high, made worse by the return of hundreds of thousands of demobilised soldiers. Lack of power and raw materials only served to worsen Italy's collapsing trade and industry. Agriculture had been in decline for decades. Poverty and illiteracy remained widespread. In 1919, violent industrial strife swept the industrial north. As the government attempted to provide unemployment relief, bread subsidies and assistance to failing farms and industry, the nation's budget deficit and inflation were careering out of control.

Italy had entered World War I in 1915 hoping to make territorial gains in the event of an Allied victory. However, unlike other European nations, Italy did not enter the war united – the socialists never supported the move. Poorly led, ill-equipped and suffering low morale, Italy experienced years of attrition warfare, culminating in the disastrous defeat in the Battle of Caporetto in October 1917. By the end of the war the country had lost more than 500 000 men. The promises of territorial gains made to Italy in the 1915 Treaty of London were largely ignored at the Paris Peace Conference, and the prevailing view in the country was that Italy's enormous sacrifices during the war had been for nothing. Italy had gained a 'mutilated victory', and this fuelled Italian nationalist anger, as seen during the D'Annunzio and Fiume affair.

D'Annunzio and Fiume

At the Paris Peace Conference, the port of Fiume (modern-day Rijeka in Croatia) was handed to the new state of Yugoslavia. Italians were outraged by this decision, as Fiume's population was two-thirds Italian. They believed that the town belonged to Italy, and that giving Fiume to Yugoslavia went totally against US President Wilson's principle of national self-determination. At this moment, one of Italy's most romantic figures, the poet and dashing air-force pilot Gabriele D'Annunzio, took things into his own hands. He gathered together a band of about 300 followers, and in September 1919 occupied Fiume. He was soon joined by more than 2000 regular Italian troops.



Getty Images/Alinari Archives

SOURCE 2.6 Gabriele D'Annunzio, the leader of the Fiume Regency, in discussion with an Italian army officer in 1919.

D'Annunzio established a 'regency' over Fiume, expecting the Italian government to back his venture and seize Fiume for Italy. In the meantime, he appointed himself as 'commandant'. The occupation of Fiume aroused Italian nationalism, and in some quarters D'Annunzio was compared to Garibaldi and his 'redshirts', whose daring exploits in the nineteenth century did much to bring about Italian unification. In November 1920, Italy and Yugoslavia signed the Treaty of Rapallo, which designated Fiume as a 'free city' with land links to Italy. D'Annunzio, rather flamboyantly, declared war on Italy but eventually surrendered the next month.

D'Annunzio's showmanship and use of nationalism was not lost on Mussolini. Fiume would become a cause for Italian fascists to fight for, and once in power, Mussolini annexed the city in 1924.

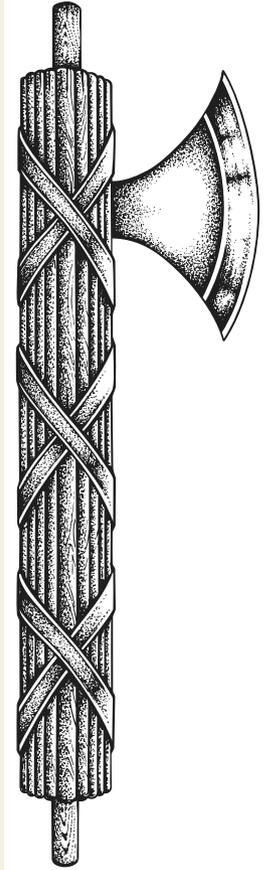
Italy's democratic government proved totally unable to deal with the issues the country was facing. Political instability had long been a problem for Italy, as governments and prime ministers came and went with frequent regularity. The Socialists were the largest party in the Italian parliament, but, scared of losing working-class support, they refused to enact much-needed austerity policies to bring the budget into line. The country was beset with political paralysis as socialists, liberals and Catholics found it impossible to form any working coalition. By 1920 the country seemed to be descending into chaos, and there were real fears of a possible communist revolt as workers' **soviets** sprang up all over Italy.

soviets

Workers' and soldiers' councils that appeared across Russia in 1917 after the fall of the tsar. In October 1917, the Bolshevik party claimed it was seizing power in the name of the soviets.

What is fascism?

Defining fascism is an enduring challenge for politicians, historians and political scientists. The problem is complicated further by the everyday use of the term to refer to almost any form of oppressive or dictatorial use of power.



Shutterstock.com/D.R.3D

SOURCE 2.7 The term 'fascist' is derived from the Latin word *fasces*, meaning the bundle of rods that signified authority in ancient Rome. The symbolism was adopted by the Italian Fascist Party to signify unity and authority. Other fascist movements adopted similar symbols.



imagefolk/Mary Evans/Maria Memorial Library

SOURCE 2.8 Sir Oswald Mosley, 'the Leader' of the British Union of Fascists, with Benito Mussolini in Rome, 1933. While each fascist movement developed distinct characteristics based on their national preoccupations, their shared concerns fostered a level of camaraderie and mutual support.

In its narrowest sense, Fascism – note the capital F – means the Italian Fascist Party. However, fascism – lower case f – refers to the generic political movement that shares a common set of values, style, outlook and ideology, which first emerged on a wide scale after World War I. During the interwar decades most European nations had at least one political movement that could be considered fascist.

Roger Griffin is one of the most influential modern historians writing on the nature of fascism. Drawing on a range of earlier historians, such as Stanley Payne, George Mosse and Emilio Gentile, Griffin argues that isolating the nature of fascist ideology is fraught with difficulty, because to create a definition of it immediately ignores the particular circumstances that gave rise to it. Unlike communism, and even liberalism, fascism did not have a major theorist to provide the ideology with any coherence. To argue that fascism has any such coherence, suggests Griffin, is especially perverse 'given that the rhetoric of fascism openly attacked party-political programmes, celebrated violence and irrational values, and justified the systematic use of state terrorism'.¹



**TABLE 2.2** Major fascist parties of the interwar years

| COUNTRY | PARTY | LEADER | FOUNDED |
|----------------|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| Italy | <i>Partito Nazionale Fascista (PNF)</i> | Benito Mussolini | 1919 |
| Germany | National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazis) | Adolf Hitler | 1919 |
| Austria | Fatherland Front | Engelbert Dollfuss, Kurt Schuschnigg | 1934 |
| Belgium | Rex <i>Vlaamsch Nationaal Verbond</i> | Léon Degrelle Staf de Clercq | 1930 1933 |
| France | <i>Faisceau</i> <i>Jeunesses Patriotes</i> <i>Solidarité française</i> <i>Francistes</i> <i>Partei Populaire Français</i> | Georges Valois Pierre Taittinger François Coty Marcel Bucard Jacques Doriot | 1923 1924 1923 1933 1936 |
| Hungary | Arrow Cross | Ferenc Szálasi | 1935 |
| Ireland | <i>Na Léinte Gorma</i> | Eoin O'Duffy | 1932 |
| Portugal | National Syndicalists | Francisco Rolão Preto | 1932 (dissolved 1934) |
| Romania | Iron Guard | Corneliu Codreanu | 1927 |
| Norway | <i>Nasjonal Samling</i> | Vidkun Quisling | 1933 |
| Spain | Falange | José Antonio Primo de Rivera | 1934 (dissolved 1937) |
| Sweden | Swedish National Socialist Party | Birger Furugård | 1930 |
| United Kingdom | British Fascisti Imperial Fascist League British Union of Fascists | Rotha Lintorn-Orman Arnold Leese Sir Oswald Mosley | 1923 1928 1932 |

Griffin further argues that to impose a coherent set of ideas on fascism is misleading, because to do so ignores the concrete events that made up the real nature of fascism.

Griffin does, however, provide us with a list of features that, combined, create a framework for understanding what constitutes fascism. He argues that fascism can be understood by its core myth, i.e. the idea of revolution to achieve national rebirth. Griffin calls this rebirth 'palingenesis'. What follows is a summary of the features that Griffin has isolated.

- For the national community to be reborn, liberalism in all its forms must be rejected. Hence, fascism has no room for the notions of tolerance, individualism and parliamentary democracy.
- However, fascism is also anti-conservative. Thus, rebirth perhaps should be referred to as new birth, a new order. It draws inspiration from the past but is not aiming to turn the clock back.
- Fascism contains a charismatic element. This does not mean that fascism must involve the development of a personality cult, but Griffin suggests that the charismatic factor cannot be dismissed. In his use of the term 'charismatic', Griffin specifically means that a fascist leader is able to inspire their followers in the belief that their views are transformative. This is especially relevant to both Italy and Germany, as the charismatic element was pivotal not only in gaining power but also in the continuing exercise of that power.
- Fascism is anti-rational. It rejects the notion of reason emanating from the Enlightenment and instead glories in the notions of myth, heroism, self-sacrifice and the role of the leader in the pursuit of national rebirth.





- A fascist version of socialism exists. This is not the international and materialist socialism of Marx, but rather includes the notions of transcending class, destroying hierarchies and removing parasites from society.
- Fascism seeks to create a coordinated, homogeneous national community as a solution to the problems faced by the state. Such a 'total' state would exercise complete power over its citizens: in essence, totalitarianism.
- The total element means that support for fascism is heterogeneous, i.e. it does not rely on one social class or group within the nation for support. Rather, all groups, rich and poor, urban and rural, well-educated and poorly educated, can share in the pursuit of national rebirth.
- The goal of national rebirth, with its glorification of the past (though without the desire to return to the past), means that fascism is racist. This does not mean that fascism is inherently genocidal. Rather, it indicates a desire to cleanse society of 'immigrants' and return them whence they came.
- Given its preoccupation with achieving its goal of national rebirth, fascism is anti-internationalist. However, this did not preclude a form of 'fascist internationalism', in which fascists of different nations seeking their own version of national rebirth could cooperate with each other.
- Fascism is eclectic. This means that it is able to absorb ideas and theories from a wide range of sources, even if these ideas and theories are incompatible with each other. All that matters is that the various ideas ultimately seek the mythic fascist goal of palingenesis.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What is the difference between 'Fascism' and 'fascism'?
- 2 Why is it difficult to isolate the nature of fascist ideology?
- 3 What is meant by the term 'palingenesis'?
- 4 Identify the fascist view of liberalism.
- 5 Explain the charismatic element of fascism.
- 6 How does fascism's anti-rational nature manifest itself?
- 7 Is fascism totalitarian in its essence? Why?
- 8 To what extent can fascism be seen as racist?

Mussolini comes to power

As the threat of a communist takeover increased in Italy during 1920, groups of nationalist-minded Italians, many of them World War I veterans, began to organise to prevent this. One of these groups was the *Fascio di combattimento*, formed in Milan in 1919 by Benito Mussolini. Fascist combat groups, wearing their distinctive black shirts – a contrast to Garibaldi's red shirts – sprang up across the country and fought their socialist/communist/trade union enemies.

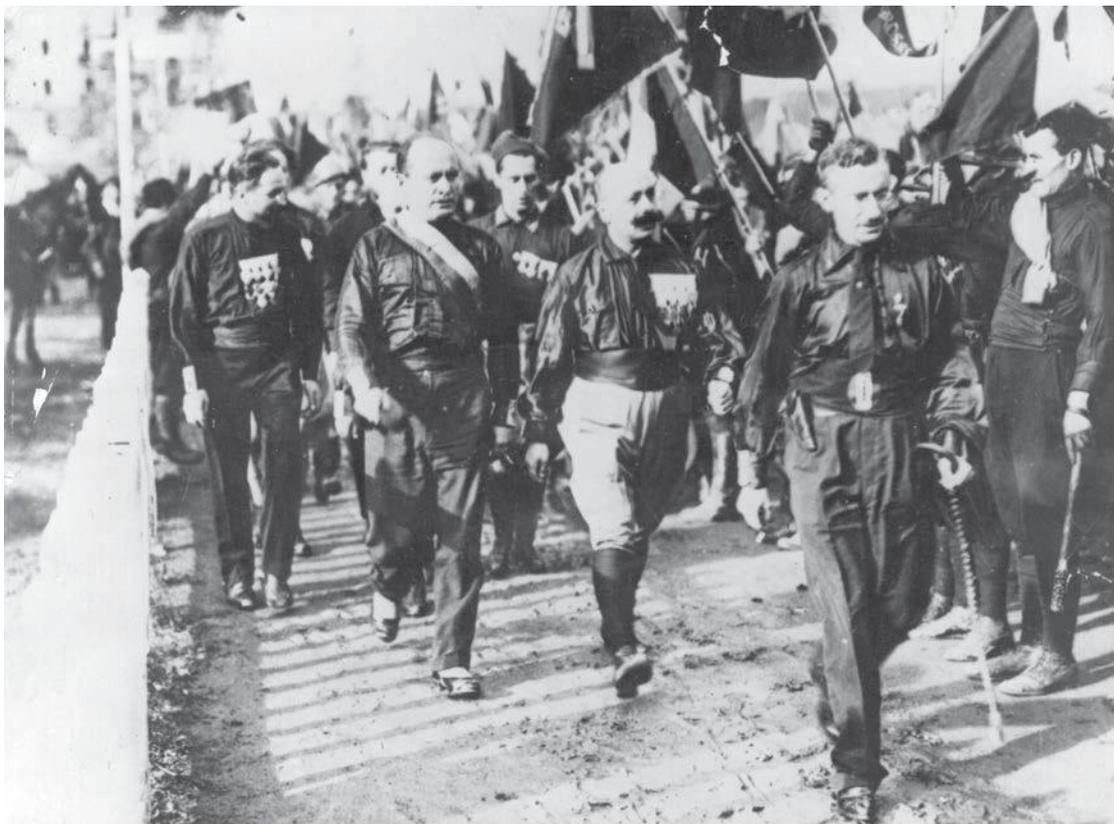
Mussolini's paramilitary squads had at first supported the workers, but very soon they were being pressured by landlords and industrialists, in an ever-increasingly violent campaign, to break the strike movement. Mussolini realised he could not defeat the socialists and the communists by trying to win over the same working-class groups that supported them. He needed the backing of men with money and influence, not just street thugs. He forged links with conservative power brokers, who financed his party and his newspaper, *Popolo d'Italia*. Ian Kershaw explains the coming together of these two unlikely allies:

“ ... His [Mussolini’s] brand of radicalism – the emphasis on national unity, authority and order, the readiness to impose order through violence against those who stood in its way (the socialist Left, revolutionaries, striking workers) – was not only compatible with the interests of the conservative ruling class, but directly served them. With order breaking down and the liberal state incapable of restoring it, the Fascists became an increasingly useful vehicle for Italy’s political and economic elites ... ”

Ian Kershaw, *To Hell and Back: Europe 1914–1949*, Penguin, St Ives, 2016, p. 137

Mussolini’s road to power was rapid.

- By 1922, the country was in chaos, violence was endemic and the Fascists were growing stronger. The Chamber of Deputies was totally divided, and unable to enforce any measure to deal with the situation.
- In October 1922, Prime Minister Giolitti resigned.
- Though the Fascists had only 35 of the 535 deputies in the Chamber, Mussolini ordered 30 000 of his black shirts to ‘march on Rome’ and demand that Mussolini be appointed prime minister.
- The government caved in and 400 non-Fascist deputies voted to support Mussolini. The king then invited Mussolini to form a government.
- Parliament voted to give Mussolini full powers for a year, and he proceeded to alter electoral laws to favour the Fascist Party. Following the 1924 election, the Fascists gained total control of the legislature. Soon the Fascist Party was Italy’s only political party.



Getty Images/Hulton Archive

SOURCE 2.9 While Mussolini did not actually participate in the March on Rome, staged photographs show him marching with Fascist Blackshirts for the final entry into the city.



LONG-TERM POLITICAL INSTABILITY
 Between 1860 and 1922, Italy had 38 governments. Francesco Crispi tried and failed to bring in authoritarian government in the 1890s, while Giovanni Giolitti failed to develop mass democracy. 'It is no exaggeration to say that Giolitti's failure to launch Italy on the path of a representative mass democracy in the pre-war years helped open the way for Mussolini and fascism in the post-war period.'²

THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR I
 War expenditure amounted to twice that of all governments from 1860 to 1913. The end of the war brought massive unemployment and inflation, which led to a struggle between labour and capital. Meanwhile the lower middle class became impoverished and increasingly radical. As in Germany, the appeal of a strong right-wing force was great.

THE POLITICAL FALLOUT OF WORLD WAR I
 Italian politics was split to the point of paralysis over the war. The only feasible government was a linking of the Socialists (PSI) and the Catholic grouping, the Italian Popular Party (PPI), which proved impossible. As political violence grew, the king and Prime Minister Facta considered martial law, but feared army desertions and the possibility of civil war.



THE EMERGENCE OF A FASCIST MOVEMENT
 Elements of the far left and far right shared a disdain for liberal Italian politics. Left syndicalist and right nationalist groups, Revolutionary Action Groups (*Fasci di Azione Rivoluzionaria*), campaigned for entry into the war. The disillusionment felt after the war, along with political and economic chaos saw the radical left and right link up into the fascist movement.

THE APPEAL OF FASCISM
 In the chaos of postwar Italy, Fascism appealed to many groups. These included war veterans, the army and the police, who sought order. The lower middle class feared being dragged down, and sought a brake on both big business and the socialists. In the countryside, landlords sought action against peasant strikers, while peasants owning small plots sought protection against socialist plans for collectivising land. Industrialists, not surprisingly, approved of fascist violence against striking workers.

MUSSOLINI
 Mussolini did much to bring some centralised organisational efficiency to the movement. He proved to be opportunistic, pragmatic and a man of action, which allowed him to take advantage of Italy's postwar chaos. His willingness to 'bluff' worked for him at this time. These things combined to suggest that fascism might indeed be the answer to Italy's troubles.

SOURCE 2.10 Factors contributing to Fascism's accession to power in Italy

BENITO MUSSOLINI (1883–1945)

The son of a blacksmith and a teacher, Benito Mussolini became a school teacher in 1901. Shortly after, he fled to Switzerland to avoid military service. During this time he became increasingly politically active. From 1909 he worked for the Italian Socialist Party, editing a weekly newspaper. While influenced by a range of non-socialist thinkers, Mussolini considered himself a Marxist and was an influential member of the party. During World War I he broke with the Socialist Party and became an advocate for Italian involvement in the conflict, serving briefly in the army before being injured in 1917. Mussolini's ideological development combined varieties of socialism with nationalism and by the war's end had synthesised into the ideological underpinnings of Italian Fascism, the movement he founded in Milan in 1919.

From his appointment as Prime Minister in 1922, Mussolini remained the dominant figure of Italian Fascism. Unlike Hitler, Mussolini was actively involved in a broad range of aspects of the state's domestic policy and maintained a façade of engagement throughout the period of his rule. Mussolini also sought to portray himself as hypermasculine and dynamic in a way that was

markedly different to Hitler. He would readily pose on horseback, perhaps to disguise his lack of height, enjoyed being photographed with the Italian King Victor Emmanuel, because the monarch was short, shaved his head to conceal his greying hair and would happily pose without a shirt. Despite their differences in style, Mussolini and Hitler maintained a close relationship.

In 1943, as Allied forces invaded Italy, Mussolini was dismissed by the Fascist Grand Council and imprisoned. He was later rescued by German paratroopers. With Hitler's support, Mussolini was made leader of German-occupied northern Italy, known as the Salò Republic, for the remainder of the war. Mussolini was killed by anti-Fascist partisans in April 1945.



Alamy Stock Photo/Paul Feann



Getty Images/Johann Bild

SOURCE 2.11 Mussolini's public persona placed great emphasis on his manly virility, as this shirtless skiing photograph attests.

- 1 Construct a paragraph describing the disastrous state of Italy immediately after World War I. Include the following terms: World War I, Paris Peace Settlement, Fiume, economics.
- 2 Outline the ease with which Mussolini was able to attain power.

The Italian dictatorship

In 1925, Mussolini stated: 'Everything in the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state.' The Fascist Party's chief theorist and Education Minister, Giovanni Gentile, talked about a 'totalitarian state' that aimed to embrace all elements of society and embody the national will. The state would determine the life of the people from cradle to grave, it would create a 'new man' imbued with Fascist principles, and a 'new woman' dedicated to the home and the production of babies. **Il Duce's** thoughts would become the people's thoughts as the tentacles of the Fascist Party stretched across the nation. The Fascist ideal never quite matched the reality of life in inter-war Italy, but as Source 2.12 indicates, the key features of the Italian dictatorship attempted to turn the nation in the direction of totalitarianism.



Mussolini

Il Duce

From Italian, meaning the Leader, the title Mussolini took for himself



Opposition to the Fascist Party was quickly removed. Hundreds were arrested, many more fled Italy. There was no freedom of press. A political police ensured constant surveillance by citizens who were willing to denounce potential opponents. However, domestic suppression in Italy was far less than existed in Germany or Russia.

Ever since Italy seized Rome in 1870, relations with the Catholic Church had been sour. In 1929, Mussolini signed the Lateran Accord, which brought the dispute to an end. The Pope now recognised the Italian state, while Mussolini's regime agreed to the creation of an independent Vatican State on 109 acres in Rome. The church was compensated with \$100 million for lost land. A Concordat recognised the Catholic religion as the religion of the Italian state.

Mussolini managed to coopt the traditional power bases of the Italian state for the Fascist cause. Once his power had been consolidated and the threat of socialism destroyed, the power elites of the state – the monarchy, the church, the leaders of industry, landowners, military and naval leaders – were more than happy to support the regime.

One of the principal reasons for the lack of dissent was the personal popularity of Mussolini. He was forgiven the early violence, even the murder of the socialist Matteoti in 1924. A cult of personality was developed around the nation's leader, *Il Duce*.



By 1929, Mussolini had introduced what he called 'the Corporate State'. Representation in parliament based on geography was replaced by the introduction of 13 corporations – six of employers, six of employees and one of professional people. Despite the claims, the Corporate State had destroyed democracy and ultimately placed all power in the hands of Mussolini. The principal purpose of the corporations was to establish harmony between capital and labour, and thus maximise the country's potential. For all the propaganda, the Corporate State achieved little, and living standards remained poor, especially in the south.

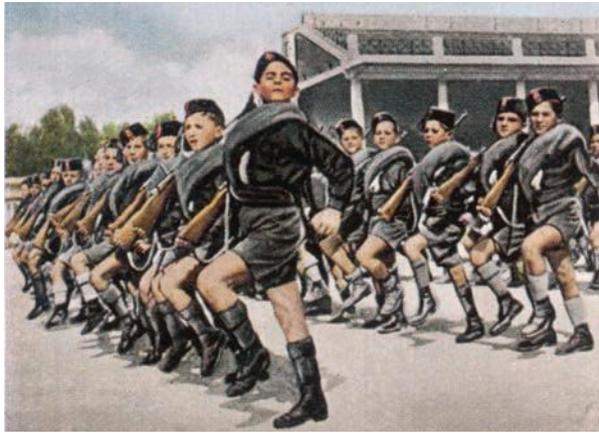
Italy's Fascist regime was far less ideologically zealous than the Nazi regime in Germany. However, from the late 1930s, greater zeal was in evidence. The fascist salute became compulsory, civil servants had to wear uniforms and the army had to goose-step. Italy even introduced anti-Jewish laws in 1938.

Fascist Italy had many admirers in the west who were impressed with the regime's vitality and dynamic nature. Many campaigns were launched to mobilise the people – for example, the battle for grain. Italy shone in the arts, sports, motor car racing and aviation, and even won the World Cup twice in the 1930s.

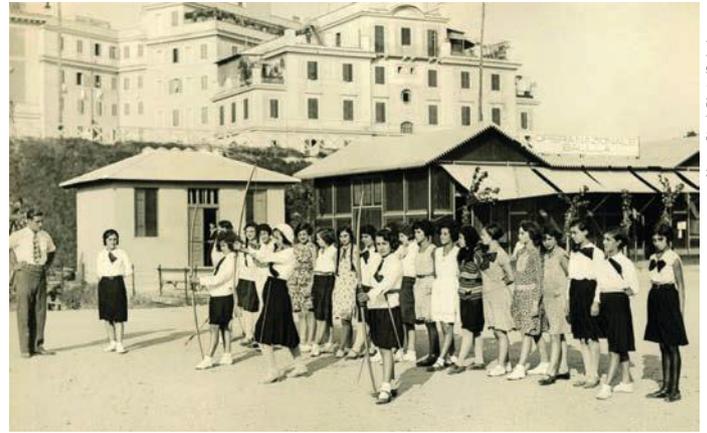
The youth were seen as of prime importance. Youth movements were created for boys, such as the *Balilla* (8–14 years), the *Avanguardia* (14–18 years) and the *Giovani Fascisti* (18–21 years), after which a man could move into the Fascist militia. Girls would move through the *Piccole Italiane* until age 12, and then the *Giovani Italiane*. A prime aim of these organisations was the inculcation of Fascist ideological thinking.

One of the prime goals of Fascism was Italian territorial expansion wherever possible. As Germany began to expand, and as Mussolini increasingly came under Hitler's spell, an aggressive foreign policy became a key element in Fascist policy. From 1935, Italy found itself in military adventures in Abyssinia, Spain and Albania.

SOURCE 2.12 The features of the Italian dictatorship



SOURCE 2.13 Members of the Balilla Italian Fascist youth movement



SOURCE 2.14 Giovani Italiane, the Italian Fascist young women's organisation

Ian Kershaw on Mussolini and Fascism

Ian Kershaw is one of Britain's leading historians, and is one of the world's most recognised authorities on Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany. His pioneering work in the 1970s and 1980s has done much to shape how people view the reality of life in 1930s Germany. In his book *To Hell and Back: Europe 1914–1949* Kershaw tries to explain the situation in Europe at this time by focusing on developments that affected the continent as a whole, rather than producing a series of separate national histories. In the extract below, Kershaw isolates the key factors that made Mussolini's rise and accession to power possible.

... The sense that the ruling oligarchy had betrayed Italy's heroic war veterans provided an initial base for Fascism's core support. The emotional appeal to nationalist commitment, to national rebirth, and to the destruction of the weak and decadent liberal state held strong attractions to many in this atmosphere of resentment, disunity, disorder and socialist revolutionary threat. Big electoral gains for a Socialist Party preaching the need for a violent seizure of power by the workers and the early growth of the Communist Party after its foundation in 1921, made the threat of revolution, so soon after the Bolshevik takeover in Russia, seem very real.

The post-war changes to the franchise had completely destabilised government. The fragmentation of politics in the centre and conservative Right, and the patent inability of the government to combat the threat that the new strength of Socialists, in the eyes of property-holders, posed, provided the political space in which Fascism could mobilise support ...

But for all its radicalism, Fascism could not have obtained domination without the support of the ruling elites, who threw in their lot with Mussolini's movement. Mussolini did not seize power; he was invited to take it. Thereafter, the conservative, monarchist, military and Church elites, fearful of Socialism, were happy to back the methods of intimidation and manipulation that, by 1925, gave Fascism close to monopoly control of the state.

Ian Kershaw, *To Hell and Back: Europe 1914–1949*, Penguin, St Ives, 2016, pp. 141–2

QUESTION

- 1 Summarise Kershaw's argument about how Mussolini was able to achieve power.

Dictatorship in Russia: An overview

The Bolshevik consolidation of power

World War I had a disastrous impact on Russia. Massive military defeats, near starvation at home, and corrupt, incompetent leadership all combined to bring down the regime of Tsar Nicholas II. Revolution broke out in Petrograd in February 1917, and in early March the tsar abdicated. For the next eight months, Russia experienced 'dual government'. A Provisional Government was formed from the Duma (parliament), but it shared power with the Soviet, comprising workers and soldiers. The Provisional Government's fundamental mistake was to continue the war against Germany. The people demanded peace, the peasants wanted land, the workers wanted bread. The Bolshevik Party leader, Lenin, skilfully manipulated these desires in his propaganda. In October 1917, in an almost bloodless coup, the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd, claiming to be acting in the name of the 'Soviet'.

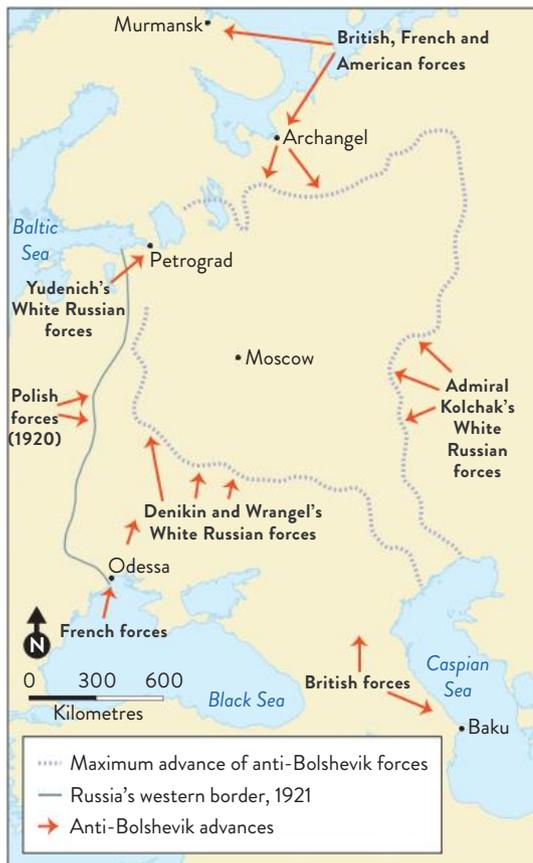
War Communism

The economic policy introduced by the Bolsheviks during the civil war. It involved the often brutal state takeover of industry, transport and food supplies to maintain the war effort of the Red Army.

The ease with which the Bolsheviks seized power belied the massive problems confronting them. Lenin's first task was to bring the war to an end, and in March 1918 Russia and Germany signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. In the first six months of Bolshevik rule, a series of populist measures was passed to ensure popular support. However, the Bolsheviks' enemies, known as the 'Whites', were gathering, and by mid-1918, Russia was in a state of all-out civil war between the 'Whites' and the 'Reds' (Bolsheviks). Though outnumbered, controlling a smaller land mass and also facing opposition from western allied powers, by early 1921, the Bolsheviks secured victory in the civil war. This was the result of Commissar of War Trotsky's superb organisation of the Bolshevik Red Army, the **War Communism** policy, terror tactics and divisions among the 'Whites'.

In March 1921, though they had triumphed in the civil war, the Bolsheviks faced a revolt from some of their most loyal supporters, the sailors of the Kronstadt naval base. Many of the sailors were of peasant origin and they were protesting against the savagery and demands of War Communism, which had left millions in the countryside starving, destitute and brutalised. This revolt was mercilessly suppressed by Trotsky's troops.

Lenin now ruled Russia unopposed, but the country was in a catastrophic state. His regime had to deal with widespread starvation, massive loss of life, economic collapse and diplomatic isolation. In response to this disastrous situation, at the 10th Party Congress in 1921 Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP), which liberalised the economy after the extremes of War Communism. NEP involved a return to small-scale capitalist enterprise, the reintroduction of markets, and allowing peasants to sell surpluses for profit. It went against Bolshevik ideology but it succeeded in reviving the economy, and within a few years Russia was on the way to recovery.



SOURCE 2.15 The Russian civil war

- 1 Construct a paragraph outlining the course of events within Russia between 1917 and 1918. Make sure you include the following events in chronological order: the Civil War, the Bolshevik coup, the abdication of the Tsar, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the February Revolution, the Provisional Government continues the war.
- 2 Identify three reasons that help explain the Bolshevik victory in the civil war.

The seeds of dictatorship sown

Victory in the civil war came at a price for the Bolsheviks. The intra-party debates and arguments that had been a feature of earlier years came to an end – the extremes of War Communism and a savage civil war did not allow for discussion. War Communism was carried out viciously; no opposition to the party's demands was allowed. Trotsky had reintroduced strict discipline and punishments into his five million-strong Red Army. Kronstadt showed the price of opposition to the party's will.

The 10th Party Congress put an end to party factions. Once the party had agreed upon a policy, no dissent was allowed. The price for disobeying this rule could be an accusation of counter-revolutionary behaviour and expulsion from the party. In December 1917, Lenin established a secret force known as the Cheka, under his trusted lieutenant, Felix Dzerzhinsky. The Cheka's purpose was to root out the Bolsheviks' enemies, and during the civil war it was responsible for a whole series of atrocities (as were White forces). It was intended to be a temporary creation, but by 1923, the Cheka had evolved into the GPU, a permanent, state-run secret police.

By the early 1920s, Russia had become a fully bureaucratic state. No post, promotion or career advance was possible without the sanction of the various party bodies. Thus, whoever controlled the party bureaucracy effectively could control the party, the country and, ultimately, the secret police. In 1922, Joseph Stalin was appointed General Secretary of the Communist (Bolshevik) Party. Stalin now held several key posts in the party bureaucracy, which gave him a great deal of power behind the scenes.



LEON TROTSKY (1879–1940)

Leon Trotsky was one of the key figures of the Bolshevik Revolution. He had his differences with the Bolshevik leader, Lenin, but by mid-1917 the two of them came together to form a strong working partnership. Ideologically, their views were converging, and Trotsky fully supported Lenin's desire to seize power. Lenin was the unquestioned leader of the party and was revered, respected and loved. However, it was Trotsky who was largely responsible for the almost-bloodless takeover, and whose efforts ensured the survival of the Bolshevik regime in the 1920s.

Lenin called for the Bolsheviks to seize power in October 1917, but Trotsky persuaded him to delay the takeover for two weeks so that the Bolshevik Party could claim it was seizing power from the Provisional Government in 'the name of the Soviet'. This would have strong popular appeal – a great advantage, as the Bolsheviks were still a minority in the country. The organisation of the

October coup was Trotsky's work, and within hours, the Bolsheviks found themselves in control of Petrograd.

Lenin appointed Trotsky as Commissar of Foreign Affairs to oversee peace negotiations with Germany. Trotsky's gambit of offering Germany 'no war, no peace' failed, and when Germany prepared to move on Petrograd, Lenin ordered peace at all costs. It came in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918.

By mid-1918, the Bolsheviks' enemies were surrounding the young regime. Trotsky was appointed Commissar of War and came into his own, transforming the rag-tag Red Guard troops into an efficient fighting machine of five million men. Against all odds, Trotsky's Red Army emerged from Russia's bloody civil war triumphant. Trotsky travelled from front to front in a specially →



Image: Bob Marx Evans Picture Library

→ fitted out train and sometimes took direct control of campaigns. His oratory rarely failed to raise troop morale. However, he was also willing to enforce the strictest forms of army discipline, including flogging and capital punishment. Trotsky's willingness to be ruthless was never more apparent than it was in his bloody suppression of the Kronstadt Revolt in March 1921, in which thousands of rebels and Red Army troops were killed.

When Lenin died in January 1924 it was widely assumed, both inside and outside of the Soviet Union, that Trotsky would lead the party. However, he was totally outmanoeuvred by Stalin. Stalin effectively controlled the party bureaucracy, and had built up great support within the party. Trotsky's blend of arrogance and naivety, and his unpopular appeal for continued sacrifice and 'permanent revolution', made it easy for Stalin to sideline him. By 1929, Trotsky had lost his position as Commissar of War and been removed from

the governing Politburo. He was quickly expelled from the party, sent into internal exile and finally forced to leave the Soviet Union in 1929, never to return.

For 11 years, Trotsky lived in exile, ending up in Mexico, where in 1940 he was murdered on the orders of Stalin. Supporters of Trotsky have always argued that if he had won the power struggle against Stalin, the Soviet Union would have avoided the extreme nature of the Stalinist dictatorship. However, some historians doubt this, citing Trotsky's record of brutality in the civil war and at Kronstadt. The economic policies that Stalin promoted from 1928, rapid industrialisation and collectivisation, were essentially those that Trotsky had supported earlier in the decade. English historian AJP Taylor, having praised Trotsky's literary talents, once wrote, 'A dictator lurks in every forceful writer. Power over words leads easily to a longing for power over men.'



SOURCE 2.16 Lenin (left) and Trotsky (saluting). Though Lenin was the undisputed leader of the Bolsheviks and made the decision to seize power, it was Trotsky who was responsible for carrying out the coup.

Stalin achieves supreme power

Lenin died in January 1924. He had been ill for some time, and throughout 1923 much of the party's business was run from Stalin's Secretariat. The question now was who would succeed Lenin as party leader. Was there anyone of sufficient stature to fill Lenin's shoes? It was generally assumed that person would be Trotsky. Trotsky had charisma, was a great orator, was highly intelligent and a great organiser, and had led the Red Army to victory in the civil war. However, Trotsky was also arrogant, and was disliked by many in the party. Stalin was the least likely of the party's leaders to take Lenin's place. He was a dour, grey figure, looked down on by party intellectuals and considered little more than a party bureaucrat. This all worked in Stalin's favour, as few suspected him of harbouring leadership ambitions.

A power struggle for the leadership ensued within the party. Stalin's control of the party machine ensured that thousands of party officials owed their jobs to him, meaning he always had the numbers

when it came to crucial votes. Stalin first outmanoeuvred Trotsky by linking up with two leading figures, Zinoviev and Kamenev. He then turned on these two men by linking up with Bukharin. Finally, he used the economic crisis facing Russia in 1928 to remove Bukharin from office. By 1929, Trotsky had been exiled from the country and Stalin was being lauded as the 'Lenin of today'. Within a short time, Stalin would totally dominate the party, the country and, importantly, the secret police, as his dictatorship took shape.



Stalin's dictatorship was far more brutal and far closer to the model of totalitarianism than that of Mussolini. Source 2.17 summarises the main features of Stalin's dictatorship as it developed in the 1930s.

- 1 Identify developments inside the Soviet Union that aided Stalin's rise to power.
- 2 Why, despite his obvious talents, was Trotsky outmanoeuvred in the struggle for power?



SOURCE 2.17 The features of Stalin's dictatorship



Cetty Images/Fine Art Images

SOURCE 2.18 Stalin presented as 'the great helmsman'. The slogan reads, 'The captain of the Soviet nation pilots us from victory to victory!'

Robert Service on Stalin

Robert Service is a British historian who has made himself one of the leading authorities on the history of the Soviet Union. Educated at Cambridge University, his post-graduate work took him to Leningrad (St Petersburg). Since 1998, Service has taught at Oxford University and is a fellow of St Antony's College. Service's great opus was his three-volume biography of Lenin. He followed this up with a biography of Stalin. Service's biography of Trotsky in 2009 received major academic criticism for its alleged errors and anti-Trotsky bias.

In the following extract from his biography of Stalin, Service analyses Stalin's attitude to the personality cult that grew around him in the 1930s.

... Yet he dominated the central public life of the USSR. People lived or died according to his whim. Political, economic, social and cultural activity was conditioned by his inclinations of the day. He was the masterful guide of men and manager of affairs of the Soviet state. But Stalin had always been cunning. He had learned of the advantages of a display of modesty. Better, he concluded, to let it be thought that he was thirsty neither for power nor for prestige. Did his interest in the career of Augustus, first of the Roman emperors, influence him? Augustus would never accept the title of king despite obviously having become the founder of a dynastic monarchy.



→ Stalin of course wanted adulation and the cult was extravagant in his praise; the restrictions imposed by him were pragmatically motivated. He discerned that he would gain more admirers if he stopped himself – and was seen to stop himself – short of making the very extreme claims put forward by Kremlin sycophants. Control of the process was crucial to him. He remained alert to the danger of letting people praise him on their own initiative and – bizarre as it might seem – banned discussion circles from looking at either the Short Course or his official biography ... The texts of the two books were fairly straightforward in themselves and could quickly be studied by individuals reading alone. And once they had read and digested the texts, they could join in the ceremonies and festivals which were organised by the authorities with scrupulous care on the streets, in factories and at offices ...

Robert Service, *Stalin: A Biography*, Pan Books, London, 2010, pp. 363–4

QUESTION

- 1 How does Service view Stalin's attitude to the cult of personality: embarrassed or contemptuous? Give reasons for your response.

Dictatorship in Japan: An overview

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Japan, in what is known as the Meiji Restoration, underwent a rapid process of modernisation. By the start of the twentieth century the nation was highly industrialised, had established education systems and had a military that was increasing its influence in East Asia, in 1905 becoming the first Asian power to defeat a European power. Although Japan was disregarded at the Paris Peace Conference, the country nonetheless aspired to greater international influence and sought avenues to enhance its economic development.

Japan after the war

The victory of the democratic powers over the authoritarian Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary had convinced many in Japan that their country should ape the west's industry and technology, and also its political ways. In 1918, Hara Kei, leader of the Seiyūkai Party, became premier. It was the first time Japan had a government led by party politicians. From 1924 to 1926, Japan was led by Kato Komei, leader of the Kenseikai Party, and by the mid-1920s, Japan seemed to be making major progress in the direction of democratic, constitutional government.

In 1925, the right to vote was extended to all men over the age of 25, quadrupling the size of the electorate. Japan's political leaders opposed increases in military and naval spending, and for a while it appeared as if political influence was triumphing over that of the military.



Alamy Stock Photo/Chronicle of World History

SOURCE 2.19 Hara Kei was Japan's first party political prime minister. He was assassinated in 1921 by a nationalist railway worker.



pan

League Covenant

The document that defined the role, function and aims of the League

Japan's status as a major power had been enhanced by its involvement in World War I. It was an ally of Britain, had gained control of German concessions in China, and had mandate control over Germany's former North Pacific colonies. It joined the League of Nations, although it failed in its attempts to have a racial equality clause inserted into the **League Covenant**. Japan's economy made gains from the war as it gradually took over markets from the western powers. By the end of the war, Japan's merchant fleet had grown tenfold, and a postwar boom led to increased factory employment and production, and further growth in exports.

Weaknesses in Japan's democracy

Despite the promising signs, there were a number of significant factors that would undermine Japan's burgeoning democratic evolution throughout the 1920s.

- Governments came and went, and throughout the 1920s Japan experienced political instability, a product of its lack of democratic tradition. This lack of tradition also led to significant graft, corruption and squabbling in Japanese politics, which angered the Japanese people, who had strong beliefs in the importance of service and duty.
- Japan's senior bureaucrats, known as the **Genro**, were opposed to democracy. Their numbers were decreasing but they were influential at the beginning of the decade. The armed services ministers still had direct access to the emperor, and the end of the Genro meant the emperor came increasingly under military influence.
- The Japanese Communist Party was formed in Hiroshima in 1922. It advocated the end of the monarchy and sought to follow the path of Russia. In 1925, the government passed the Peace Preservation Law, which provided for major penalties against those supporting changes in national policy and the end of private property. By the early 1930s, the Communist Party had effectively disappeared.
- The biggest threat to democratic government came from the ultra-nationalists and militarists, who resented the cuts to military spending and saw the cooperative foreign policy of Foreign Minister Shidehara as weak. Many of the young military officers were the sons of angry peasants who were suffering as a result of high taxes, high prices and falling exports.
- Right-wing nationalists and militarists were also opposed to the Washington system of naval agreements, which the government had agreed to in 1922. Following the 1921–22 Washington Conference, Japan signed three agreements:
 - the Four Power Treaty, whose purpose was to maintain the territorial status quo in the Asia-Pacific region
 - the Five Power Treaty, whose purpose was to place a limit on naval armaments
 - the Nine Power Treaty, whose purpose was to protect the territorial integrity of China.
- Militarists inside Japan opposed the Washington system because it locked Japan into a position of naval inferiority to the United States and Britain, and tied its hands regarding any possible territorial expansion. Opposition to 'Washington' was a significant source of discontent within the Japanese political system in the 1920s and early 1930s.

Genro

Japanese statesmen who, after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, acted as unofficial advisors to the young emperor, and wielded great influence. They were aristocratic and conservative.

- 1 Identify three factors that gave hope to the development of democratic government in postwar Japan.
- 2 Identify three factors that mitigated against the development of democracy in Japan.
- 3 What was the significance of the Washington treaties for Japanese democracy?

The role of economics and Manchuria

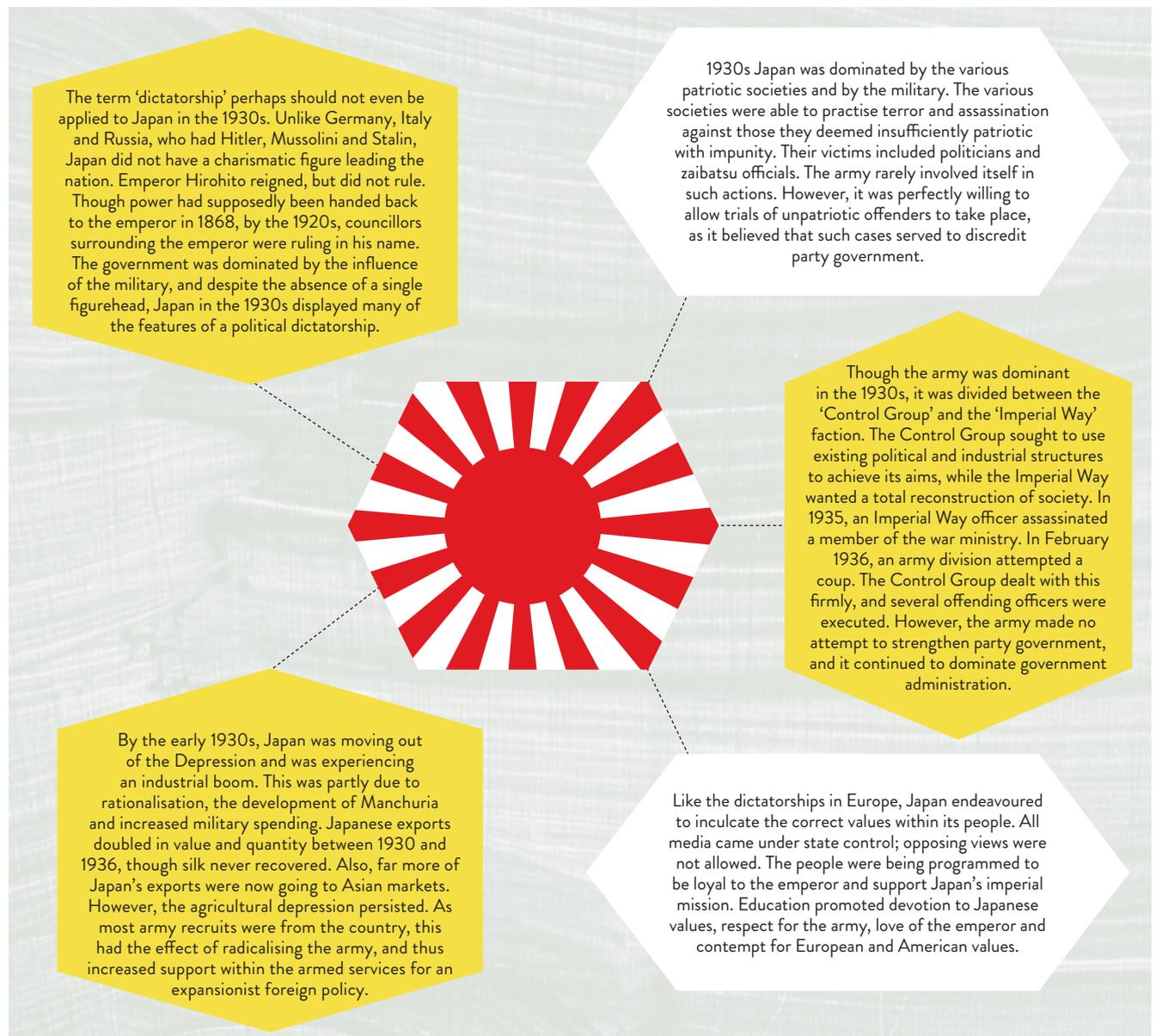
Japan's postwar boom was short-lived. By late 1920, prices were rising rapidly, and there was a growing gap between rich and poor, with most of the economy controlled by the powerful **zaibatsu**. Widespread strikes and rice riots became common. The situation worsened with the collapse of several banks in 1927.

The Great Depression hit Japan severely. Both the price and amount of its exports plummeted. The silk price collapsed, and just as farmers were benefiting from better harvests, world overproduction drove the price of rice to rock bottom.

Japan's fundamental problems of overpopulation and lack of resources prompted many Japanese to eye the Chinese province of Manchuria as a solution to the nation's economic woes. Japan had been involved in Manchuria since the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05, developing the region's industry, mining and transportation. Japan also wanted to maintain and develop China as a market for its exports. These demands all led to calls for an expansionist foreign policy.

zaibatsu

Large-scale industrial and financial conglomerates that came to dominate Japan's economy during the late nineteenth century. They came to wield enormous political influence.



SOURCE 2.20 Features of the Japanese dictatorship

Japan was also becoming alarmed at the Chinese Nationalist leader, Jiang Jie-shi, who by 1928 had almost reunited his country and was conducting an economic and propaganda war against Japan. These developments led to Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931 (see information box below).

The Manchuria Incident showed that Japan's civilian leaders had lost control of the nation's affairs. Prime Minister Wakatsuki told Baron Kumao Harada at the time:

“ ... I would summon the Minister of War to explain to him at great length the necessity of maintaining orderly conduct of our troops abroad. He would then agree ... Then what would happen? The troops stationed abroad would commit acts which would run completely counter to the agreement that the Minister of War and I had just made. ”

Quoted in Edwin P Hoyt, *Japan's War: The Great Pacific Conflict*, Guild Publishing, London, 1986, p. 94

The cabinet of prime minister Wakatsuki resigned in December 1931. Political life in Japan was becoming more violent by the day. On 15 May 1932, Premier Inukai and several other leading politicians were assassinated by naval officers.

The murder of Inukai ended party government in Japan, and the country gradually drifted towards dictatorship. Leftists were soon rounded up and imprisoned, while liberals were attacked for allegedly questioning the powers of the emperor. Throughout the 1930s, Japan continued to have a parliament and cabinets, but it was clear that decision making was in the hands of the military. Occupation of Manchuria was followed by the invasion of China in 1937, and ultimately the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. The Japanese would come to describe the period between 1931 and 1941 as *kurai tanima* – 'dark valley'.

The invasion of Manchuria

On 19 September 1931, there was an explosion on the Manchurian Railway. Japanese authorities blamed Chinese troops for this 'terrorist act', but the explosion had been carried out by the Japanese as an excuse to take action in the province. Prime Minister Wakatsuki had been aware that the Kwantung Army in Manchuria was planning something like this, and he persuaded the emperor to send Major General Tatekawa to stop them. But Tatekawa was in favour of action in Manchuria, so he both delayed and advertised his departure for Manchuria, allowing the conspirators time to act.

Japanese troops soon occupied the town of Mukden, and once it had been presented with this fait accompli, the Wakatsuki government was forced to back the army action. The army action was well received inside Japan, and by November the whole province had come under Japanese control. In January 1932, Japanese forces attacked Shanghai, eventually leaving in May. In 1933, Japan added the small province of Jehol to its control.

In 1932, Manchuria became the independent state of Manchukuo under the leadership of the former Chinese Emperor Pu Yi. 'Independent' Manchukuo was recognised by Japan, but its true puppet status was lost on no one. Manchukuo soon became a mine for Japan to exploit, a destination for Japanese emigrants and a place for businesses to set up. New zaibatsu quickly moved in.

Manchuria was of decisive importance. It showed the weakness of civilian governments in the face of a determined military and of the emperor in the face a determined army. The military now became increasingly assertive in Japanese domestic and foreign policy. The League of Nations proved totally incapable of dealing with Japanese aggression, a fact that European dictators would later take note of. Japan had taken its first major step on the road to Pearl Harbor.

Conclusion

In the early 1920s, democracy seemed to have become the natural form of government for many countries. However, a combination of pre-war developments, the impact of the war and the Paris Peace Settlement would quickly work to weaken these new democracies. In some ways, the new democracies were too democratic for their own good, and the systems proved incapable of dealing with the major problems of the time, particularly economic issues. In the wake of the Depression, few democracies remained, though the economic collapse of the time was not a fundamental cause of the emergence of dictatorships. Italy was a nation in chaos after the war, and determined action by Mussolini enabled the Fascist Party to quickly establish a dictatorship. Mussolini's willingness to work closely with Italy's elites ensured his consolidation of power. In the Soviet Union, the death of Lenin was followed by a power struggle in which Stalin triumphed. Under his unquestioned leadership, Stalin proceeded to establish a dictatorship with all the hallmarks of a totalitarian system. Japan in the 1930s had many of the features of a dictatorship without having a charismatic leader.

Chapter summary

- There were various types of dictatorships that appeared between the wars – constitutional, authoritarian, totalitarian, militarist.
- Democracies existed in nearly all European countries in the early 1920s, but factors such as mass politics, the brutalisation of war and the acceptance of government control during wartime combined to weaken democracy.
- The 1919 Peace Settlement left many nations dissatisfied, and resulted in national minorities being forced to live under the rule of other national groups.
- After 1919, many constitutions were written, but they often contained flaws, such as the notion of sovereignty and proportional representation, which often resulted in a national parliament being a focus of division rather than unity.
- Many postwar democracies in eastern and southern Europe became unworkable.
- The great personalities of the inter-war period were invariably dictatorial figures who outshone their democratic counterparts.
- Economic conditions – including the postwar recessions, national inflation and eventually the Great Depression – added to public disillusion with democratic government. However, these factors simply accelerated the move towards dictatorship, rather than causing it.
- Political instability, dissatisfaction with the peace settlement and economic weakness all assisted in Mussolini's rapid rise to power in Italy in the early 1920s.
- Italian Fascists described the rule as totalitarian as they attempted to bring all aspects of Italian life under the control of the state. Although Italian Fascism did not reach the levels of brutality achieved by German Nazism or Soviet communism, it would be wrong to view it as somehow 'benign'. Mussolini's rule was responsible for about a million deaths, and his grandiose ambitions certainly matched those of Hitler and Stalin.
- Mussolini's brutality was limited by the restrictions placed on his power by the monarchy, the Church, the army and Italian elites, which did not exist in Germany and Soviet Russia. The increasing bureaucratisation of life inside the Soviet Union assisted Stalin in the post-Lenin struggle for power as he wielded enormous influence within the party bureaucracy.

- Stalin's dictatorship was notable for its use of terror, the development of the cult of personality and the party's all-pervasive impact on the lives of ordinary people.
- In the 1920s, Japan seemed to be progressing towards stable, democratic government, but economic conditions, the influence of the military and inexperience in democracy all combined to thwart the success of democracy.
- Although Japan's dictatorship lacked a dictator, Japan in the 1930s shared many of the features of the European dictatorships, such the ubiquity of government propaganda, the influence of the security forces and intolerance of any opposition.

Additional resources

- Ian Kershaw, *To Hell and Back: Europe 1914–1949*, Penguin, Milton Keynes, 2015, Chapters 3–6
- Stephen J Lee, *European Dictatorships: 1918–1945*, Routledge, Glasgow, 2010, Chapters 1–4
- Richard Overy, *The Inter-War Crisis*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2017, Chapter 6
- Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, OUP, Oxford, 2013
- Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, Routledge, London, 1991

Endnotes

- ¹ Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, Routledge, London, 1991, p. 14
- ² John Pollard, *The Fascist Experience in Italy*, Routledge, London, 1998, p. 10

CHAPTER REVIEW

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

- 1 Why had societies such as Germany become so violent by the early 1920s?
- 2 Why did Italy feel cheated by the 1919 Peace Settlement?
- 3 What is proportional representation?
- 4 Why was Europe's economic prosperity so bound up with that of the United States?
- 5 What was the agricultural depression?
- 6 Who was D'Annunzio?
- 7 Why was the 10th Party Congress so important for the Soviet Union?
- 8 Why did most people expect Trotsky to succeed Lenin as Soviet leader?
- 9 What did the Manchuria Incident show about Japanese politics?
- 10 What are Japanese people referring to when they use the phrase 'dark valley'?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 11 Why was Mussolini so widely admired by many western democratic leaders during the 1920s and early 1930s?
- 12 One of the key features of Stalin's dictatorship was his purging of the Communist Party and the armed forces. How extensive was this purging, and why did so many people end up being accused of things that they obviously had not done?
- 13 How much influence did Japan's civilian leaders have over the country's 1931 invasion of Manchuria, its 1937 invasion of China and the 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor?

EXTENDED WRITING EXERCISE

- 14 Why did it prove so difficult for democracy to survive in much of Europe during the inter-war period?
- 15 'Both dictatorships in name, but the similarities stop there.' To what extent does this accurately sum up the dictatorships of Italy and Japan?



03

The rise of Nazism and collapse of the Weimar Republic

SYLLABUS OUTCOMES

In this chapter, students will examine the growth of the Nazi Party and the fall of the Weimar Republic.

Aspects to be covered include:

- weaknesses of Weimar, 1923,
- mid-1920s prosperity and stability,
- development and rise of Nazism,
- the Depression,
- Hitler's appointment as Chancellor.



SOURCE 3.1 German President Paul von Hindenburg in 1932



Introduction

Germany was in a disastrous state at the end of World War I. As well as having lost a war it had expected to win, the country was racked by severe food shortages, the spread of Spanish Influenza, political violence, mutinies, economic collapse and revolution. A constitution was introduced in mid-1919, but few would have given democracy much chance of survival, given the chaos Germany was in at the time. By 1923, the country had gone bankrupt, its currency was worthless and it was to suffer the humiliation of French occupation in the Ruhr.

It seemed to be only a matter of time before the Weimar Republic, as Germany's new democracy was called, collapsed. But nothing in history is inevitable. By the mid-1920s, the Weimar Republic had proven the doomsayers wrong. Germany had become Europe's number-one economy, with the continent's best welfare system, and had been accepted back into the family of nations. Anyone living in Berlin in 1927 would not have predicted the end of the republic within a few years, yet alone a Nazi dictatorship.

But it could be argued that the seeds of the republic's demise had already been planted. The failure of the Revolution of 1919 would have long-term ramifications for Germany. The Treaty of Versailles would hang around the neck of the young republic like a millstone, and though the German economy was buoyant in the 1920s, the weak foundations of that economic strength were apparent to anyone who looked closely. Indeed, with the benefit of hindsight, the causes of the republic's collapse are clear. The Depression could thus be seen not as the cause of the collapse of Weimar, but simply the occasion for that collapse.

The collapse of the republic and the rise of Nazis are two separate things. Weimar's fall did not mean that Hitler would step into power, just as the Nazis' rise did not mean the collapse of Weimar. Indeed, many commentators had written off the Nazis by the end of 1932. Peculiar circumstances had to coalesce in the early 1930s for the Nazis to attain power.



Germany 1918-33

| | | |
|------|----------------------|---|
| 1918 | ● 9 November | The Kaiser flees to the Netherlands |
| | ● 10 November | The signing of the Ebert-Groener Pact |
| | ● 11 November | Germany signs the armistice bringing World War I to an end |
| 1919 | ● January | Freikorps and army troops brutally suppress the Spartacist Revolt |
| | ● June | Germany signs the Treaty of Versailles |
| | ● July | The Weimar Constitution is introduced |
| 1920 | ● March | The Kapp Putsch takes place |
| 1921 | ● July | Hitler becomes leader of the Nazi Party |
| 1922 | ● June | Foreign Minister Rathenau is assassinated |
| 1923 | ● January | French troops invade and begin the occupation of the Ruhr |
| | ● August | Gustav Stresemann is appointed Chancellor |
| | ● November | Hyperinflation reaches its height |
| | ● | Hitler's Munich Putsch takes place |



Weimar R b i

The Weimar Republic: Chaos and stability 1918–1929

The seeds of collapse are sown

To suggest that the Weimar Republic was doomed from the start is an unhistorical notion; there was nothing predestined about the republic's demise. However, it could be argued that the 'seeds' of future collapse were indeed sown at a very early stage.

Weimar's handicaps existed even before its constitution came into being. Since 1916, Germany had effectively been a military dictatorship run by Generals Hindenburg and Ludendorff. The Kaiser had been sidelined, and had ceased to have any meaningful role in the running of the country. However, in late 1918, once it was clear that – as Ludendorff put it to the Reichstag in early October – there was 'no longer any prospect of forcing the enemy to sue for peace', Ludendorff handed over his power to a civilian government that had the support of the Reichstag. Ludendorff's aims at this point were twofold. Firstly, he hoped that by allowing for the formation of a democratic government, Germany might be able to avoid the sort of revolutionary events that had occurred in Russia the previous year. Secondly, he knew that it would now be a civilian, democratic government that would have to sign an armistice and deal with the Allies in what were bound to be tough postwar peace negotiations.

On 3 October, Prince Max von Baden became Chancellor of Germany and called for an armistice. However, by November, the prospect of a revolution in Germany seemed very real. There were army and naval mutinies, soviets were appearing across the country, and in Bavaria a socialist revolutionary government was formed. On 9 November, the Kaiser abdicated and fled to the Netherlands, never to return.

Two crucial events then occurred that were to have a dramatic impact on the fate of the future republic. On the same day that the Kaiser left Germany, the new, temporary democratic government was meeting in the Reichstag. The Deputy leader of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Philipp Scheidemann, became carried away with the excitement of the moment, rushed to the Reichstag balcony and declared that Germany had become a democratic republic. The crowd outside cheered, but Scheidemann's party leader, Friedrich Ebert, was much less happy. He berated his deputy for this reckless act.

There was no going back from that announcement, and it would now be the republic that would sign the armistice two days later. It would also be the republic that would eventually have to sign the peace treaty, rather than the generals who were responsible for the terrible state Germany was in. Having been able to absolve themselves of any responsibility for Germany's defeat, the generals were able to promote the idea that Germany had not been defeated in the war; rather, the German army had been 'stabbed in the back' at home by democratic politicians, socialists, Jews and pacifists, who became known as 'the November Criminals'. Thus, the 'stab in the back legend' – the *'Dolchstoßlegende'* – was born. The republic would never be allowed to forget this.

- 1 Why was General Ludendorff so willing to hand over his power to democratic politicians?
- 2 What was meant by the 'stab in the back'?
- 3 Who were the 'November Criminals'?

A more fateful event was to occur the following day, 10 November, when Ebert received a call from the Chief of Staff, General Groener. Their conversation resulted in the Ebert-Groener Pact. Groener promised to bring the army home in good order if Ebert guaranteed that he could maintain order and prevent the same revolutionary events that had occurred in Russia a year earlier. Ebert agreed.

Politically, Ebert and Groener were polar opposites, with Ebert standing far to the **left** and Groener to the **right** of the political spectrum. However, they shared one common aim: neither wanted a social revolution. Groener was horrified at the prospect of a communist government and civil war, as was afflicting Russia. Ebert wanted only political power, which he now had. He abhorred the idea of a left-wing revolution. When the troops marched through the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Ebert addressed them, saying, 'I salute you, who return unvanquished from the field of battle.' Though it would certainly not have been his intention, Ebert was giving further credence to the 'stab in the back legend' to which the far right had given birth.

However, for the radical left in Germany, the Spartacists, who would later become the KPD (German Communist Party), the goal was total social revolution. When the Spartacists tried to seize power in January 1919, the true impact of the Ebert-Groener Pact became clear. Working alongside the **Freikorps**, who had been called in by Defence Minister Noske, Groener's troops crushed the Spartacist (communist) uprising. Hundreds were killed, and the Spartacist leaders, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, were murdered.

It could be argued that this was the ultimate reason for the eventual collapse of the Weimar Republic. The failure of the 1919 revolution had two major implications. Firstly, it led to the eternal division of the 'left' in Weimar politics. The KPD would never forgive the SPD for what happened in January 1919, and blamed it, justifiably, for the bloodshed. The KPD and the SPD would remain bitter enemies. In late 1932, a combined left in the German Reichstag could have seen off the Nazi challenge, but the KPD hated the SPD even more than it hated the Nazis. A disunited left would ease Hitler's path to power.

left

At this time, the 'left' in politics generally were internationalist and non-racist, supported state intervention, welfare measures and trades unions, and were opposed to the elites

right

At this time, the 'right' in politics generally were nationalist and likely to be racist, opposed state intervention, welfare measures and trades unions, and were supportive of the elites

Freikorps

Right-wing paramilitary groups mostly comprising ex-servicemen; 'Freikorps' is German for 'free corps'



imagefolk/Robert Hunt Collection/Mary Evans

SOURCE 3.2 Members of the Freikorps stand beside an armoured car, armed with a flame thrower.



imagefolk/Mary Evans © Robert Hunt Library

SOURCE 3.3 A demonstration was held in memory of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht after they were murdered in 1919.

The failure of the far left in 1919 meant that there was no social revolution in Germany. The Kaiser's regime had gone and a democratic political structure had come into being, but nothing else had changed. Those who controlled the organs of power – the army, the police, the judiciary, the bureaucracy, the economy, the church, education – throughout the Weimar years were essentially the same people who had the power in 1914. This group is loosely referred to as the 'conservative elites'. These elites included army generals, leading church figures, Junker landowners, business and media owners.

The conservative elites shared certain values; they hated the republic, they hated democracy

and they wanted authoritarian rule. At first, they would have welcomed back the kaiser, but it soon became clear that was not going to happen. The elites were fairly helpless during the chaotic early years of the republic, and in the mid-1920s were happy to reap the benefits of prosperity. However, once the Depression had descended on Germany, they saw their opportunity to destroy the republic. This does not mean that the elites were on 'the lookout' for Hitler; most elites despised the Nazi leader. However, it was the elites who put together the backroom deal in 1933 that would eventually bring Hitler to power. All this was made possible by the events of 1919.

- 1 Explain the essential purpose of the Ebert-Groener Pact.
- 2 Why could it be argued that the Ebert-Groener Pact was good for the republic?
- 3 How could it be argued that the pact sowed the seeds of the republic's long-term demise?

Versailles, violence and vengeance

German delegates were summoned to Paris in May 1919 and presented with the terms of the peace treaty. In essence, the choice was to accept the terms or face invasion. In German eyes, the Treaty of Versailles was a 'diktat', a slave treaty and a national humiliation (see chapter 1). Recent historians have argued that the Treaty of Versailles was nowhere near as harsh as the Germans made out. However, perceptions are as important as reality. Germany believed it had been unjustly treated, and the blame for this humiliation was placed squarely at the feet of the republic. Versailles remained a potent piece of right-wing, anti-Weimar propaganda throughout the life of the republic.

It took several years for Weimar politics to settle into a peaceful pattern. Richard Evans describes how violence became a normal feature of Weimar political life during the early years of the republic. He argues that the experience of defeat, revolution and armed conflict at the end of the war, even more than the war itself, normalised violence.

“ ... A powerful role was played here by the myth of the 'front generation' of 1914–18, soldiers bound together in a spirit of comradeship and self-sacrifice in a heroic cause which overcame all political, regional, social and religious differences ... Many soldiers bitterly resented the outbreak of revolution in 1918. Units returning from the front sometimes disarmed and arrested workers' and soldiers' councils in the localities through which they passed. Some combatants were converted to radical nationalism ... All sides organised armed squads of thugs, fights and brawls became commonplace, and beatings-up and assassinations were widely used ... Fear and hatred ruled the day in Germany at the end of the First World War. Gun battles, assassinations, riots, massacres and civil unrest denied Germans the stability in which a new democratic order could flourish ... ”

Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, Penguin, 2004, pp. 69, 72, 78

- 1 Identify three specific outcomes that Evans suggests resulted from the 'myth of the "front generation" of 1914–18'.

The Weimar Republic experienced hundreds of political murders during its early years. Most were committed by the right-wing activists, the majority of whom received minimal sentences from sympathetic, nationalist judges. In March 1920 there was an attempt to overthrow the republic in a right-wing coup, the Kapp Putsch. Led by Wolfgang Kapp, various Freikorps units attempted to take control of Berlin. The government called on army troops to quell the revolt, just as it had during the Spartacist revolt. But the army commander, Hans von Seeckt, refused, arguing that he could not order his men to fire on those who had so recently been their comrades in the trenches. Von Seeckt stated at the time, 'Reichswehr does not shoot upon Reichswehr'. The Kapp Putsch was poorly organised, and collapsed in the face of the general strike.

Though the Kapp Putsch ended in failure, it was significant, because it showed that the army could not be relied upon to defend the republic against the right. The army's leadership were members of the conservative elites, whose contempt of the republic was deeply ingrained. Shortly after the Kapp Putsch,



SOURCE 3.4 Hans von Seeckt



the army was happy to take action against workers in the Ruhr who had been armed to counter Kapp. Hundreds were killed. Similar action was taken against left-wing revolutionaries who attempted to seize power in Bavaria.

The most high-profile victim of early right-wing Weimar violence was Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau. Rathenau's 'crimes' included being a member of the republican government, signing a treaty with the Soviet Union (the 1922 Treaty of Rapallo) and being Jewish.

1923: Humiliation and bankruptcy



SOURCE 3.5 French occupation troops in the Ruhr, 1923

The Treaty of Versailles required Germany to pay reparations to the victorious Allies. The final sum was US\$40 billion (£6.6 billion). Germany made its first payment in 1921, thanks to a loan from Britain. However, it defaulted at the end of 1922 when it failed to deliver 140 000 telegraph poles to France. The French saw this as an act of bad faith, and in January 1923, French and Belgian troops marched into the industrial Ruhr region to 'make Germany pay'.

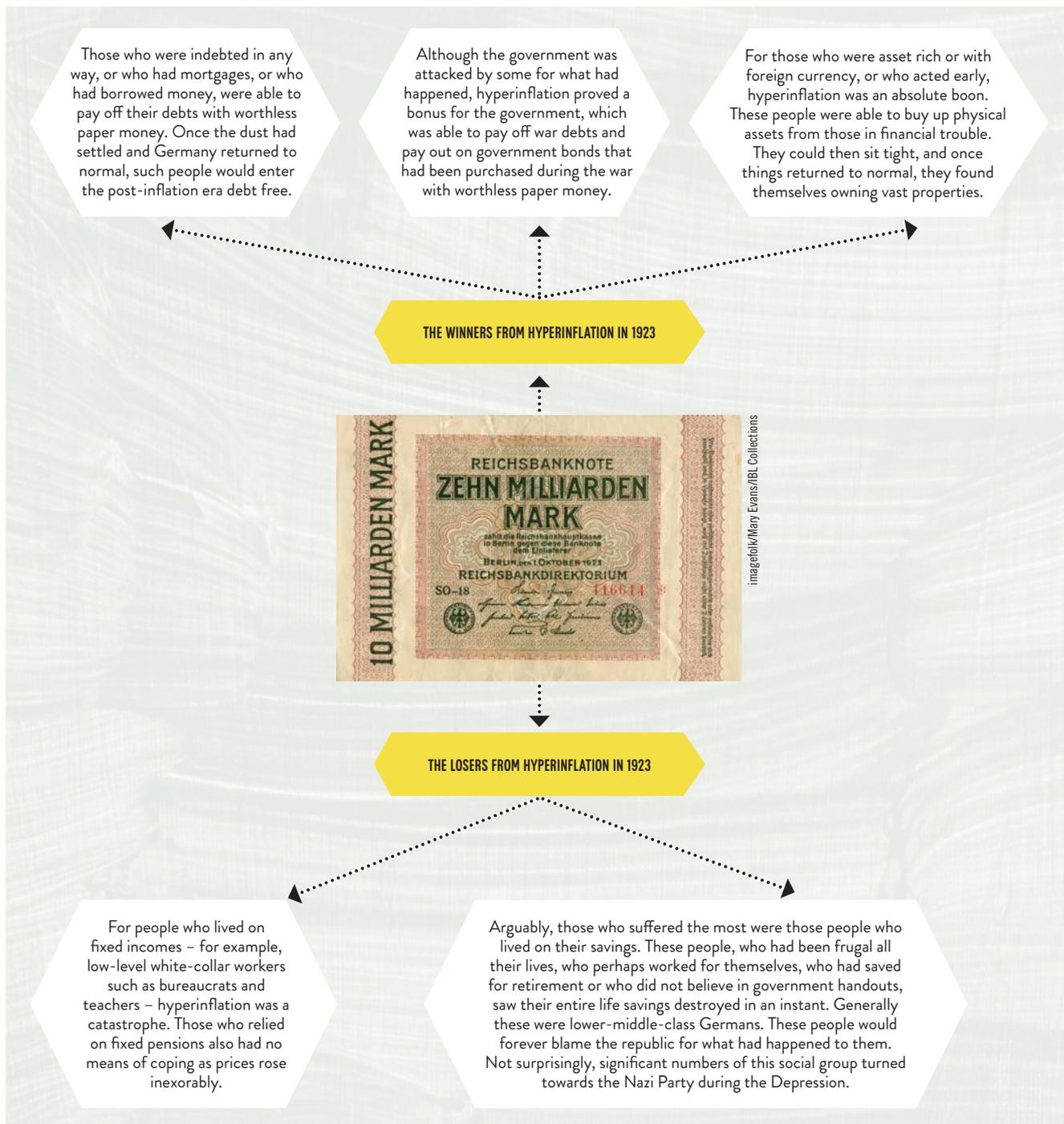
Germany was in no position to resist militarily, so Chancellor Cuno announced a policy of 'passive resistance'. Germans were called upon to refuse to cooperate with the French, and strikes broke out. The government agreed to pay the wages of striking German workers. As the months passed, relations between the local population and the

occupying French deteriorated, and there was widespread violence. In May, the French executed a man named Leo Schlageter for sabotage, and he became an instant martyr. Schlageter had an early association with the Nazis, and his 'martyrdom' was eagerly used by them. He became one of the Nazis' main heroes once they were in power. Monuments were raised in his honour, and plays were written about him.

Inflation had long been a problem in Germany. Deficit financing secured during the war, in the expectation of victory, had left Germany with major inflation at the establishment of the republic. Reparations distorted both Germany's and Europe's economy, and the decision to continue paying striking workers in 1923 created ideal conditions for demand-pull inflation. The government placed no limits on the printing of banknotes, and soon the printing presses were operating 24 hours a day. Workers were being paid twice daily, and on receipt of wages would rush to the shops for fear that prices could double in a few hours. The mark became totally worthless as prices reached astronomical levels and the exchange rate collapsed. By November 1923, one American dollar was being quoted at 4 420 000 000 marks. Germany had gone bankrupt.

“ ... At the expense of people with savings and accounts and those who owned securities, they stabilised the new currency using inflation and balanced the budget. Normally, this policy's losers included major portions of the middle-class; winners were debt-ridden large landowners and holders of big-industry fortunes. This finance intervention fundamentally shook the levelled employees' (whether they were workers, clerks or civil servants) confidence in the republic and bathed the imperial authoritarian state in a glorious light. Those who had material assets profited from the government's inflation policy; they had always opposed the republic and did not change their minds at this time ... ”

Gerhard Besier and Katarzyna Stoktosa, *European Dictatorships: A Comparative History of the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle, 2013, p. 138



SOURCE 3.6 The profound impact of 1923 hyperinflation

In August, Gustav Stresemann, the leader of the DVP (German People’s Party), became Chancellor. He called for an end to passive resistance and put the nation back to work. A few months of political instability followed, with right-wing revolts in Bavaria and Berlin and left-wing revolts in Saxony and Thuringia. In November, Adolf Hitler’s Nazi Party attempted to seize power in a putsch in Munich. Stresemann’s government fell in November, and was replaced with a government that had him as Foreign Minister, a post he would hold until his death in 1929. It was Stresemann who would lead Germany out of the horrors of hyperinflation into the prosperity and stability of the mid-1920s.

Hyperinflation



imagefolk/Mary Evans/IBL Collections

SOURCE 3.7 German five billion mark banknote from hyperinflation period



imagefolk/INTERFOTO

SOURCE 3.8 Children playing with banknotes during the period of hyperinflation



Alamy Stock Photo/World History Archive

SOURCE 3.9 A 50 million mark banknote overprinted with a new value of five billion marks

QUESTIONS

Examine the banknotes and picture shown in Sources 3.7–3.9, then answer the following questions.

- 1 How do you think everyday Germans would have been affected by the fact that Germany was printing banknotes to the value of five billion marks?
- 2 What conclusion do you draw from the fact that existing banknotes had new, higher numbers printed on them?
- 3 What does the picture of the children tell us about the economic situation in Germany in 1923?

EXTENDED RESPONSE QUESTION

- 4 'Despite the obvious difficulties created by hyperinflation, the republic came out of the crisis stronger than it went in.' Construct an argument using evidence that has been provided to either support or refute this statement.

1924–29: The golden years

The Weimar Republic's recovery from the debacle of hyperinflation was both rapid and dramatic. Within two years, Germany's economy was booming, and it would soon be second only to the United States in many areas of economic activity. This economic revival was accompanied by a period of political stability. By the mid-1920s, it really did seem that democracy was working, and that the republic had been accepted by most Germans. A series of developments occurred that suggested a promising future for Germany.

- In 1924, the Reparations Commission set up a panel of experts, led by the Chicago banker Charles G Dawes, to revitalise the German economy. The result was the Dawes Plan. Reparations were reduced, a two-year moratorium was placed on payments, and the first of a series of large-scale US loans flowed into Germany. The German currency was reformed, with the new Rentenmark replacing the worthless mark. With confidence restored in Germany's economic future, vast amounts of foreign capital, primarily American, flowed into the country. Germany was able to use much of this money to modernise its industry, create vast new infrastructure and develop the new booming industries of the 1920s, such as electrics, chemicals and the car industry. German industry was soon outstripping all other European economies, many of which remained rooted in nineteenth-century methods and technology.
- The Weimar Republic had many elections, and 11 changes of government, but during the Stresemann period, the personnel of these governments changed little. Stresemann remained Foreign Minister in all of them, and few other cabinet posts changed, providing a significant degree of political stability. Stresemann's political acumen acted like a 'political glue' that kept the various administrations together.
- The parties of the extreme left and right polled poorly in elections. In 1928, the Nazis gained only 12 seats in the Reichstag, 2.6 per cent of the vote; the KPD won 54 seats and 10 per cent of the vote. The pro-republic SPD gained 153 seats and 30 per cent of the vote.
- In 1925, General von Hindenburg was elected president of the republic following the death of Ebert. Hindenburg belonged to the conservative elites, and was no lover of democracy. However, he honoured his oath to uphold the constitution, and the fact that Germany's most revered figure was now the republic's head of state added to the prestige of the republic.
- The violence that had plagued the early years of the republic declined.
- In the mid-1920s, Germany had the best social welfare system in the world. The 1927 *Unemployment Insurance Act* provided assistance for the unemployed. In the same year, laws were passed to ensure an eight-hour day and bonus payments for workers.
- Governments invested in social infrastructure such as housing, education and health. Women's rights were promoted, including the granting of women's suffrage. In all of these areas, Germany was well ahead of other European nations.
- Internationally, Germany had resumed its place among the family of nations. In 1925 it signed the **Locarno Pact**, and in 1926 it became a member of the League of Nations.
- Germany was also leading the world in the cultural sphere. Berlin became an international mecca for art, literature, music and cinema. Many of the giant names of the cultural world in the 1920s were German, such as Nobel Prize-winning authors Thomas Mann and Hermann Hesse, film director Fritz Lang and playwright Bertolt Brecht.



SOURCE 3.10 Gustav Stresemann addresses the League of Nations in Geneva on 9 September 1929.

Locarno Pact

An international agreement signed by Germany, France, Britain, Belgium and Italy guaranteeing Germany's western borders

- 1 What evidence was there that the German economy was experiencing significant prosperity in the mid-1920s?
- 2 Why could it be argued that the German political situation in the mid-1920s had stabilised?
- 3 What was the 'positive' significance of Germany joining the League of Nations?

However, as was to be seen from 1929, the tremendous advances that Germany had made during this 'Stresemann period' were only superficial. If one explored beneath the surface, there were major fundamental problems afflicting the Weimar Republic.

Though there was evidence of greater political stability at this time, significant political problems persisted. The Weimar Constitution, which was introduced in 1919, was arguably one of the most democratic in the world. For each 60 000 votes a party gained in an election, it would be allowed a seat in parliament. During the Weimar period, Germany had a proliferation of parties. Some parties were nationally based, such as the SPD, others were regionally based, such as the Bavarian People's Party, and others were based on religious faith, such as the (Catholic) Centre Party. With so many political parties vying for support, no one party ever came near to gaining a majority. Thus, coalition governments had to be formed. This created enormous instability, and disaffection among the German people. (See the historian study on page 66 regarding the impact of this.)

The one party that truly believed in the republic and democracy, the SPD, was out of power between 1920 and 1928. In fact, an examination of Weimar's election results throughout the decade reveals the stark fact that the majority of German people consistently voted for political parties that did not believe in democracy, whether right- or left-wing – and this was during times of stability and prosperity. This means that at each election, the majority of Germans voted against democracy. This phenomenon is referred to as a 'negative consensus'.

The constitution also gave the president great power. Under Article 25, he could dissolve the Reichstag and call elections, and Article 48 gave him extraordinary powers to rule without parliament. Such powers were not an issue when the country was stable and prosperous, but there was always the possibility that they could be abused in extreme circumstances, or in the wrong hands. President Hindenburg was an old man; he was 84 at the time of his re-election in 1932. Increasingly frail, he came to lean increasingly on his advisors. These advisors were all drawn from the conservative elites, whose antipathy to the republic and the democracy has already been established.

Violence in Germany had certainly declined since the unruly early years of the republic, but it would be wrong to think that it had disappeared altogether from German political life. Though open gun battles on the street were not happening, there were still violent conflicts between various political groups. Each political party had its own 'paramilitary' organisation, such as the Nazi **Sturmabteilung** (SA) and the communist Roter Frontkämpferbund (Red Front Fighters' League). These paramilitary groups were formed to protect their parties, and they frequently attacked opponents' meetings. Once the Depression had engulfed the country, these violent political confrontations were brought out into the open.

Though the republic was making strides in the international community, this came at a price. The Dawes Plan stabilised Germany's economy, but it also placed its banks and railway system under international control. The 1929 Young Plan, which further tried to rationalise reparation payments, became a focus of right-wing anti-republican propaganda, as it would have meant Germany would be paying reparations until 1988.

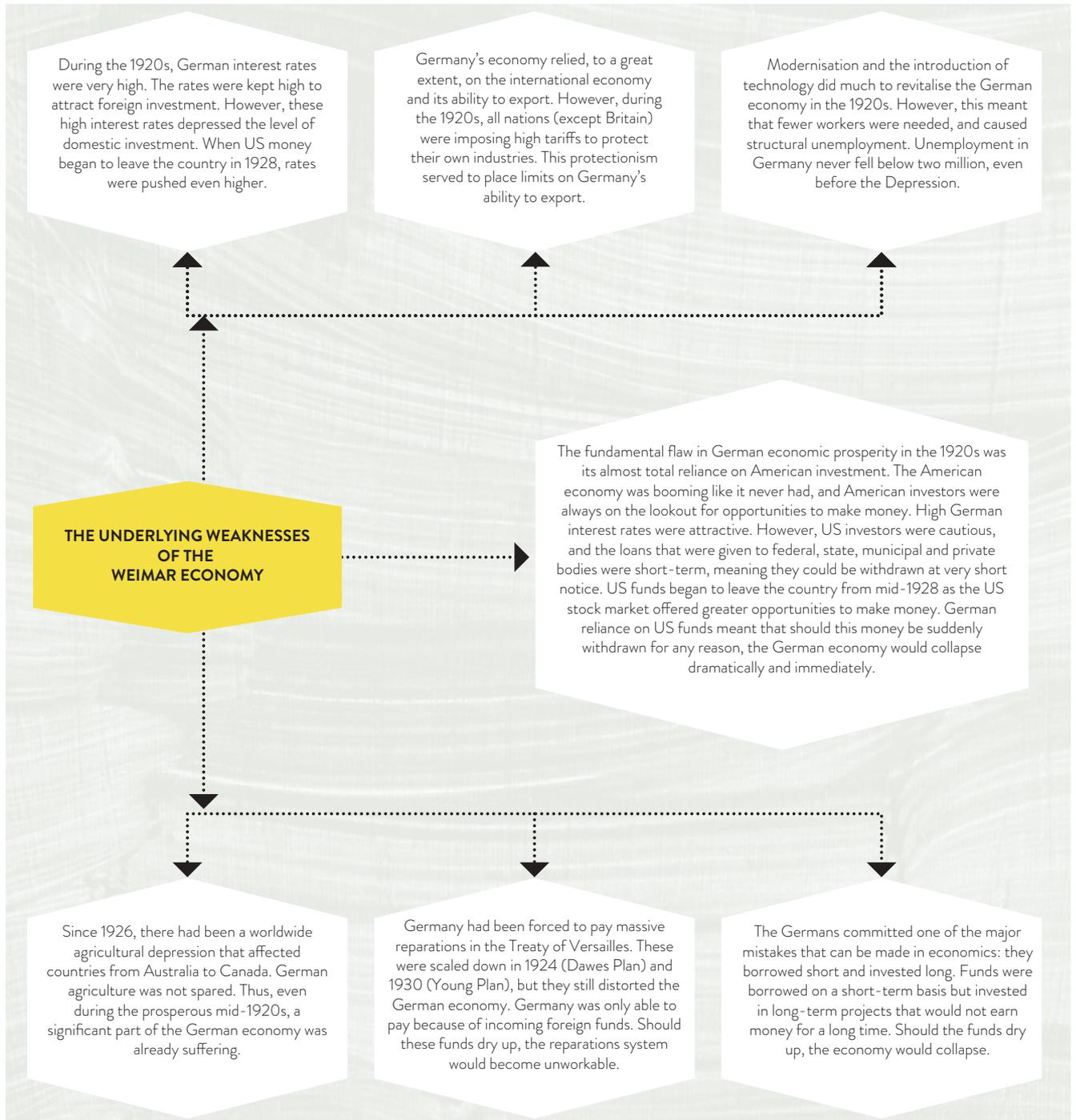
Though the 1925 Locarno Pact and Germany's entry into the League of Nations were welcomed at the time, each of these actions meant that the republic was accepting the Treaty of Versailles. The covenant of the League of Nations comprised the first 26 articles of the Versailles Treaty. Entry into the League implied acceptance of Versailles, which was detested by all Germans, as to accept the treaty

Sturmabteilung

The paramilitary branch of the Nazi Party. Members were often referred to as Stormtroopers or Brownshirts, after the colour of their uniform.

was to accept the humiliation of war guilt. To accept the Dawes Plan was to accept the legitimacy of reparations, and hence war guilt. Right-wing media and political groups never allowed the people to forget the shame of Versailles, or the republic's apparent acceptance of this shame.

However, the greatest danger to the Weimar Republic during the 'golden years' was the underlying precariousness of the economy. Although the German economy certainly boasted some great achievements in the 1920s, the bases of economic prosperity were fragile in the extreme, as Source 3.11 illustrates.



SOURCE 3.11 The underlying weakness of the Weimar economy

Michael Burleigh on the Weimar Republic

Michael Burleigh is one of Britain's leading historians. Over the years, his work has focused on Nazi Germany, totalitarianism and race issues in history. He has taught at Oxford, the London School of Economics and Washington University, and is currently Distinguished Research Professor in Modern History at Cardiff University. Burleigh's book, *The Third Reich: A New History*, won the Samuel Johnson Prize for non-fiction in 2001. In his book, Burleigh comments on the Weimar Republic's political processes and the disillusionment that these created within Germany, which was one factor easing the path for the Nazis to achieve power.

... Between 1919 and 1933 there were twenty governments in Germany ... This chronic political instability, in economically good times and bad, diminished respect for parliament and politicians. The periods of horse-trading that preceded the formation of Weimar's many coalition cabinets were inherently unedifying, leaving outsiders in the dark regarding what deals had been struck and what principles were sacrificed. Sometimes no deals were struck at all ... Even when a coalition had been formed it was not guaranteed support from the parliamentary caucuses of its partner parties ... Since all the parties contained centrifugal forces, they risked losing supporters to other parties if they made too many compromises ...

... the public perception was that they (politicians) were *bon vivants*, returning to the Reichstag from Berlin's bars and restaurants only to wheel and deal or conduct intemperate exchanges involving Communists tooting the 'Internationale' on toy trumpets while conservative nationalists sang the national anthem ... Of course this ostentatious silliness has its counterparts in some contemporary democracies. Contempt for politicians was compounded by the widespread view that political parties divided Germany into artificial confessional, ideological or socio-economic camps, within the context of a republic that many Germans regarded as akin to a foreign occupying power. This made the attractions of an imagined pre-political yesteryear ... all the greater, and increased the temptations of any political party that promised both consensual transcendence and national deliverance, especially when that party denied being a conventional political party at all. The Nazi 'movement' mastered that particular sleight of hand to perfection ...

Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, Pan Books, London, 2001, pp. 62, 63, 64

QUESTIONS

- 1 What does Burleigh mean by 'periods of horse-trading'?
- 2 Why did each party have to be careful about political 'centrifugal forces'?
- 3 How did the public view Weimar politicians?
- 4 How does Burleigh argue that the Nazis would be the likely winners out of the state of Weimar politics?

The Rise of the Nazi Party and Hitler to 1930



To the Munich Putsch

In the volatile and often violent political atmosphere that dominated Germany after its defeat in the war, a host of political groups appeared, predominantly of a right-wing nature. These groups were disillusioned by the defeat in 1918, angered by the 'slave' Treaty of Versailles and convinced of the guilt of the 'November Criminals'. Many of these extreme nationalist groups also held strong racist and **anti-Semitic** views. One example was an insignificant group in Bavaria called the German Workers' Party.

After the war, the army ordered Hitler to infiltrate such groups with the aim of rooting out possible communist subversives. In 1919, Hitler joined the German Workers' Party. His amazing speaking ability electrified audiences, and he proved to be a skilful propagandist. Largely due to Hitler's efforts, party membership grew, reaching 3000 by late 1920. The party developed its own newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, and in mid-1920 adopted the swastika as its symbol. Hitler was a key contributor to the party's 25 Point Program adopted in 1920, and on his suggestion, the party changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP), or Nazi Party for short.

anti-Semitism

The irrational and often violent hatred of Jews and all things Jewish



imagerfolk/Mary Evans

SOURCE 3.12 The Nazi Party's *Blutfahne* (Blood Flag) was the banner under which the party marched in the failed Munich Putsch of 1923. Allegedly soaked in the blood of SA members who had died, the *Blutfahne* became a sacred object of the party. New party flags were consecrated by touching them against this relic.

HITLER'S EARLY LIFE

Adolf Hitler was born in Braunau am Inn, Austria, on 20 April 1889. His father was a minor customs official who regularly beat his son, while his mother was a gentle woman, to whom Hitler was devoted. The family was always on the move, and by the time Hitler was 15, he could remember seven different addresses and five different schools. The Hitler family had experienced a series of name changes, including Heidler and Schicklgruber. Hitler was an average school student, though he did shine in art and history. He later wrote that one of his history teachers, Leopold Poetsch, was able to move his students to tears, Hitler included, by telling emotional stories of Germany's past. For a while, Hitler attended a Benedictine Monastery in Lambach, and sang in the choir. At age 15, he left school and apparently got very drunk to celebrate the occasion. The experience was so awful that Hitler never touched alcohol again.

In 1906, he moved to Vienna and tried to join the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, but failed to gain entry, twice. In 1908 his mother died of cancer. Hitler's time in Vienna was not a happy period. The years before the outbreak of war were hell for

him, and for a while he was literally 'living on the street' or in hostels for homeless men. It was probably during this miserable time that Hitler absorbed the racist and anti-Semitic ideas that were prevalent in Vienna's multinational atmosphere. In 1913, he left Vienna to avoid being conscripted into the Austrian army with people he considered his 'racial inferiors'. However, when war came in August 1914, Hitler was in Munich and he immediately volunteered to fight in a Bavarian regiment. Hitler later said that the outbreak of war was one of the greatest days of his life; at last, his life seemed to have purpose. Hitler served on the Western Front, often as a trench runner. He gained medals for bravery, including an Iron Cross First Class, and was wounded twice. At the Somme he received a leg wound. When the war came to an end, Hitler was in hospital, suffering temporary blindness from a British gas attack.



SOURCE 3.13 Hitler during World War I

In July 1921, Hitler replaced Anton Drexler as party leader. Later that year, he set up the party's paramilitary arm, the Sturmabteilung (SA), comprised mainly of former Freikorps and wartime veterans. By mid-1923, the party had more than 70 000 members.

In November 1923, during the French occupation and while the country suffered from hyperinflation, Hitler attempted to seize power in a putsch in Munich, in what became known as 'The Beer Hall Putsch'. At this time, Bavaria was being run by State Commissioner von Kahr, Commander von Lossow and Police Chief von Seisser. On 8 November, Hitler burst into the Munich Bürgerbräukeller where von Kahr was holding a meeting. He ordered von Kahr and the others to join the Nazis in a putsch. Von Kahr agreed, but once he had managed to escape, he ordered police to arrest Hitler and his co-conspirators, including former General Ludendorff. On 9 November, Hitler led 2000 supporters through the streets of Munich but they were stopped by police, who opened fire. Sixteen Nazis and four police officers were killed. Hitler was soon captured, and he and nine others were tried for treason.



SOURCE 3.14 Memorial to the Munich policemen killed in the Munich Putsch attempt

The Nazi Party regroupes

At his trial, Hitler was sentenced to five years imprisonment. However, he served only nine months in Landsberg Prison, and his confinement was notable for its level of comfort and the company he was allowed to have. The lightness of his sentence illustrates the sympathy that the trial judges had for his beliefs. While in prison, Hitler wrote his autobiography, *Mein Kampf* ('My Struggle'), in which he set out his ideas for Germany's future.

Although the Munich Putsch had ended in laughable failure, it proved to be extremely significant for Hitler's future and for that of the Nazi Party. Before the attempted putsch and his trial, Hitler had been virtually unknown in Germany, but his forceful denunciation of the judicial process and his electrifying speeches suddenly brought him national attention. The putsch also taught Hitler an important lesson: power would not be gained through a violent revolt. On his release from prison, Hitler set out to win power through the ballot box.

However, the party that Hitler now led found itself weak, disillusioned and divided. The Bavarian government had banned the Nazi Party. The ban was lifted in early 1925 but quickly reimposed for another two years following a violent speech given by Hitler. The leader of the SA, Ernst Röhm, resigned and left for Bolivia. The Nazi candidate in the 1925 presidential election, General Ludendorff, gained a laughable 1 per cent of the vote.

Even worse for Hitler was the fundamental divide that now afflicted the Nazi Party. The northern and western branches of the party located in the industrial towns were dominated by younger figures, such as Gregor Strasser and his brother Otto, and Joseph Goebbels. These men were trying to entice working-class voters from the SPD and KPD towards the Nazis, so they emphasised the egalitarian and anti-capitalist elements of the party's program. However, the southern branches of the party were dominated by men like Ludendorff and racists like Alfred Rosenberg. These men emphasised the party's pursuit of anti-Semitism and anti-Marxism. In 1925, the northern Nazis attempted to rewrite the party's 25 Point Program to ensure the predominance of social and economic issues. They hoped to pull Hitler from the more conservative Bavarian elements of the party.

To deal with the growing divisions, Hitler called a meeting of party leaders in Bamberg in February 1926. At this meeting, Hitler attacked the northerners' ideas and demanded that the party's prime interest should be its campaigns against Marxists and Jews. Hitler's charisma, and the other leaders' belief that the Nazi Party was nothing without him, carried the day, and so the northern Nazis meekly accepted his views. Goebbels was totally entranced by Hitler's oratory, and from then became one of his most loyal followers. The party drifted further right, and its membership became increasingly drawn from the conservative, lower-middle-class sections of society.

The Nazi Party's electoral fortunes suffered during the superficial prosperity and stability of the Stresemann years. In 1928, the Nazis gained only 12 Reichstag seats. However, it would be wrong to suggest the Nazis were a lost cause at this time. Party membership continued to grow, and membership of the party meant more than just paying one's dues every few months. The party was already developing a Hitler Youth Movement. There were Nazi clubs, Nazi



SOURCE 3.15 Hitler announced the refoundation of the Nazi Party at a meeting in 1925.

newspapers, Nazi sports teams, Nazi pubs. Being in the Nazi Party went beyond politics; for its die-hard early members, it was a way of life. And though the party performed poorly in the 1928 Federal election, in state and local elections it was performing well. In some of the really depressed agricultural regions, Nazi candidates were sometimes gaining close to 40 per cent of the vote.

Historian Richard Evans sums up Hitler's position on the eve of the Depression as follows:

“ ... By the end of the 1920s, Hitler had emerged, partly through circumstances, partly through his own speaking ability and his own ruthlessness, partly through the desperate need of the extreme right for a strong leader, as the unquestioned dictator of the movement, the object of a rapidly growing cult of personality ... Hitler had built up around him a crucial group of men whose devotion to him was wholly unconditional – men like Goebbels, Goring, Hess, Himmler, Rosenberg, Schirach and Streicher ... the Nazis movement by the middle of 1929 had become an elaborate, well-organised political body whose appeal was directed to virtually every sector of the population. Its propaganda was becoming rapidly more sophisticated. Its paramilitary wing was taking on the Communist Red Front-Fighters and Social Democratic Reichsbanner in the streets. Its internal police force, the SS, was poised to take action against the dissident and disobedient in its own ranks ... ”

Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, Penguin, London, 2003, p. 229

- 1 How does Evans account for Hitler's rise to unquestioned leadership of the Nazi movement by mid-1929?
- 2 Identify four factors mentioned by Evans that indicate the strength of the Nazi Party by mid-1929.

The violence that the SA took to the streets, in an increasingly brutal and widespread manner, did not seem to affect Hitler's growing popularity. Hitler never gave orders for violent action. He spoke in generalities, leaving his followers to interpret his desires. Middle-class and upper-middle-class Germans did not blame Hitler and his leadership team for SA violence, especially when the Brownshirts were happy to claim they had acted on their own initiative. This created a beautiful irony. As political violence escalated during the Depression and blood flowed on the streets, most of which was the result of Nazi actions, it was Hitler who was increasingly looked to as the man who could restore peace and order to German society.

However, the Nazis still lacked 'mass support'. It would take an economic catastrophe to change this situation.

Alamy Stock Photo/dpa picture alliance



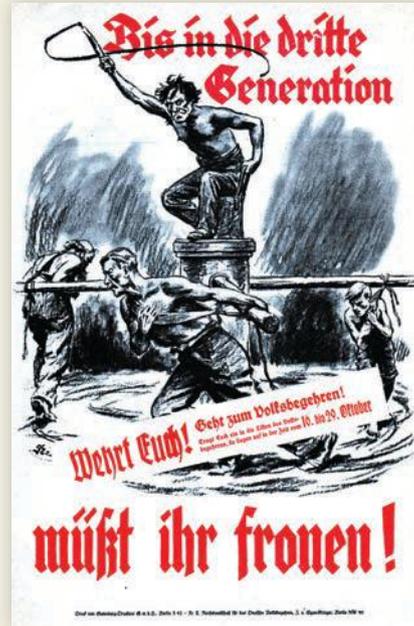
SOURCE 3.16 Members of the Sturmabteilung salute a fallen comrade in 1931.

Hitler and the campaign against the Young Plan

In 1929, a group of economic experts led by Owen D Young, head of the American firm General Electric, met in Paris to consider the issue of reparations. The German delegates to the meeting were the Reichsbank President, Hjalmar Schacht, and Albert Vöglger, an industrialist. The Germans negotiated as hard as they could and an agreement was finally reached in May. In essence, reparations were to be reduced, and would be spread out until 1988!

A right-wing campaign was immediately launched against this 'slave agreement'. Propaganda was spread suggesting that Germany was to be enslaved for the next three generations. Such a poster is illustrated in Source 3.17.

The anti-Young Plan campaign was led by DNVP leader Alfred Hugenberg, who was also a powerful media figure in Germany at the time. Hugenberg gathered together a range of leading right-wing figures, forming a committee to promote a 'Law Against the Enslavement of the German People', which would cancel the Young Plan. His campaign did not succeed, but it did have one major consequence. Hitler had been invited to join the committee, and to campaign alongside Hugenberg and other 'elites' against the plan. For Hitler, this invitation and his work for the committee had several results. It brought him national attention and free publicity through Hugenberg's media machine. It showed Hitler in a more moderate light, rubbing shoulders with the country's rich and powerful. It brought him the attention, and later the assistance, of some rich industrialists in Germany. Hitler's courting of such people would continue in 1931 when he joined the Harzburg Front against Brüning's economic policies, and in January 1932 when he gave his speech to the Düsseldorf Industry Club. However, the sight of Hitler standing alongside reactionary figures of the right angered some of the radical elements on the left of the Nazi Party, and led to some internal criticism of Hitler.



SOURCE 3.17 Propaganda poster against the Young Plan. The main text reads: 'Till the third generation we must labour!'

QUESTION

- 1 How do you think Hitler would have viewed his participation in the campaign against the Young Plan?

The collapse of the Weimar Republic: 1930–33

The impact of the Depression

The German economy was already in trouble well before the Wall Street Crash. American funds had been leaving the country from late 1928 as investors sought greater profits on the New York Stock Market. With the crash of October 1929, US funds dried up immediately, and money quickly flowed out of Germany, removing the essential basis of German prosperity at a stroke. The impact of the Depression on Germany was both immediate and catastrophic. By early 1930, unemployment had

reached over three million; by 1932 it was well over six million. However, this figure tells only part of the story, as millions of Germans were ‘underemployed’, working just a day or two a fortnight.

The tragic Depression scenes common across the world were replicated in Germany. Men aimlessly walking the streets looking for work, evictions, soup kitchens, factories closed, businesses large and small displaying ‘no vacancies’ signs. However, the situation was worse in Germany. Not only was the impact immediate, but the Depression marked the end of a decade that had witnessed war, defeat, urban violence, revolution, Versailles, humiliation and hyperinflation, and it came after a superficially prosperous time. The Depression was a further psychological blow to the German people.

From economic crisis to political crisis



SOURCE 3.18 Heinrich Brüning

Since 1928, Germany’s Chancellor had been the Social Democrat, Müller. In March 1930, his government was approaching its second anniversary, a record for a Weimar administration. As unemployment soared, Müller sought to maintain the generous Weimar Unemployment Insurance scheme. However, this was causing a massive budget deficit, and the orthodox economic thinking of the time demanded a balanced budget to restore confidence. This was the thinking of Müller’s right-wing coalition partners, who refused to back his proposals for maintaining the scheme. Unable to get his legislation through the Reichstag, Müller turned to President Hindenburg and prevailed on him to use Article 48 to break the impasse. Hindenburg’s closest advisors – who included his son Oskar, Otto Meißner and General von Schleicher, chief of the Army Department in the Defence Ministry – were eager to destroy Müller’s government and replace it with an authoritarian government from above. The conservative elites’ opportunity had arrived. They advised the ageing president to reject Müller’s request, leaving Müller with no choice but to resign.

Hindenburg now appointed the Centre Party leader, Heinrich Brüning, as Chancellor. Brüning had little support in the Reichstag, and so from then on, Germany was being governed on the basis of presidential decree. In effect, this meant the end of German democracy, almost three years before the appointment of Hitler.

For the next two years as Chancellor, Brüning was to follow a rigid policy of deflation. Deflation involved increased taxation and massive cuts in government expenditure. It was believed that such a policy would bring the budget back into balance, restore confidence, encourage investment and so bring the country out of Depression. However, Brüning’s dogged devotion to deflation merely drove the German economy deeper and deeper into Depression. The economic scene suddenly worsened in July 1931 with the collapse of one of Germany’s leading banks, the Danat. There was a run on other banks, and funds began to flow out of the country. Brüning acted quickly and he managed to work out ‘standstill’ agreements with other countries to stop this outflow. However, the banking crisis also led to a tightening of credit, which merely drove the economy even deeper into Depression.

Brüning optimistically believed that, following his appointment, his party would do well in elections, which he called for September. For Brüning the election was a failure, with his party gaining just six more seats. The big winner in the election was Hitler’s Nazi Party, whose support rose to 18.3 per cent, giving them 107 seats. The Nazis were now the second biggest party in the Reichstag after the SPD, whose support had fallen to 24.5 per cent. The election showed that German politics had entered a period of political polarisation, with moderate parties losing support and extremist parties making significant gains. Table 3.1 illustrates this.

TABLE 3.1 September 1930 election results

| PARTY | VOTE PERCENTAGE WON IN MAY 1928 ELECTION | VOTE PERCENTAGE WON IN SEPTEMBER 1930 ELECTION |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| KPD (Communists) | 10.8 | 13.1 |
| SPD (Social Democrats) | 29.8 | 24.5 |
| DDP (Democratic) | 4.9 | 3.8 |
| Centre Party | 12.1 | 11.8 |
| BVP (Bavarian People's) | 3.1 | 3.0 |
| DVP (German People's) | 8.7 | 4.5 |
| DNVP (Nationalists) | 14.2 | 7.0 |
| Nazi Party | 2.6 | 18.3 |

From Brüning to von Schleicher

In March 1932 there was a presidential election, as Hindenburg's term was coming to a close. In the election, the 84-year-old President Hindenburg faced Hitler, Duesterberg (leader of the nationalist paramilitary *Stahlhelm*) and the KPD leader, Thälmann. Hindenburg narrowly missed gaining an absolute majority, achieving 49.6 per cent of the vote. In the second round of voting, Hindenburg was against Hitler and Thälmann. This time Hindenburg gained 53 per cent of the vote to Hitler's 36.8 per cent.

The great irony of the presidential election was that Hindenburg had become, in effect, the candidate for the republic and democracy, a role he resented. He blamed Brüning for this. Brüning was also losing the support of Hindenburg's advisors. In their eyes, Brüning had failed to establish a solid right-wing cabinet, had failed to deal with the Depression and had failed to end reparations. When Brüning suggested a moderate farming resettlement plan for poor farmers in East Prussia, they attacked the proposal as 'Bolshevik' and persuaded Hindenburg to demand Brüning's resignation.

Hindenburg's close circle of conservative elite advisors believed that Germany needed a more right-wing government. However, Hitler was not trusted – indeed, he was despised by many of them. As a result, the Chancellor's position was handed to a conservative aristocrat of the Centre Party, Franz von Papen. Von Papen's government was referred to as the 'baron's cabinet', as it contained many aristocratic figures.

Not long before Brüning's fall, von Schleicher had secret meetings with Hitler, keen to harness the popular support of the Nazis behind a solidly right-wing government. A deal was worked out. Hitler would go along with a more right-wing government led by von Papen, but in return demanded early Reichstag elections and a lifting of the ban on the SA. Elections were called for July, and the ban on the SA was lifted on 17 June.

Germany's largest state was Prussia, and in 1932 it had an SPD-led government under Otto Braun. However, on 20 July, von Papen used his emergency power to remove Braun's state government and appointed himself State Commissioner. This was a crucial moment, as Prussia had the last truly pro-Republican, democratic administration in Germany. Federal elections were held 11 days later, and they proved to be a triumph for the Nazis – the high point of their popularity. Table 3.2 summarises the results.



SOURCE 3.19 Kurt von Schleicher and Franz von Papen

Getty Images/ulstein bild DTU

TABLE 3.2 July 1932 election results

| PARTY | VOTE PERCENTAGE WON IN SEPTEMBER 1930 ELECTION | VOTE PERCENTAGE WON IN JULY 1932 ELECTION |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| KPD (Communists) | 13.1 | 14.3 |
| SPD (Social Democrats) | 24.5 | 21.6 |
| DDP (Democratic) | 3.8 | 1.0 |
| Centre Party | 11.8 | 12.4 |
| BVP (Bavarian People's) | 3.0 | 3.2 |
| DVP (German People's) | 4.5 | 1.2 |
| DNVP (Nationalists) | 7.0 | 5.9 |
| Nazi Party | 18.3 | 37.3 |

German politics were continuing to polarise, SPD support was falling and the DDP was virtually annihilated. With 230 seats, the Nazis were now the biggest party in the Reichstag as they continued to capture support previously given to other right-wing nationalist parties such as the DVP and DNVP. The Nazis were mastering modern electioneering techniques, which included the use of trained party speakers, propaganda targeted at specific groups and the use of great rallies. In 1932, Hitler made use of the aeroplane, becoming the first politician to fly across the country, and speaking in disparate locations across the country in a single day. Above all, the Nazis were able to make use of Hitler's oratorical genius.



Hitler's speeches

Who voted for the Nazis?

Between the election of 1928 and that of July 1932, Nazi electoral support rose from 2.6 per cent to 37.3 per cent. It did drop off in November 1932, but the Nazis remained the largest party in the Reichstag. They never achieved an electoral majority, even in March 1933, when they were in power, gaining only 43.9 per cent in that election. However, their enormous electoral support was the fundamental reason some of the elites believed they had to work with the Nazi Party, distasteful as that was to many of them.

The rise in Nazi support coincided with the worst years of the Depression. However, it was not the masses of the desperate unemployed who suddenly switched their allegiance to the Nazi Party.

- Most Nazi Party members were usually employed, and the Nazi vote was lowest in those areas that had the highest unemployment. Thus, there was a negative correlation between unemployment and the Nazi vote.
- The large urban areas that had the highest concentration of industry were the least open to Nazi arguments. In towns of over 100 000 people, the Nazi vote was, on average, 10 per cent less than it was nationally. This was because KPD/SPD support was entrenched in those towns.
- It is true that about 55 per cent of SA members were working class, but they did not come from the big cities. Indeed, working-class support for the Nazis occurred in smaller towns, which explains why the rise in Nazi support did not translate into equivalent falls for the KPD and SPD.

“ ... Thus, a combination of variables produced the working-class Nazi. The NSDAP was very different to the parties of the Left, which were dominated by factory workers in the large towns, did not possess substantial middle-class support; and were less attractive to females but more attractive to the unemployed than the NSDAP ... ”

Dick Geary, 'Who voted for the Nazis?', *History Today*, October 1998, p. 12



The Nazi vote was far greater in Protestant areas than Catholic, being twice as great in the July 1932 election. This was mainly because Catholic support for the confessional parties, the Centre and the BVP, remained consistent. The Nazi vote was actually highest in Protestant rural areas, such as Schleswig-Holstein.

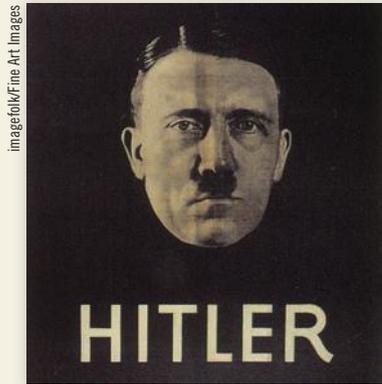
For a long time, it was believed that the mainstay of Nazi electoral support came from the lower-middle-class, the *Mittelstand*, comprising small businessmen, independent artisans, shopkeepers and the self-employed.

- This was a group that feared the influence of trade unions and the communists, but also that of big business. It was a group that resented the cost of the Weimar welfare state.
- However, Nazi support went wider than this, and included Protestants from the upper middle class and the manual working class. Indeed, the wealthiest areas of Hamburg, upper-class holiday resorts and cruise liners all showed significant support for the Nazis.
- Big Business did not swing behind the Nazi Party until after it was in power.

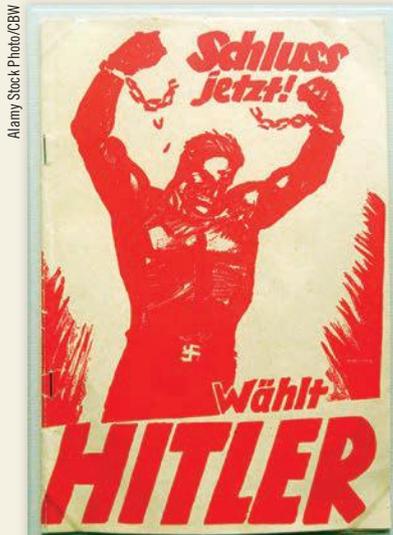
The Nazi Party proved to be far more attractive to women than the parties of the left, though female support for confessional parties remained high. The Nazi regime would prove popular with the younger sections of the community, but it is difficult to separate the age factor from class and religion. Pensioners, the elderly and war veterans strongly supported the Nazis.

“ ... Being a Catholic, unemployed or living in a large town significantly reduced the likelihood of voters to opt for Hitler, as did the existence of strong ideological and political traditions. Conversely, being a Protestant in rural Germany greatly increased such a propensity, as did the absence of strong loyalties.”

Dick Geary, 'Who voted for the Nazis?', *History Today*, October 1998, p. 14



SOURCE 3.20 1932 Nazi election poster



SOURCE 3.22 1932 Nazi election poster, artist Mjöltnir. 'Enough! Vote Hitler'



SOURCE 3.21 1932 Nazi election poster with Hitler in civilian clothes. 'We are taking the fate of the nation in our hands! Hitler becomes Reich President.'





The deal that von Schleicher had struck with Hitler now began to unravel. The Nazis were far and away the largest party in the Reichstag and Hitler, justifiably, demanded to be appointed Chancellor. However, the most that Hindenburg would offer him was the post of Vice-Chancellor to von Papen. With virtually no support in the newly elected Reichstag, von Papen persuaded Hindenburg to call another national election in November. There was now a clear division on the right between the 'old' right, elites comprising Hindenburg, von Papen and his cabinet, Hindenburg's advisors, and the 'new' right represented by the Nazis. In the elections, Nazi support dropped significantly. This was partly the result of the growing influence of the 'socialist' element in the Nazi Party, which frightened middle-class voters, and the upsurge in SA violence. Table 3.3 shows the election results for November 1932.

TABLE 3.3 November 1932 election results

| PARTY | VOTE PERCENTAGE WON IN JULY 1932 ELECTION | VOTE PERCENTAGE WON IN NOVEMBER 1932 ELECTION |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| KPD (Communists) | 14.3 | 16.9 |
| SPD (Social Democrats) | 21.6 | 20.4 |
| DDP (Democratic) | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Centre Party | 12.4 | 11.9 |
| BVP (Bavarian People's) | 3.2 | 3.1 |
| DVP (German People's) | 1.2 | 1.9 |
| DNVP (Nationalists) | 5.9 | 8.8 |
| Nazi Party | 37.3 | 33.1 |

ACTIVITIES

- 1 Examine the electoral results shown in Tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3. Outline what happened to the electoral fortunes of the KPD, SPD, DDP, DVP, DNVP and the Nazi Party between May 1928 and November 1932. Suggest reasons for these developments.
- 2 Examine the 1932 Nazi election posters. What image of Hitler is conveyed? To which groups in society might these images have appealed?
- 3 Source 3.22 does not include an image of Hitler. What message does this poster convey? To whom would it be likely to appeal?

The Nazi Party vote had fallen by two million, and though it remained the largest party in the Reichstag, it had lost votes to the traditional right-wing parties, the DNVP and the DVP. The KPD vote continued to rise. The combined left vote (KPD and SPD) was significantly greater than the Nazi vote. However, as explained earlier, up to the end of 1932 there was no chance of KPD-SPD cooperation. History might have been very different if there had been ...

In conservative circles there were genuine fears of the growing communist strength, and it was clear that any right-wing government needed Nazi support in order to be taken seriously. President Hindenburg was convinced by von Schleicher to dispense with von Papen and appoint von Schleicher as Chancellor instead. Von Schleicher hoped to build a wide coalition, including some of the 'left' Nazis. He approached Gregor Strasser and invited him to join his cabinet. When Hitler learned of this he exploded in fury and demanded Strasser reject the offer. Strasser resigned from the party. Von Schleicher's ambitions had come to nought.

At the end of 1932, the Nazis were in a very weak position. Electorally, their fortunes were on the slide, and they never again reached the heights of the July election result (at least in a fair and open

election). Not only was the November election result poor, but results in state and local elections also went very badly for the Nazis. The party was close to bankruptcy, challenging the idea that they were being bankrolled by Germany's leading capitalists. There were serious divisions within the party, not only between Hitler and Strasser's circle, but also between Hitler and SA leader Röhm. Most troubling of all for the Nazis, there was evidence that the worst of the Depression was over. Life was still hard in Germany in late 1932, but the Depression seemed to have bottomed out; Brüning's earlier tough policies were finally bringing some success. In fact, in Germany in late 1932 or early 1933, the idea that in a few weeks Adolf Hitler would be Chancellor would have seemed a fanciful notion.

Von Papen now became the key player. His goal was to destroy von Schleicher, who had robbed him of the Chancellor's post. Von Papen had an over-inflated opinion of his abilities, and believed he could be the man to lead Germany out of its troubles. However, he too knew that he needed the Nazis, at least in the short term. Von Papen met Hitler at the home of Cologne banker Kurt von Schröder in early January, and discussions continued over the next few weeks. Von Papen won DNVP leader Hugenberg over to the idea of working with Hitler; Hugenberg was close to Hindenburg. Von Papen also managed to bring some of the president's advisors on board with his plan.

Von Papen's intention was to allow Hitler to be Chancellor with von Papen as Vice-Chancellor. Out of a cabinet of 11, there would be three Nazis; Hugenberg was given the Economics and Agriculture Ministry. Hindenburg had major doubts about appointing Hitler. He despised the man, calling him 'that Bohemian corporal'. However, when von Schleicher revived Brüning's earlier 'Bolshevik' land settlement plan, Hindenburg's aristocratic circle convinced him to implement von Papen's plan. On 28 January, von Schleicher was forced to resign; two days later, Hitler was sworn in as Germany's Chancellor.

Von Papen expected to be able to use Hitler. He believed that Hitler's lack of experience and governmental ability would soon become apparent, and that he, von Papen, would be called upon to retake the reins of power. Von Papen claimed at the time, 'We have hired him. He will be a Chancellor in chains.'



SOURCE 3.23 Hitler gives the thumbs up shortly after learning that he was to be appointed Chancellor.



Conclusion

Few would have given the Weimar Republic much chance of surviving more than a few years following the introduction of its constitution in 1919. Indeed, its early years were dominated by street violence, attacks from the left and the right, the Treaty of Versailles and the hyperinflation of 1923. However, by 1924, it had weathered these storms, and for a few years in the mid-1920s, guided by Gustav Stresemann, it experienced economic prosperity and political stability. But these positive elements were only superficial. When the Depression hit Germany in 1929, prosperity collapsed and Germany entered a political crisis. Democracy was effectively neutralised from March 1930 as successive Chancellors ruled under presidential decree.

Hitler's failed coup attempt in 1923 persuaded him to seek power through the ballot box instead of through violence. Early poll results were not promising, but he used the lean years to strengthen the organisation of the Nazi Party. The onset of the Depression saw Weimar politics polarise, and Nazi support rapidly grew. However, the Nazis never achieved a majority, and by late 1932 their support was declining. It took a typical backroom political deal among the elites to finally bring Hitler to power in January 1933.

Chapter summary

- Germany's military leaders had handed over political power to the politicians before the armistice was signed.
- The new republic was burdened with responsibility for the armistice and the Treaty of Versailles.
- The Ebert-Groener Pact ensured the survival of the republic, but also the survival of the conservative elites, as an attempted left-wing revolution in early 1919 was crushed by army and Freikorps troops.
- Violence was endemic in the early years of the republic.
- Failure to keep up reparation payments resulted in the French occupation of the Ruhr in 1923. The government ordered a policy of passive resistance.
- In 1923 the German currency became worthless as the country experienced hyperinflation.
- The mid-1920s was a period of great prosperity and stability as the republic managed to overcome its considerable early problems, thanks largely to Stresemann's influence.
- However, beneath the surface there were major economic and political problems, which would come to the surface during the Depression.
- The Depression hit Germany more dramatically and more immediately than any other country.
- The socio-economic crisis of the Depression developed into a political crisis, which saw Müller's SPD-led government fall, to be replaced by Brüning.
- Once Brüning became Chancellor, democracy was effectively at an end, as the country was now ruled by presidential decree.
- The Depression led to political polarisation, as voters turned in droves towards parties of the extreme left and right.
- By July 1932, the Nazi Party had become the largest party in the Reichstag, and Hitler demanded, unsuccessfully, the post of Chancellor. Meanwhile, Germany was racked by mass street violence between warring paramilitary groups of left and right.
- Brüning was replaced by von Papen in May 1932, who in turn was eased out of power in late 1932, to be replaced by von Schleicher.
- Von Papen sought revenge against von Schleicher, and it was he who was responsible for organising the backroom deal that was to bring Hitler to power in January 1933, at a time when the Nazi Party's fortunes were actually in decline.

Additional resources

- Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, Penguin, London, 2004, Parts 1–4
- Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, Pan Books, London, 2001, Part 1
- Stephen J Lee, *European Dictatorships 1918–1945*, Routledge, Glasgow, 2010, pp. 178–97
- Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: Profiles in Power*, Longman, Harlow, 1991, Chapters 1–2

CHAPTER REVIEW

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

- 1 Who were the 'November Criminals'?
- 2 Explain the 'stab in the back' legend.
- 3 What was Army Commander von Seeckt's attitude towards the 1920 Kapp Putsch?
- 4 What happened to Germany's currency in 1923?
- 5 What was the main reason for the success of the German economy in the mid-1920s?
- 6 How electorally successful was the Nazi Party up to 1928?
- 7 Why was Müller forced to resign as Chancellor in March 1930?
- 8 What was the basis of Brüning's policy of deflation?
- 9 How successful were the Nazis in the March and July 1932 elections?
- 10 How did Hitler finally achieve the post of Chancellor?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 11 Why was the Weimar Republic considered to be such a golden age of culture? Examine some of the main developments in art, literature, music, architecture and cinema.
- 12 Examine the roles of Hugenberg, Röhm and Hindenburg during the years of the Weimar Republic.
- 13 What was the role of the army during the years of the Weimar Republic?

EXTENDED WRITING EXERCISE

- 14 To what extent could it be argued that the prosperity and stability of the Weimar Republic during the Stresemann years was only superficial?
- 15 'The Depression did not put Hitler into power. However, without the Depression Hitler would not have achieved power.' In light of this statement, how important was the Depression in bringing about the collapse of the Weimar Republic?

04

Nazi consolidation of power 1933–34

SYLLABUS OUTCOMES

In this chapter, students will examine how the Nazis consolidated their power in 1933–34.

Aspects to be covered include:

- the 'legal revolution',
- the role of terror and propaganda,
- Gleichschaltung,
- the Night of the Long Knives.



in History
syllabus

SOURCE 4.1 The remains of the Reichstag plenary sessions hall after the Reichstag burnt down in February 1933



Introduction

When Hitler came to power in January 1933, his political position was weak. Indeed, the conservative figures who had masterminded the deal to put him in power believed that 'they had hired him'. A month earlier, few people in Germany would have expected Hitler to be appointed Chancellor; on 30 January 1933, few would have expected him to last long in office. However, by the end of 1933, Nazi control of the country was almost complete. At the start of 1934, the only possible threats to Hitler's total domination of the country came from the ageing President Hindenburg, the army and Hitler's own SA. By August 1934, each of these threats was gone. Hitler's personal position was unassailable, and Nazi power was complete.

There is no simple explanation for how this was achieved. In one sense, the Nazi consolidation of power could be viewed as a legal process; some historians refer to the Nazi 'legal revolution'. However, it cannot be denied that terror and fear played a major role in the process. Yet fear was not always necessary; Goebbels' propaganda genius brought many around to at least tolerating the new regime. An examination of the process of '**Gleichschaltung**', the Nazi coordination of power, highlights how the Nazis managed to eliminate all possible sources of opposition to their rule.

It is important to also realise that there were many people in Germany at this time who were willing to do the Nazis' work for them. The age-old German tradition of law-enforcement agencies and the judicial system supporting the government worked strongly to the Nazis' advantage.

Hitler's elimination of the SA leadership in June 1934 not only silenced the left-wing dissidents within his own party, but also swung business interests and the army behind the Nazi regime. Hitler's actions against the SA even won President Hindenburg's admiration. When the president died in early August 1934, the only potential source of opposition to the Hitler regime was the German military.

Gleichschaltung

German for 'synchronisation'; refers to the Nazi coordination of political and social life as it consolidated its power between 1933 and 1934. This 'coordination' was often achieved with intimidation and open violence.

The Nazi consolidation of power 1933–34

1933

- **30 January** Hitler is appointed Chancellor of Germany
- There are three Nazis in a cabinet of 11
- **1 February** President Hindenburg dissolves the Reichstag
- New elections are called
- **4 February** Law for the Protection of the German People enacted
- **22 February** 50 000 SA and SS men join the Auxiliary Police
- **27 February** The Reichstag fire
- **28 February** The Reichstag Fire Decree issued
- **March** Opening of the first concentration camps at Dachau and Oranienburg
- Establishment of the Gestapo
- **5 March** Elections for the Reichstag: the Nazis gain 44% of the vote
- **13 March** Goebbels appointed Propaganda Minister
- **20 March** Opening of Dachau Concentration Camp
- **21 March** Potsdam Day
- **23 March** The Enabling Act is passed



| Year | Date | Event |
|------|--------------|--|
| 1934 | 1 April | National boycott of Jewish businesses |
| | 2 May | Trades unions are dissolved |
| | | Creation of the German Labour Front |
| | 10 May | Burning of 'un-German' books |
| | 26 May | Law for the seizing of communist assets is passed |
| | 22 June | The SPD is dissolved |
| | 27 June | The DNVP dissolves itself |
| | 28 June | The DDP dissolves itself |
| | 4 July | The DVP dissolves itself |
| | 5 July | The Centre Party dissolves itself |
| | 14 July | Law Against the Establishment of Political Parties is passed |
| | 20 July | Concordat signed with the Catholic Church |
| | 22 September | Formation of the Reich Chamber of Culture |
| | 12 November | Elections for the Reichstag. The Nazis gain 92% of the vote |
| | 1 December | Law for Ensuring the Unity of Party and State passed |
| | 20 January | Law for the Ordering of National Labour passed |
| | February | The Reichsrat is abolished |
| | April | Himmler takes control of the Gestapo |
| | | Establishment of the People's Court |
| | 11 April | Hitler's meeting with the generals aboard the <i>Deutschland</i> |
| | 17 June | Von Papen's Marburg Speech |
| | 30 June | The Night of the Long Knives |
| | 1 July | Murder of Röhm |
| | 2 August | Death of President Hindenburg |
| | | The post of president is abolished |
| | | Hitler is now 'Führer' and Reich Chancellor |
| | | The army swears an Oath of Allegiance to Hitler personally |

Consolidation of power within Germany

Von Papen and the other conservative elites felt pleased with the deal they had organised in late January 1933, which resulted in Hitler's appointment as Chancellor. The aim had been to use the support the Nazis had in the short term, discard Hitler once he had proven his unsuitability as Chancellor, and re-install von Papen. 'He [Hitler] will be a Chancellor in chains' was one of the boasts made by the conservative king-makers.

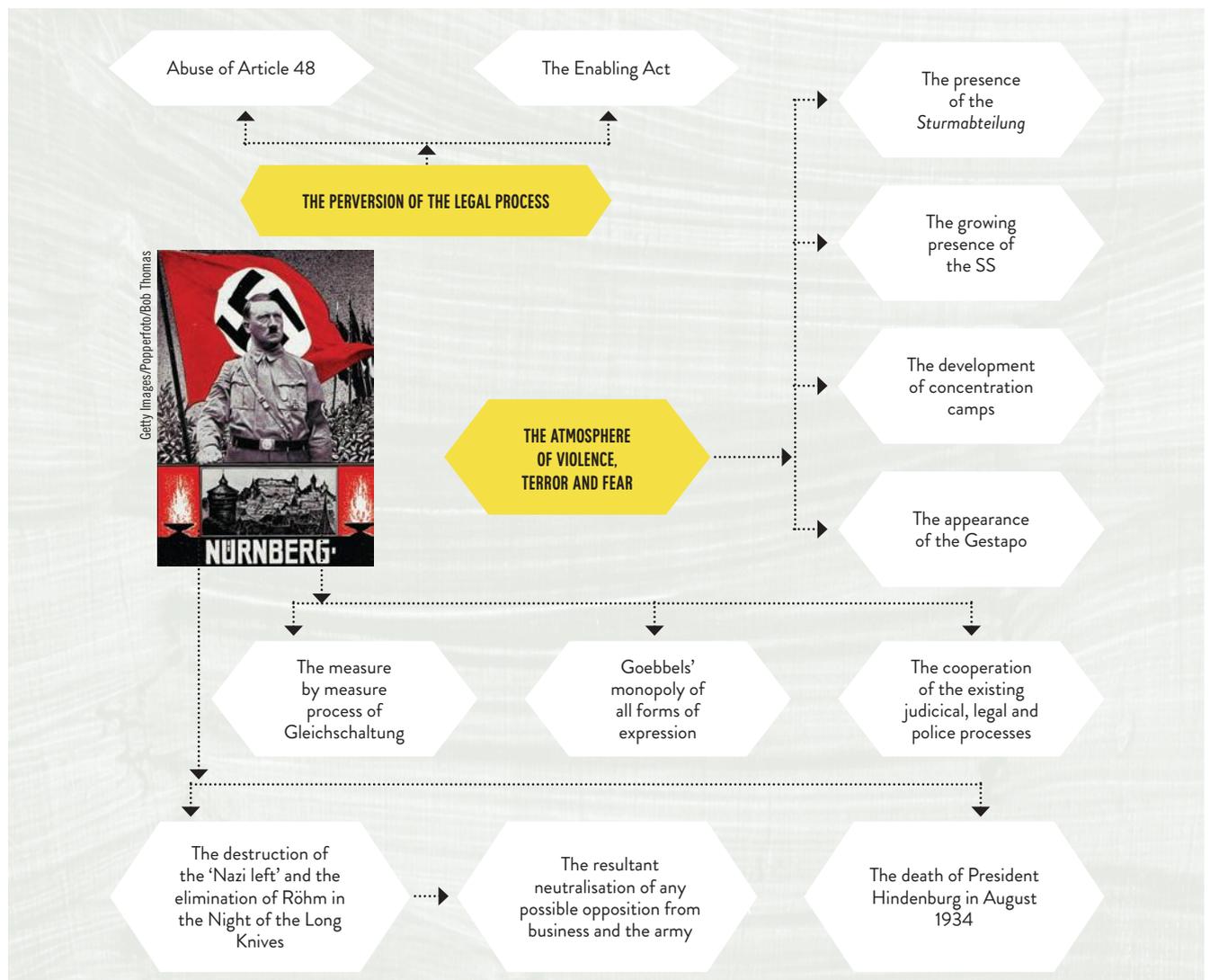
The evening of 30 January saw massive torchlight processions through Berlin as Nazi stormtroopers celebrated the Nazis' coming to power. These displays had been carefully organised by the future Nazi Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels. The stormtroopers certainly believed they were now in charge of Germany. However, at the time there were grounds for conservative optimism. The cabinet of 11 contained only three Nazis – Hitler, Wilhelm Frick (Interior Minister) and Hermann Goering (Prussian Interior Minister and **Minister without Portfolio**). Thus, the Nazis could always be outvoted in cabinet. Though Hindenburg had agreed with Hitler's appointment, his disdain for the man was well known. Nazi electoral support was falling, as seen in the two million-vote drop that occurred in the November 1932 Reichstag poll and in a series of state and municipal elections. It would seem that the Nazis' moment was passing.

Minister without Portfolio

A member of the cabinet who does not have responsibility for a specific area of government

Hitler was a great campaigner, but he was totally inexperienced in government and had never held an administrative post. Despite gaining the keys to the Chancellor's office, the Nazis were still greatly divided. Supporters of the now-departed Gregor Strasser were still angry about his treatment, and Ernst Röhm's influence and desire for his own power were steadily increasing as his SA organisation went from strength to strength.

But within 18 months, none of these factors counted for anything. Source 4.2 summarises the ways in which Hitler's position and Nazi power in general were consolidated in the 18 months following Hitler's appointment.



SOURCE 4.2 Summary of the process of the Nazi consolidation of power

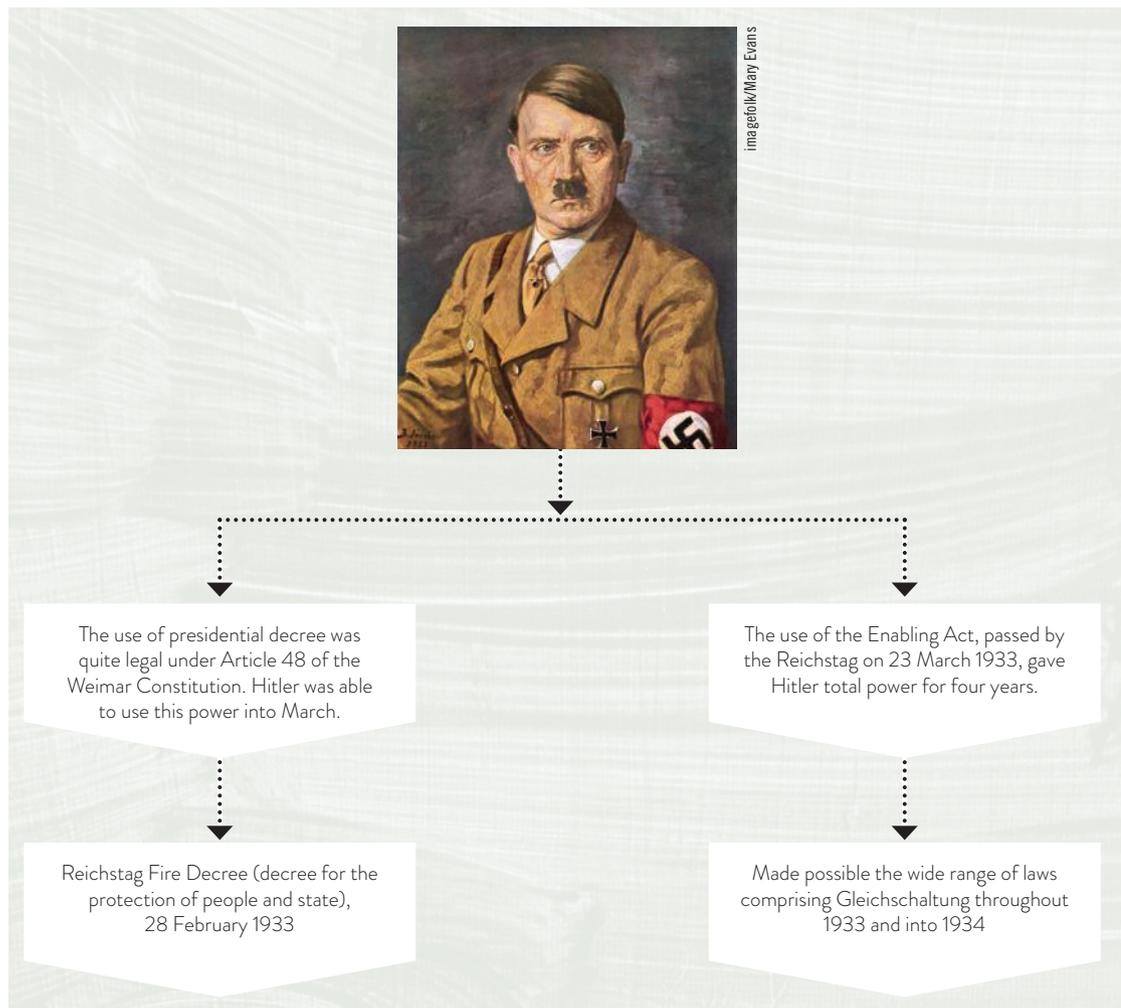


SOURCE 4.3 Nazi Stormtroopers celebrate Hitler's accession to power in Berlin, 30 January 1933

The 'legal revolution'

In a real sense, it could be argued that Hitler's accession to, and consolidation of, power was totally legal. There was no violent takeover of the government, though of course street violence, often initiated by SA thugs, was widespread. Though the Nazis never gained an electoral majority, the formation of Hitler's government in January 1933 differed little from the way other administrations had been put together. In fact, the Weimar Republic's constitution would never be formally annulled. The essential bases of Hitler's early 'legal' power are summarised in Source 4.4. President Hindenburg had taken an oath to protect the Weimar Constitution and the parliamentary order. However, Hitler had never

hidden his disdain for the democratic system, and made it clear that his aim was to end democracy. Thus, did Hindenburg violate his oath to the constitution by accepting Hitler as Chancellor?



SOURCE 4.4 The legal bases of Hitler's power

During the early weeks of his power, Hitler ruled as the previous Chancellors had, making use of presidential decrees, which was allowed under Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution. Hitler was very keen to hold new elections and consolidate his power, and so on 1 February he asked President Hindenburg to dissolve the Reichstag. New elections were called for 5 March. Hindenburg was legally allowed to do this under Article 25 of the constitution.

Though there were only three Nazis in the cabinet, their influence was significant. As Chancellor, Hitler's authority was, of course, considerable. Equally important was the fact that Frick was Federal Interior Minister, while Goering was Interior Minister of the largest state, Prussia. Their combined power gave the Nazis control of the police. In mid-February, Goering ordered the Prussian police to end its surveillance of the Nazis and the SA. On 22 February, he established an auxiliary police force of 50 000, mostly comprising members of the SA and the SS. The SA was now given the green light to go on the rampage against communists, SPD members and trade unionists. Across Germany, no police action was taken against Nazi violence, and opponents of the Nazis were pursued relentlessly.

Just before Hitler was appointed Chancellor, General von Blomberg was made Defence Minister. Von Papen and Hindenburg had hoped 'their man in government' could keep a check on the Nazis. However, though von Blomberg forbade members of the army to join the Nazi Party, his sympathies towards Nazism were strong. On 3 February, Hitler spoke to army leaders, promising conscription, an end to Versailles, and expansion. The generals were impressed; the effect of these developments was to keep the army at least 'neutral' during the consolidation period.

With an election campaign in full swing, the Nazis played up the danger of a communist revolt within Germany. On 4 February, Hindenburg allowed the Law for the Protection of the German People, which banned left-wing meetings, newspapers and other activities. However, it did not ban the Communist Party. It suited Hitler to keep the communist 'bogey' alive. He emphasised in his election speeches that the German people had a choice between 'the swastika' and the 'hammer and sickle'. Attacks on the communists mounted, yet there was no noticeable increase in communist actions. The communists believed that the Nazi regime would not last, that the Hitler government was the last gasp of German capitalism and that the people would soon rise up, as their comrades had done in Russia in 1917.

.....
hammer and sickle
The symbol of communist parties of the time

- 1 What was the popular expectation about Hitler's leadership at the time of his appointment as Chancellor?
- 2 Can it be argued that Hitler's assumption of power was legal?
- 3 What was Hitler's first decision as Chancellor?
- 4 Why were Frick and Goering so influential in the early days of Nazi rule?
- 5 How was Hitler trying to keep the army onside?

The Reichstag fire

On 27 February, the Reichstag building went up in flames. Hitler allegedly confided to an English diplomat that he hoped the communists were responsible. As the flames leapt ever higher, Hitler could hardly believe his luck, though it is almost certain that the Nazis were not behind the action. They did not hesitate to present the fire as evidence of a communist plot in the making. A mentally disturbed young Dutchman, Marinus van der Lubbe, was arrested at the scene and he freely confessed to the crime. Nazi propaganda painted van der Lubbe as a communist agent, signalling the start of the revolution.

Hitler immediately had Hindenburg issue the Decree for the Protection of People and State, known as the Reichstag Fire Decree. This 'legal' measure was to provide the legal basis for everything the Nazis would do in the following months. In essence, it removed those civil liberties guaranteed by the constitution. In addition, the law ceded some of the president's powers to Hitler's government. The Nazis now had the legal power to do almost anything they wished.



Reichstag fire



SOURCE 4.5 The Reichstag fire, 27 February 1933

Reichstag Fire Decree

Paragraph 1 of the Reichstag Fire Decree:

Article 1: 1. Articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124, and 153 of the Constitution of the German Reich are suspended until further notice. Thus restrictions on personal liberty, on the right to free expression of opinion, including freedom of the press, on the right of assembly and association, and violations of the privacy of postal, telegraphic and telephonic communications, and warrants for house searches, orders for confiscations as well as restrictions on property rights are permissible beyond the legal limits otherwise prescribed.

Article 2: If any state fails to take the necessary measures to restore public safety and order, the Reich government may temporarily take over the powers of the highest state authority.

Article 3: State and local authorities must obey the orders decreed by the Reich government on the basis of Article 2.

Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of the People and State ('Reichstag Fire Decree'), 28 February 1933

QUESTIONS

- 1 What had the Reichstag Fire Decree effectively done to the freedoms and rights that were enshrined within the Weimar constitution?
- 2 How had the Reichstag Fire Decree ensured the control of Hitler's 'federal' government over Germany's 'state' governments?

After the fire, violence rose to unprecedented levels. As was to become the pattern of the Nazi regime, the Nazi leaders did not give any specific orders about what action should be taken. And in March 1933, they were not controlling the violence. The leadership would make vague, general statements and then the lower sections of the party acted in the manner they believed their leaders were suggesting. The Communist Party was still not banned, as Hitler wanted individual communists to be treated as 'criminals'. Also, if the party had been banned, many on the left might have switched to the SPD, and so by allowing the KPD to exist, Hitler was able to ensure continuing division on the left. Richard Evans gives a flavour of the violence of the time.

“ ... All over the country, Communist Party organisations were smashed, offices occupied, activists taken into custody. Often the Stormtroopers carried off any funds they could lay their hands on, and looted the homes of Communist Party members for cash and valuables while the police looked on. Soon the wave of arrests swelled to many times the number originally envisaged. Ten thousand Communists had been put into custody by 15 March ...¹ ”

The KPD was finally outlawed on 6 March, the day after the election.

The Reichstag Fire Decree was supplemented on 21 March by the ‘Decree for the Protection of the National Movement against Malicious Attacks upon the Government’, which meant people could be imprisoned for making statements that were deemed to ‘harm the welfare of the Reich’. This law was replaced on 20 December 1934 with the ‘Law Against Malicious Attacks on State and Party and for the Protection of the Party Uniforms’. This law provided for the imprisonment of anyone who might make even the most casual or innocuous remarks about the regime or its leaders.

Evans comments on the speed with which the Nazis were consolidating their power.

“ ... Germany was well on the way to becoming a dictatorship even before the Reichstag fire decree and the elections of 5 March 1933. But these two events undoubtedly speeded it up and provided it with the appearance, however threadbare, of legal and political legitimisation ...² ”

The Nazis presented themselves as the saviours and future of Germany, hoping to sweep to victory in the coming elections. Table 4.1 summarises the March 1933 election results.

TABLE 4.1 March 1933 election results

| PARTY | VOTE PERCENTAGE WON IN NOVEMBER 1932 ELECTION | VOTE PERCENTAGE WON IN MARCH 1933 ELECTION |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| KPD (Communists) | 16.9 | 12.2 |
| SPD (Social Democrats) | 20.4 | 18.2 |
| DDP (Democratic) | 1.0 | 0.9 |
| Centre Party | 11.9 | 11.0 |
| BVP (Bavarian People's) | 3.1 | 3.1 |
| DVP (German People's) | 1.9 | 1.1 |
| DNVP (Nationalists) | 8.8 | 8.0 |
| Nazi Party | 33.1 | 43.9 |

The March election results were a disappointment for the Nazis, despite Goebbels’ diary entry describing them as ‘fantastic results’. Despite the intimidation, the propaganda blitz and their control of the government, the Nazis only gained 44 per cent of the vote. The KPD still managed over 12 per cent. In fact, out of an electorate of 45 million, only 17 million had voted for the Nazis. To amend the constitution, the Nazis needed two-thirds of the Reichstag votes. However, the Nazis were able to form a coalition with Hugenberg’s DNVP, which polled 8 per cent, giving them a majority of 51.9 per cent.

The new parliament met in the Kroll Opera House shortly after the election. The main item of business was the introduction of an ‘Enabling Act’. If passed, the act would allow the Chancellor to introduce laws that went against the constitution, that did not have the approval of the Reichstag and had not been referred to the President. The Act was to be introduced on 23 March, and would operate for a period of four years, then it would have to be re-presented to the parliament.

As deputies came into the opera house to vote on the Act, the atmosphere of intimidation was immense. Hundreds of SA men, many armed, roamed the outside of the building and wandered up

and down the aisles inside. It would take a brave person to vote against the Act. After a few speeches, the Enabling Act was passed into law by 444 votes to 94, with only SPD deputies voting against it. Reichstag chairman Goering had forbidden the communists' deputies to take their seats. This action would have had little impact on the voting, but it could be argued that Goering's high-handed action removed the element of legality from the passage of the Act.

The Enabling Act gave Hitler the legal right to rule by decree and to bypass the President if he chose. The opinions of the Reichstag could be ignored. Few people had any doubts that the law would never be cancelled after four years, and indeed it was renewed again in 1937 and 1939, and made permanent in 1943. The path was now clear for all possible sources of opposition to be eliminated. The Enabling Act made such a program 'technically' legal.

- 1 Why was the Reichstag fire such good news for the Nazis?
- 2 What was the significance of the Reichstag Fire Decree?
- 3 How responsible were Hitler and the Nazi leadership for the violence that spread across Germany in early 1933?
- 4 How did the Enabling Act assist the Nazi consolidation of power?

The Potsdam Ceremony

On 13 March 1933, Joseph Goebbels joined the cabinet as Minister for Propaganda and National Enlightenment. One of his first propaganda successes was his organisation of the Potsdam Ceremony on 21 March. The purpose of the ceremony was the official opening of the new parliament. Goebbels chose Potsdam rather than Berlin because of Potsdam's deep association with German history. His aim was to link the current Nazi regime with the glory of previous historic figures like Frederick the Great. The main part of the ceremony was held in the Garrison Church, where Frederick the Great was buried. Even the date was significant, as it was on this day that the first Reichstag of Bismarck's Second Reich was opened in 1871. Carefully study the photograph, then answer the questions that follow.



Many Stock Photo/Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo

SOURCE 4.6 Hitler shakes hands with Hindenburg at the Potsdam Ceremony in 1933.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Comment on the way Hitler is bowing deeply to Hindenburg. Why is Hitler behaving this way? Does it imply the superiority of Hindenburg's power?
- 2 Look at how Hitler is dressed. He normally wore a Nazi uniform, but not on this occasion. Why?
- 3 Hitler is surrounded by senior army officers. What is the significance of this?
- 4 Just out of the picture are many old black, white and red imperial flags instead of the black, red and gold flags of the Weimar Republic. Comment on this. What is Goebbels trying to say about the Weimar Republic?

The reality of terror

Terror as a means of control became a key element of the regime during the early Nazi consolidation of power. (This will be more fully examined in chapter 6.) As Richard Evans observes:

“Far from being directed against particular, widely unpopular minorities, the terror was comprehensive in scope, affecting anyone who expressed dissent in public, from whatever direction against deviants, vagrants, nonconformists of every kind.”

Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, Penguin, London, 2004, p. 381

The SA was growing in strength every day, and would eventually have more than three million members. They were able to roam the streets of Germany and attack opponents of the regime, real or imagined, with impunity. At this time the smaller, more tightly organised elite SS were more concerned with discipline within the party.

In early March, the Munich-based leader of the SS, Heinrich Himmler, became Provisional Police President in Bavaria. Himmler proceeded to order mass arrests of opponents of the Nazis, and soon conventional prisons proved inadequate for the enormous number of people in custody. As a result, on 20 March, Himmler informed the press that a ‘concentration camp’ was being constructed at Dachau, outside of Munich, to house the large numbers who had been arrested. The Dachau camp was placed under the command of the SS leader Hilmar Wäckerle. With Himmler’s blessing, Wäckerle ensured that Dachau would be run on a basis of violence and terror. Other concentration camps soon appeared across Germany, usually under the supervision of the thugs of the SA.



SOURCE 4.7 The gate of the Oranienberg/Sachsenhausen concentration camp



SOURCE 4.8 The grounds of the camp, showing the watchtowers and barracks

However, it would be wrong to view these concentration camps as a response to an immediate law and order issue. Hitler had predicted the use of such camps as far back as 1923, and the Nazi press was pushing for them throughout 1932. All along, the Nazis had intended to use such places.

The use of concentration camps was widely publicised. The Nazis wanted the general public to know about the intolerable conditions within the camps and the brutal treatment that inmates suffered as a matter of course. The opening of a camp was a front-page newspaper story. Knowledge of what awaited anyone who dared oppose the Nazis became enough to prevent any meaningful opposition.

The violence inflicted on inmates in the early camps of 1933 was sadistic and haphazard. It was not refined or inventive, as such treatment was to become, but primarily involved nothing more than savage beatings and kickings. The early camps were for political opponents, not for Jews, as would later be the case. Though their treatment was appalling, few inmates died in the camps. The Nazis

wanted the inmates to be able to leave, in the hope that they would spread the word about conditions. At the start of the Nazi regime, inmates rarely spent longer than a few weeks in the camps.

Communist Party leaders claimed that by the end of 1933, more than 130 000 party members had been arrested, and up to 2500 killed. The Prussian police claimed to have arrested 20 000 communists in Prussia alone. Throughout 1933, the secret state police – the Geheime Staatspolizei, or Gestapo – was steadily growing. Initially under the control of Goering, the Gestapo was to become greatly feared throughout Germany. Its existence, and people’s fear of coming to its attention, did much to drastically limit open opposition to Nazi rule.

Legal and judicial cooperation

Much of the legal and judicial work in suppressing opponents of the Nazi regime, both real and imagined, was carried out by judges, lawyers, police and officials who were already in place before the appointment of Hitler. These were men and women who, in the time-honoured German tradition, were simply doing their duty and serving the state.

At the time the Nazis assumed power, very few judges and state prosecution lawyers were card-carrying members of the party. However, the Nazis experienced few problems with the existing legal institutions. Some lawyers did protest about the violent actions during the early months of Hitler’s chancellorship, but the vast majority did not. In Prussia there were more than 45 000 such officials. Just over 500 were removed, either for political reasons or because they were non-Aryan. Similar developments were happening in other states across Germany.

The Nazis were quick to tighten provisions of the legal code, and gradually more offences carried the death penalty. A People’s Court was established in 1934. A state or city prosecutor would forward the names of the accused to the court. Proceedings before a People’s Court judge were notoriously brief, and a trial could be over in 15 minutes (the average was an hour). Charges were read, the judge would berate the accused, the accused might be allowed to say something – but would immediately face further berating – and then the sentence would be announced. Prosecution and defence counsels were present, but rarely contributed. The Nazis had no problem staffing these courts.

Historian Ian Kershaw makes the point that most judges and lawyers of the Weimar Republic had been anti-democratic, and supportive of a return to authoritarian government, and so sympathised with the regime. They accepted the harshness of Nazi laws, were willing to extend the death penalty and happily went along with retrospective legislation. Kershaw gives a classic example of this behaviour with reference to Justice Minister Franz Gürtner.

“ ... Gürtner was concerned to uphold the legal system and to keep separate the roles of the judiciary and police. But his philosophy and his actions demonstrated how open his position was to exploitation by those forces in the regime – starting with Hitler – which were wholly unscrupulous in their approach to principles of legal rectitude.

The hopelessness of the legalists’ position resided ultimately in their willing acceptance of the unique nature and unlimited power of the Führer – a principle which in essence contradicted entirely the premise of rule on the basis of legal norms ... ”

Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, Longman, Harlow, 1991, pp. 77–8

Gleichschaltung

The atmosphere of violence, fear and terror that pervaded Germany during the early months of Nazi rule was almost certainly the driving factor in the speedy consolidation of Nazi power. However, the Nazis were equally active in eliminating all possible sources of opposition through ‘legal processes’ or ‘the cooperation’ of potential opponents. This process of imposing Nazi control on all areas of German life became known as Gleichschaltung, or ‘coordination’. Table 4.2 demonstrates how the process of Gleichschaltung proceeded.

Aryan

A word from Sanskrit, meaning noble. Initially it referred to the family of Indo-European languages, but from the late nineteenth century the term became increasingly associated with racial theory.

TABLE 4.2 Aspects of Gleichschaltung

| POSSIBLE SOURCE OF OPPOSITION | NATURE OF THE OPPOSITION | HOW THE POTENTIAL OPPOSITION WAS ELIMINATED |
|--|--|---|
| The Reichstag | With only 196 seats in the Reichstag, the Nazis did not have control. They potentially faced the same problems that had faced previous governments. | The 5 March elections gave the Nazis 43.9% of the vote. They joined the Nationalists to have 51.9%, giving them a majority, and hence control of the Reichstag. However, the Reichstag Fire Decree and the Enabling Act had made the Reichstag irrelevant anyway. |
| Organised labour/ the trade unions | Organised labour was openly opposed to the Nazis. It was strike action in 1920 that broke the attempted right-wing takeover of power with the Kapp Putsch. | Organised labour was in a weak position due to the high levels of unemployment. Goebbels declared 1 May – a traditional labour celebration day – a public holiday, calling it the Day of National Labour. On 2 May, SA and SS forces invaded trade union offices across the country. The trade union bank was occupied, union newspapers were closed down and thousands of trade unionists were rounded up and put in concentration camps. On 4 May the Christian trade unions and others voluntarily placed themselves under Nazi control. |
| Communists | The communist threat to Germany was never as real as the Nazis wanted people to believe. Communist inactivity was explained above. | Immediately after the Reichstag Fire Decree, thousands of communists were rounded up and sent to concentration camps. The KPD was formally made illegal on 6 March. |
| Social Democrats | The SPD had been the largest party in the Reichstag until July 1932 and still held the loyalty of many Germans. | From early February, SPD members were beaten and intimidated. Thousands found themselves in the same situation as KPD members. The SPD was formally banned on 23 June. |
| The DDP | The DDP, by now called the State Party, had been demolished in successive elections. It was no real threat to the Nazis. | The State Party formally dissolved itself on 28 June. |
| The DVP | The DVP had moved towards the right after Stresemann's death. Its representation in the Reichstag had become negligible. | The DVP dissolved itself on 4 July. |
| The DNVP | Hugenberg's party, the DNVP, had joined the coalition that placed Hitler in power. This 'coalition' continued in the 5 March elections, and it supported the Enabling Act. | Hugenberg's disillusion with Hitler led to his resignation in late June. His action was unimportant, and the remaining DNVP members met Hitler to form a 'Friendship Agreement', which led to the party's dissolution. |
| The Catholic Church and the Centre Party | The Catholic Church had been moving steadily towards the right and an authoritarian stance for several years (as it was in most European countries). Its prime concern was to protect the interests of the church. | The Catholic Church came to an understanding with the Nazis. It signed a 'Concordat' in July promising to remove itself from political life in return for a guarantee that the Church's rights would be upheld throughout Germany. The (Catholic) Centre Party dissolved itself on 5 July. |



| → POSSIBLE SOURCE OF OPPOSITION | NATURE OF THE OPPOSITION | HOW THE POTENTIAL OPPOSITION WAS ELIMINATED |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| The Steel Helmets | The paramilitary group associated with the DNVP, the Steel Helmets, had grown to almost a million members by 1933. It was led by Franz Seldte, who was a member of Hitler's cabinet. Seldte joined the Nazi Party on 26 April. | The Steel Helmets shared similar values to the Nazis and had assisted the SA in 'police' actions during the early months of 1933. At the end of May, the Steel Helmets were absorbed into the Nazi SA. |
| Provincial political leaders | Germany had a federal system with state governments, similar to Australia. Could these local centres of power provide opposition to the Nazi regime? | Hitler had organised the party into regional organisations, or Gaus, in the 1920s. Once the Nazis were in power, the head of each Gau, called a Gauleiter, became a powerful figure, answerable only to Hitler. State government administrations became mere rubber stamps. |
| Municipal leaders | There was also a possibility of opposition to the Nazis at a municipal level. | SA and SS troops took over council offices, town halls, government offices, hospitals and a whole range of public institutions. Public officials were given a choice: join the Nazi Party or face the consequences. |
| The civil service | After SA and SS attacked upturned administrations across the country, some kind of order needed to be imposed. | The removal of officials across the country was 'legalised' with the 7 April 'Law for the Restoration of a Professional Civil Service'. Further removals from office included those considered lacking skills and/or political reliability. Non-Aryans were also removed. (See chapter 7.) |
| The professions | As political opposition became impossible, the Nazis understood that dissent might occur within the associations that existed for various professional and occupational groups. | To deal with this threat, teachers were forced into the National Socialist Teachers League. Lawyers' groups were forced to merge with the League of National Socialist Lawyers, forming the Front of German Law. The Federation of German Women's Associations was ordered to dissolve itself and join the Nazi Women's Front. |
| Business groups | Business was keen to display its support for the new regime. | Nazis were brought onto the boards of industry groups such as the Reich Association of German Industry. Industry groups were quick to form a united Reich Corporation of German Industry and declare their backing for the Nazis. |
| Agrarian groups | Farming groups were already supportive of the Nazis, as Nazi propaganda had made much of the value of the man on the land and its preference for rural values over urban. | Though Hugenberg was nominally in charge of agriculture, Walther Darré, head of the Nazi Party's Farmers' Organisation, quickly coordinated the rural sector by forcing agricultural organisations into a unitary Nazi grouping. |

The process of Gleichschaltung never really came to an end, and Nazi control continued unabated throughout the 1930s. No aspect of political, social or associational life was allowed to escape the tentacles of the party's control, which reached from the national level right into the smallest village. The Nazis' desire to dominate all areas of German society had no limits; even the leadership of the National Rabbit Breeders' Association was purged and replaced with Nazi officials! How the Nazis gained and maintained control in areas of life such as cultural expression, religion, and control over the workers, youth, women and minority groups, including the Jews, will be examined in chapter 7. The Nazis' exercise of control, including the use of propaganda and repression, will be examined in more detail in chapter 6.



- 1 Why did the left prove to be so ineffective in opposing the Nazi consolidation of power?
- 2 Why were right-wing parties so ready to dissolve themselves?
- 3 What does the takeover of the National Rabbit Breeders' Association suggest about how the Nazis perceived the nature of the state?

JOSEPH GOEBBELS (1897–1945)

Joseph Goebbels was one of the key figures in the Nazi regime. As Minister of Propaganda and Enlightenment, he was the person primarily responsible for creating the super-human image of Adolf Hitler and raising the Führer to almost godlike status in the eyes of the German people.

Goebbels was born in 1897 in the town of Rheydt. Raised in a Roman Catholic family, it is said that he had at one time contemplated going into the priesthood. The young Goebbels often suffered ill health, and was born with a right foot that turned inwards. As a result of his 'club foot', Goebbels was denied entry into the army during World War I.

Though he may have had health issues, Goebbels excelled in intellectual pursuits. He attended the University of Heidelberg and went on to earn a Doctorate of Philosophy. Goebbels was a captivating public speaker, second only to Hitler himself. His studies drew him to the works of men like Houston Stewart Chamberlain (see chapter 5), and Goebbels soon developed strong anti-Semitic views.

Goebbels joined a northern branch of the Nazi Party in 1924. His talents were quickly recognised, and in 1926 he became Gauleiter of the Berlin region and was placed in charge of the local SA and SS. At first, Goebbels was close to Gregor Strasser, and embraced the more socialist

elements of the Nazi Party Program. In his early days of party membership, he had disagreements with Hitler over the party's aims. However, following meetings with Hitler in 1926 and 1927, Goebbels became captivated by the Führer's conviction and charisma, and from then on became an unquestioning and devoted follower of Hitler.

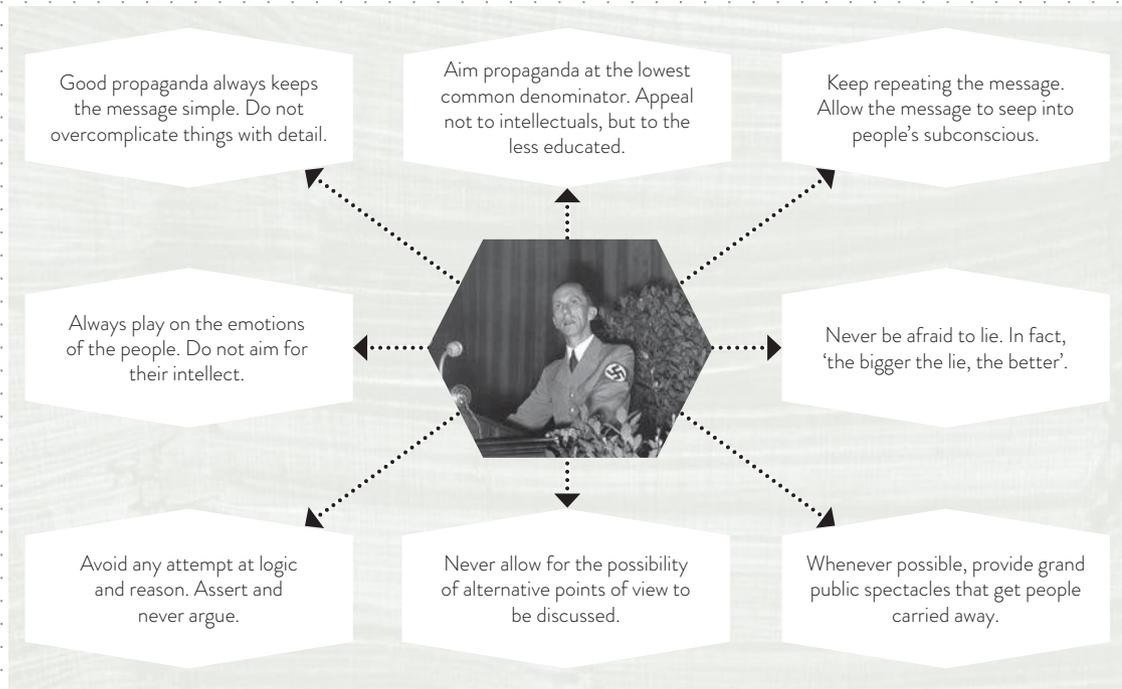
In 1928, Goebbels became one of only 12 Nazis elected to the Reichstag. Hitler made him National Director of Propaganda, and Goebbels' genius was showcased in this role well into the war years. Goebbels' manipulation of the Potsdam Ceremony has been described in the source study on page 88, and his propaganda work will be discussed more fully in chapter 7.

Goebbels' genius as a propagandist was rooted in his deep understanding of human psychology. He understood what worked as successful propaganda, and the 'lessons' he taught continue to be used even today by political leaders in both Australia and around the world. Source 4.9 summarises Goebbels' principles of successful propaganda.



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Alamy Stock Photo/Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo

SOURCE 4.9 Goebbels' principles of successful propaganda

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1 How have Goebbels' principles of propaganda been used by US President Donald Trump before and after his election in 2016, and by North Korean leader Kim Jong-un since his assumption of power in 2011?
- 2 Have Australian politicians used Goebbels' principles?

Dr Bernward Dörner

Bernward Dörner is a historian and lecturer at the Centre for Anti-Semitic Studies at the Technical University of Berlin. In this article, Dörner explains how the Nazis cleverly managed to synthesise constitutional legitimacy, their popular appeal and their use of terror in the process of the consolidation of power. Two disturbing elements are quickly revealed in Dörner's analysis: first, how enthusiastic many sections of society were to go along with the process, and second, the ease with which the Nazis achieved their objective.

... When President Paul von Hindenburg appointed Adolf Hitler as Chancellor on January 30, 1933, the National Socialists gained access to the mechanisms of state power. The conservative elites also facilitated the disastrous transformation of German politics with their readiness to assume positions in Hitler's cabinet. The way in which power was transferred provided the decisive prerequisite for the National Socialists' ability to instrumentalise the apparatus of the state for their political goals in a 'completely legal' manner – without a putsch, without open civil war and without an irreconcilable 'division of the nation'. Propaganda and terror, both instruments of National Socialist politics well established in the Weimar Republic, could now function together, under completely transformed conditions, to develop and consolidate the Nazi regime ...



→ ... A national mood of euphoria amplified the tendency to identify with the new regime. Along with this wave of enthusiasm, the collective optimism of the German people grew as well, with only limited opposition to the national delirium ... By the end of 1934 the NSDAP's membership tripled to approximately 2.5 million. No German city wanted to miss the opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to the new regime. Thousands of communities named Hitler as an honorary citizen ... There was scarcely a single organisation that did not send a declaration of loyalty to the new leadership in the weeks after the seizure of power.

At the same time, the new state leadership both unleashed a massive wave of terror and tolerated independent acts of violence and intimidation. In the wake of the nation's celebratory mood, the persecution of political opponents and critics escalated rapidly ... Persecution and terror developed partly on the streets and partly outside public view, yet the regime consciously chose not to conceal the use of these tools; instead they frequently exercised them in an ostentatious manner for all to see ...

Bernward Dörner, 'Between the Führer Myth, Everyday Life and Genocide: Germans and the Nazi regime', in *Topography of Terror: A Documentation*, Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, Berlin, 2014, pp. 59, 60

QUESTIONS

- 1 What does Dörner believe was the consequence of the conservative elites' eagerness to serve in Hitler's government?
- 2 When describing Germany in early 1933, Dörner uses the term 'national delirium'. What does this suggest about the state of Germany at this time?
- 3 How do you explain the widespread desire of so many Germans to identify with the new regime at this time?
- 4 Why did the Nazis exercise terror in 'an ostentatious manner'?

ERNST RÖHM (1887–1934)

Ernst Röhm was born in Munich in 1887. He was a career soldier, and had been commissioned before the outbreak of war. He served on the Western Front throughout the war, and was badly wounded on two occasions. After the war he joined one of the various Freikorps groups that were appearing across Germany at the time. In 1920, Röhm had worked for General von Epp, the military area commander in Munich. As such, he had been involved in the *Einwohnerwehr*, one of many right-wing groups that fought the communists. He became a member of the German Workers' Party shortly before Hitler joined.

The Nazi Party's paramilitary wing, the SA, or *Sturmabteilung*, had been formed not only to protect the party but also to break up opponents' meetings, using whatever force was deemed necessary. In 1922, Goering took charge of the SA, but it was soon Röhm who became the

organisation's driving force.

The SA included many of society's outcasts – thugs, criminals, 'lost' ex-servicemen. Some, like Röhm, were homosexual. Hitler found Röhm's homosexuality repugnant but tolerated it, such was the value he placed on Röhm's ability.

After Hitler's release from prison in 1924, he and Röhm had a major disagreement about the role of the SA in a future Nazi state. Hitler was already thinking of *Lebensraum* – the creation of a new German empire in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union – and the need for a professional army, whereas Röhm had visions of the SA absorbing the army. In 1925, Röhm left the SA, although he remained influential within



Getty Images/Corbis Historical/Library of Congress



→ the party. In 1928, he tried to have his former lover, Edmund Heines, reinstated as head of the Munich SA, but Hitler refused. Angered by Hitler's treatment of Heines, Röhm accepted an appointment in a military mission to Bolivia. He left Germany in January 1929. With the onset of the Depression and the growth in Nazi support,

the SA continued to grow and was becoming unwieldy. Hitler persuaded Röhm to return from Bolivia to once again take charge of the SA and return it to some sort of order.

The historian John Toland describes Röhm as follows:

... He was short and stocky with closely cropped hair and an engaging smile. He was a walking monument to the war; the upper part of his nose had been shot away and a bullet had left a deep scar in one cheek ... Between Hitler and Röhm were bonds of blood and suffering since both belonged to the brotherhood of the front-line fighter ...

John Toland, *Adolf Hitler*, Doubleday, New York, 1976, p. 98

Destruction of the SA

The speed with which Hitler and the Nazis had been able to consolidate their power was breathtaking. At the end of January 1933, Hitler's position was weak. Few expected him to survive as Chancellor, and it was apparent that Nazi support across the country was waning. But by the beginning of 1934, the Nazi hold on power was almost absolute. The left had been annihilated, the right had fallen into line, the process of Gleichschaltung had brought the country's institutions under party control, and the atmosphere of fear that pervaded the country ensured that there was virtually no possibility of organised opposition to the regime.

However, Hitler's position was not totally secure. Although the chances of opposition from outside the party had been eliminated, he still faced serious threats from within. Elements of the Nazi Party were continuing to call for a more radical transformation of German society, and were disappointed that the 'Nazi Revolution' had been compromised. They were not happy to see Hitler on platforms with bankers, industrialists and other elites. For the left, the 'Nazi Revolution' was not over; it had only just begun.

During the early months of 1934, it was SA leader Ernst Röhm who posed the most significant threat to Hitler's position – at that point he was regarded as the second-most powerful figure within the movement. Röhm had fundamental disagreements with Hitler over the future of both the party and the country. Röhm and his supporters believed that there should be a 'Second Revolution', and called for a wholesale Nazification of German society and economy. They held a radical vision of National Socialism that would see takeovers of businesses and banks and the removal of reactionary elites from their positions of power. Röhm believed in a true revolution from below.

However, Röhm wanted to go even further than that. At the beginning of 1934, Röhm was in a powerful position as head of the SA, which now numbered almost 3.5 million members. Röhm's control of the SA was an amazing feat, but the SA was now an organisation without the same unifying function it had boasted before the seizure of power. By some accounts, Röhm's dream was to absorb the German army into the SA. He wanted to eliminate the upper-class, aristocratic, Prussian officer elite and replace them with his tough SA officers. At the head of this new egalitarian-style military force would, of course, be Röhm.

It was clear that Röhm's ambitions did not stop there. As far as he was concerned, it was his SA streetfighters who had made the first stage of the Nazi Revolution possible. Perhaps Röhm even saw himself as the rightful Führer of Germany. Aware of this threat, Hitler attempted to calm things by inviting Röhm into his cabinet in December 1933. However, Röhm was not mollified by this gesture, and he continued to push for radical socio-economic change, and for the SA to replace the army as Germany's military force. Röhm never made any secret of his intentions. In June 1933 he wrote:

“ ... The SA and the SS will not tolerate the German Revolution going to sleep ... we will continue our struggle ... ”

Ernst Röhm, speech, June 1933, quoted at <http://spartacus-educational.com/GERoehm.htm>

On 6 August, in a speech to SA members, he stated:

“ ... Anyone who thinks the task of the SA has been accomplished will have to get used to the idea that we are here, and that we intend to stay here, come what may ... ”

Ernst Röhm, 6 August 1933, quoted in Jean Denis Lepage, *Hitler's Stormtroopers: The SA, The Nazis' Brownshirts, 1922–1945*, Frontline Publishing, Barnsley, 2016, p. 232

On 5 November, in a speech at the Berlin Sportpalast, he said:

“ ... One often hears voices in the bourgeois camp to the effect that the SA has lost any reason for existence, but I will tell these gentlemen that the old bureaucratic spirit must yet be changed in a gentle or, if need be, an ungentle manner ... ”

Ernst Röhm speech, 5 November 1933, Berlin, quoted in *The SS: Alibi of a Nation, 1922–1945*, De Capo Press, Boston, 1989

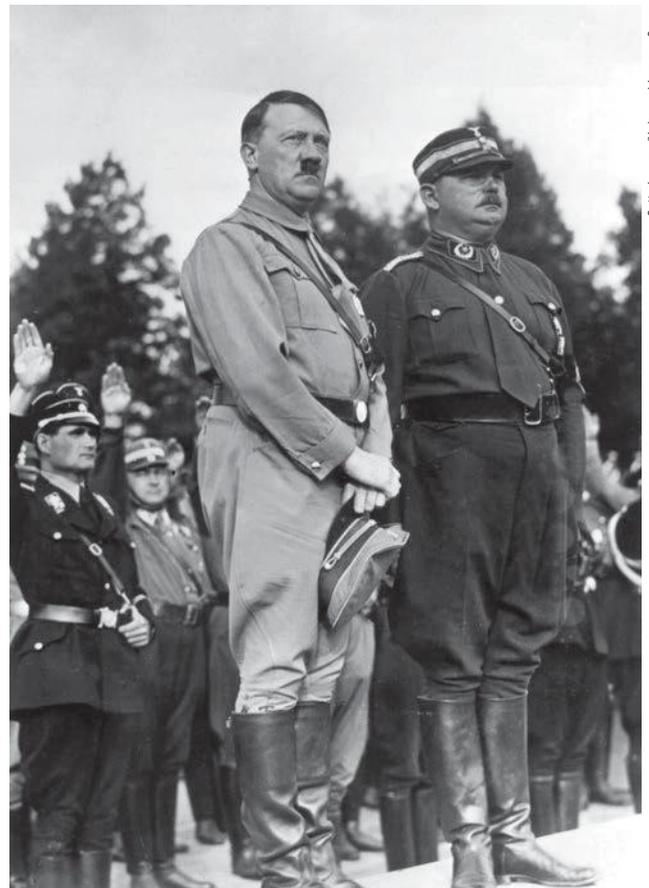
Röhm and the SA presented a real threat to Hitler's focus on bringing organisations like the military into the Nazi system. Hitler was thus faced with a major choice: side with his comrade from the party's early days, or with Germany's traditional elites? To understand the decision Hitler made, one has to understand the fundamental purpose of Nazism. (Nazi ideology will be covered in detail in chapter 5.)

From the time he spent writing *Mein Kampf* in Landsberg Prison in 1924, Hitler's goal had been clear: *Lebensraum* – territorial expansion in the east. Germany's destiny was to establish a new Aryan empire in the lands of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Hitler's destiny was to lead the German nation to this. Such expansion was unlikely to be accepted by the inhabitants of these eastern lands, and so war would be inevitable. In this scenario, Hitler would no longer need the undisciplined rabble of the SA. The SA – ‘the battering-ram of the National Socialist revolution’, as Hitler called it – had served its purpose. It now needed to slip into the background. If Hitler's goal of *Lebensraum* was to be achieved, he needed the skills and professionalism of the German army and its elite officers. The achievement of *Lebensraum* was not a task for the SA.

If Germany's future was to be another war, its armed forces would have to be properly armed. Thus, Hitler needed Germany's capitalists to provide the required weapons and hardware. The last thing Hitler needed was for the country to be turned upside down in a ‘second revolution’.

There was also the issue of the ailing President Hindenburg, now aged 86. Hitler's aim was to absorb the posts of Chancellor and President into one office, Führer. For this, he would need the backing of the army. Therefore, Hitler decided to turn on his former comrade and back the army instead.

On 11 April 1934, Hitler met secretly with leading army figures aboard the pocket battleship *Deutschland*. A deal



SOURCE 4.10 Röhm and Hitler's friendship dated back to the early period of Nazi activism in Munich. Röhm was one of the few members of the inner party who was on such familiar terms with Hitler as to address him in the informal mode of *Du*.

was worked out to address the SA threat. Hitler promised to handle Röhm and the SA, and to ensure that the army would never be absorbed into the SA as Röhm wanted. The army agreed to back Hitler in this, and to support his move to take on the president's powers after Hindenburg died, which of course included Commander-in Chief. Army leaders were also impressed with Hitler's future plans, which offered the prospect of conscription, rearmament and the ripping up of the Treaty of Versailles.

As 1934 wore on, the pressure on Hitler built up.

- SA street marches continued.
- On 5 June, Hitler and Röhm had a long, bitter meeting, with Röhm insisting that a second revolution had to come.
- On 13 June, Hitler visited the Italian Fascist dictator, Mussolini, in Venice. Mussolini openly warned Hitler that he needed to remove the radical element of his party, as Mussolini had done years earlier.
- On 17 June, Vice-Chancellor von Papen gave a speech at Marburg attacking both the idea of a second revolution and the drift to dictatorship that had happened in Germany under Hitler. Von Papen became an overnight hero. Over the next few days, people would run up to him in the street and call out 'Heil Marburg'.
- On 20 June, Hitler was summoned to President Hindenburg's estate at Neudeck, where he was given an ultimatum to rein in his unruly elements or face the imposition of martial law. If this happened, it would be the end of Hitler's power; it could also mean the end of Hitler's life.

Operation Hummingbird

Hitler called together Hermann Goering and Heinrich Himmler to plan the elimination of Röhm and the SA leadership. Goering and Himmler each had grounds to regard Röhm as a potential threat to their particular aspirations. The operation was codenamed 'Hummingbird'. Death lists were drawn up. Goering was to deal with the Berlin end of the operation, Himmler the Munich part. Hitler would personally arrest Röhm. Himmler was enthusiastic – he would be the obvious winner, with the destruction of the SA leaving him as head of the elite SS.

The operation took place on 30 June, the so-called 'Night of the Long Knives'. In a carefully coordinated operation, SS troops arrested hundreds of SA officers, falsely accusing them of planning a coup against the Nazi regime. They were summarily shot. In addition to the SA victims, many other 'enemies' were removed, including former Chancellor General von Schleicher; the former leader of Bavaria at the time of Hitler's 1923 Munich Putsch, Gustav von Kahr; Edgar Jung, author of von Papen's Marburg speech; and Gregor Strasser, who had played such a key role in the reorganisation and building of the party apparatus in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Accounts of the executions suggest a haphazard affair:

“ ... The victims were rushed off to the Cadet school at Gross-Lichterfelde (in Berlin) where the executions were carried out by the Leibstandarte companies attached to Göring's Landespolizei force ... it is not known what officer was in charge of the executions, which were said to have been horribly amateurish. ”

Gerald Reitlinger, *The SS: Alibi of a Nation*, Book Club Associates, London, 1981, p. 67

Röhm was holidaying at the Bavarian health resort of Bad Wiessee. Hitler flew into Munich and, with an SS escort, drove to Röhm's hotel, went up to Röhm's room and pushed his way in to find the SA commander in bed with his chauffeur. Röhm was arrested and taken to a Munich prison. He was given the option of committing suicide, but he refused. He was shot in his cell the following day.



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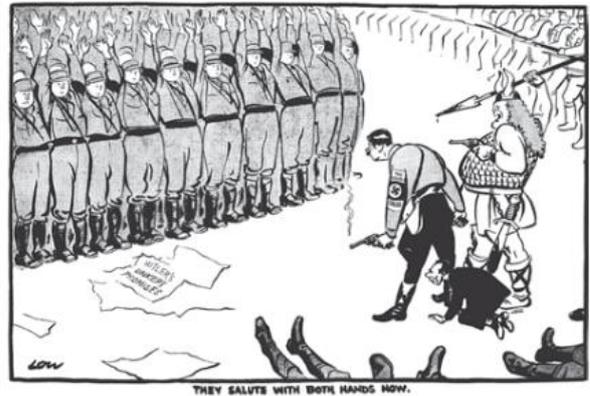


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‘They salute with both hands now’

Carefully examine David Low’s cartoon from the *London Evening Standard* of 3 July 1934, then answer the questions that follow.

- 1 What point is Low making with the caption ‘They salute with both hands now’?
- 2 To whom has Hitler presumably broken his promises?
- 3 Who is the small figure crouching at Hitler’s feet?
- 4 Who is the large figure to Hitler’s right? Why is he presented in that manner?
- 5 Who do the figures holding guns in the top right-hand corner of the picture most likely represent?



SOURCE 4.11 David Low’s cartoon, ‘They salute with both hands now’

The consolidation of power is complete

Hitler was quickly congratulated by President Hindenburg after the actions against the SA. He is alleged to have said, ‘when history is being made, blood is sometimes spilled’. On 13 July, Hitler addressed the Reichstag to justify the actions that had taken place on 30 June. In this speech he noted:

“... If anyone reproaches me and asks why I did not resort to the regular courts of justice, then all I can say is this. In this hour I was responsible for the fate of the German people, and thereby I became the supreme judge of the German people. I gave the order to shoot the ringleaders in this treason, and I further gave the order to cauterise down to the raw flesh the ulcers of this poisoning of the wells in our domestic life. Let the nation know that its existence—which depends on its internal order and security—cannot be threatened with impunity by anyone! And let it be known for all time to come that if anyone raises his hand to strike the State, then certain death is his lot.”

Adolf Hitler, speech to Reichstag, 13 July 1934

On 1 August, a law was announced called ‘The Law Concerning the Sovereign Head of the German Reich’. It stated that the offices of Chancellor and President were now combined into the single office of the Führer, and that the president’s powers would be passed on to the Chancellor Adolf Hitler. The law would come into effect as soon as President Hindenburg died. He died the next day.

Hitler’s power was now absolute. The process of Gleichschaltung had removed most possible sources of opposition by the end of 1933. The prevailing atmosphere of fear all but eliminated the chance of any organised opposition. The events of the Night of the Long Knives had removed Röhm, broken the power of the SA and brought the army fully behind the Nazi regime. After Hindenburg’s death, the German army swore an oath of allegiance ‘personally’ to Adolf Hitler.



SOURCE 4.12 The death of President von Hindenburg consolidated the Nazi regime. This photograph shows Hitler taking part in the funeral ceremony for the President.



Conclusion

The Nazi consolidation of power was rapid and dramatic. At the end of 1932, the Nazis had almost been written off as a viable political force, but within a year, through the process of Gleichschaltung, almost all areas of German life had been brought under Nazi control. As 1934 opened, the only possible threats to Hitler came from Hindenburg, the army and the SA. The swift and ruthless efficiency of Operation Hummingbird dealt with these concerns. Following President Hindenburg's death in August 1934, Hitler absorbed the powers of Chancellor and President into the single office of Führer. Consolidation was complete, all made possible by a combination of the perversion of the legal process, the use of violence and terror, clever propaganda and the step-by-step removal of each potential source of opposition.

Chapter summary

- Hitler made quick use of presidential powers to call early elections and impose various security laws.
- At the end of February the Reichstag erupted in flames. The Nazis blamed the fire on the communists, and used it to justify the Reichstag Fire Decree.
- The March 1933 elections were disappointing for the Nazis, but they managed to form a majority with the Nationalists.
- The Potsdam Ceremony of 21 March was Goebbels' attempt to link the new Nazi regime with the traditions of Germany's past.
- The Enabling Act of 23 March 1933 gave Hitler total power for a period of four years. It was to be renewed in 1937, but that was merely a formality.
- Throughout 1933, the Nazis imposed 'Gleichschaltung' on German society as they pursued a policy of coordination. Gradually, all aspects of German life were brought under the control of the party.
- From the earliest days of Nazi rule, fear and terror were widely used to bring the nation under control. The Gestapo was formed in March 1933, and the first concentration camps for political prisoners appeared at this time too.
- SA troops were allowed to roam the country with impunity, contributing to the atmosphere of menace and fear that prevented the development of any meaningful opposition to the regime.
- Goebbels' propaganda skills succeeded in convincing early waverers of the benefits of the regime.
- In the time-honoured German tradition of accepting authority, judicial, legal and law and order officials were happy to obey the instructions of the new regime and carry out its will, despite many of them not being party members.
- By early 1934, the main threat to Hitler came from the party left, in particular Ernst Röhm and the SA. This threat was ruthlessly dealt with during the Night of the Long Knives.
- Following the death of President Hindenburg in August 1934, Hitler took on the powers of both the Chancellor and President. The army swung its support behind the Nazi regime, and the consolidation of power was complete.

Additional resources

- Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, Penguin, London, 2004, Part 5
 - Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, Penguin, London, 2006, pp. 20–41
 - William L Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, Pan, London, 1960, pp. 235–60
 - Richard Bessel (ed), *Life in the Third Reich*, OUP, Oxford, 1988
-

Endnotes

- ¹ Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, Penguin, London, 2004, p. 335
- ² Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, Penguin, London, 2004, p. 349

CHAPTER REVIEW

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

- 1 What positions were held by Frick and Goering in Hitler's first cabinet?
- 2 What was the immediate effect of the Reichstag fire on the political situation?
- 3 Explain the term 'Gleichschaltung'.
- 4 What had happened to Germany's political parties by mid-1933?
- 5 Who was Heinrich Himmler?
- 6 What was the purpose of the Potsdam Ceremony of March 1933?
- 7 What was Röhm's position in the Nazi movement?
- 8 What did Röhm mean by a 'second revolution'?
- 9 Explain the purpose of Operation Hummingbird.
- 10 What was Hitler's position in Germany from August 1934?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 11 Describe the circumstances on 23 March relating to the passing of the Enabling Act.
- 12 In 1933 the annual Nazi rally, 'Victory of Faith', was recorded on film by the director Leni Riefenstahl. What did this film show about the Nazis? Why did it later become an embarrassment for Hitler?
- 13 What was the fate of Vice-Chancellor von Papen?

EXTENDED WRITING EXERCISE

- 14 To what extent could it be argued that the Nazi consolidation of power between January 1933 and August 1934 was a 'legal process'?
- 15 To what extent was Hitler's consolidation of power met with the cooperation of the various groups within German society and the enthusiasm of the general population?

05

Nazi ideology

SYLLABUS OUTCOMES

In this chapter, students will examine the meaning of Nazi ideology.

Aspects to be covered include:

- origins of Nazi ideology,
- the impact of 1918,
- Nazi thinking and thinkers,
- *Mein Kampf*,
- racial ideas,
- Nazism as fascism.



Modern History
syllabus

SOURCE 5.1 Adolf Hitler was incarcerated in Landsberg Prison after the failed Munich Putsch in 1923.



Introduction

By the early 1930s, dictatorship had almost become the default form of government for the countries of Europe. From Lisbon to Moscow, Berlin to Sofia, democracies had crumbled in the face of authoritarian rule of one form or another. However, apart from the Soviet Union (and possibly Italy), Germany was the only European dictatorship that aimed to implement a specific party ideology.

The nature of Nazi ideology presents a paradox. In some respects it presents a picture of the utmost complexity. Within Nazi ideology, historians have identified the following influences:

- Social Darwinism
- Nietzsche
- Houston Stewart Chamberlain
- historic anti-Semitism
- volkisch ideas
- eugenics
- pseudo-science
- crude German nationalism
- the embracing of modernity and technology while venerating tradition and the connection to the soil
- elements of socialism
- the importance of private property.

Nazi ideology grew out of this eclectic collection of complex ideas, but in another sense the essence of Nazi ideology is extremely simple, and can be narrowed down to one basic idea. Ultimately, all Nazi thinking emanated from its core thinking on the issue of race. Complex or straightforward, Nazi ideology affected many areas of German domestic and foreign policy in the 1930s.

Nazi ideology 1859–1939

1859 ● Publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*

1860s ● Herbert Spencer introduces the phrase 'survival of the fittest'

1876 ● First complete performance of Wagner's *Ring Cycle* at Bayreuth

1891 ● Publication of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

1899 ● Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* is published

1901 ● Publication of Nietzsche's *The Will to Power*

1919 ● Establishment of the German Workers' Party

1920 ● The 25 Point Program of the Nazi Party is proclaimed

1923 ● Hitler and Houston Stewart Chamberlain meet

1924 ● Hitler writes *Mein Kampf* during his imprisonment in Landsberg Prison

1926 ● Hitler completes the second volume of *Mein Kampf*
The Bamberg Conference marks the end of the Strasserite urban plan

1927 ● Death of Houston Stewart Chamberlain

1928 ● Hitler writes his 'second book', which is not published until after World War II

1930 ● Alfred Rosenberg publishes *Der Mythus des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts* (*The Myth of the Twentieth Century*)

1935 ● The Nuremberg Laws are introduced

1938 ● The Night of Broken Glass

1939 ● Hitler predicts the end of the Jews in Europe if they bring on a war
Germany invades Poland

Origins of Nazi ideology

Nazi ideology had its origins in a range of pre-World War I European intellectual and political movements. These ideas emerged, in part, as a response to and rejection of modernity – which was seen to incorporate Enlightenment ideals of rationality – the emergence of democracy, and the social transformations caused by the Industrial Revolution, which had led to a breakdown of traditional social organisation. Many of these ideas, such as Social Darwinism and anti-Semitism, featured in political and philosophical writings of other European nations. Anti-Semitism, for instance, was particularly significant in France and the Russian Empire. Nazi ideology was also shaped by a particularly German variety of nationalism, known as *volkisch* thought.

Social Darwinism

A key influence on the development of Nazi ideology was the adaptation of British naturalist Charles Darwin's ideas to understanding social and cultural development. This movement, generally described as Social Darwinism, took Darwin's biological theories of evolution and natural selection, which had been presented in his 1859 book *On the Origin of Species*, and applied them to understanding human societies. Perhaps the most influential exponent of Social Darwinism was the British scientist and philosopher Herbert Spencer, who coined the phrase 'survival of the fittest'.

Social Darwinists argued that some races were inherently superior to others and would prosper at the expense of those inferior races. Within the Social Darwinists' arguments there emerged a hierarchy, which maintained that western Europeans were capable and creative, thus the strongest, while other races, such as those of Africa and Asia, were deemed weaker. Such thinking became a rationale for imperialism, where mainly European nations imposed their rule over the peoples of Africa and Asia, and for eugenics programs that aimed to improve the 'breeding stock' of the race. British historian Eric Hobsbawm summed up the thinking of late-nineteenth century Europe:

“ ... The survival of the fittest could also be indicated, and indeed ensured, by the conquest of inferior races and people or war against rival states. ”

Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, Abacus*, London, 2010, p. 254

The Social Darwinist notion of struggle and race was certainly apparent in Nazi ideology. For Hitler, the life of the nation was one of permanent and continuing struggle for survival, in which the strongest race was destined to come out on top – so long as its purity was maintained.

Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism, hostility or prejudice against Jews, had been a feature of European life for centuries. Until the nineteenth century, anti-Semitism, in a prominently Christian Europe, had generally been religious in its nature. Jews were habitually identified as being responsible for the killing of Jesus Christ and singled out for their adherence to a non-Christian faith. Vilified and ostracised, Jews had been targeted by governments and communities across Europe since the Roman period. In the Middle Ages they were accused of causing the Black Plague and of sacrificing Christian children. In the late nineteenth century they were the victims of government-inspired **pogroms** in Russia. Jews were an easy target for those who believed they were suffering in an unjustifiable manner. Jews were often forced to live in separate communities, and restricted in their rights and occupations. In these early forms of hostility and persecution of Jews, the central idea was religious. On conversion to Christianity, an individual Jew generally ceased to be a target of persecution.



Darwin influence

pogrom

A violent attack on Jewish people or a Jewish settlement. In Russia, pogroms were often planned and carried out by government agencies.



By the late nineteenth century, as ideas of Social Darwinism spread and cultural difference came to be understood – erroneously – as based on race, the nature of anti-Semitism began to change. Jews came to be considered a racial group. Their difference was not considered the result of their religion or culture, but rather, a feature of their race that was determined permanently by genetics. A Jew's conversion to Christianity, therefore, would not change their perceived nature.

This sense of Jews as another race was widespread in Europe by the late nineteenth century. In Vienna, where Hitler lived between 1907 and 1913, anti-Semitism, for example, was rife. The Christian Democrat and populist mayor Karl Lueger was obsessed by Jews, and identified them as both overly wealthy and influential, and as potential revolutionaries. Historian Michael Burleigh describes Vienna before World War I as ethnically deeply divided:

“ ... Hitler was also affected by many of the passionately argued causes and hatreds of that polyglot city in those times, where violence among students from different national backgrounds was commonplace and chairs and inkwells were hurled around in the fractious parliament. One of these hatred-provoking beliefs was that ethnic Germans were being swamped by the Slavic majority of the multi-national Austro-Hungarian Empire; another was that assimilated Jews were too conspicuously predominant, while unassimilated eastern Jews, fleeing successive pogroms in the Tsarist empire, were part of the Slavic inundation. A sense of German beleaguerment was exploited by Pan-German politicians, who wanted the ethnic German Austrians to break out of what they regarded as the multinational ‘zoo’ of the Hapsburg empire, to join up with their mighty Teutonic northern neighbour ... ”

Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, Pan Books, London, 2001, p. 87

The extent to which Hitler's racial thinking was shaped by his time in Vienna is the subject of debate among historians. Burleigh, as noted above, sees a very direct link with Vienna, while Brigitte Hamann, in her book *Hitler's Vienna*, argues that Hitler's anti-Semitism was more a product of the immediate post-World War I period. Regardless of the contributing influence, these notions of racial anti-Semitism and racial struggle formed the cornerstone of Nazi ideology as it emerged in the 1920s.

Volkisch ideas

Another important influence on the development of Nazi ideology was volkisch nationalism. By the late nineteenth century, many educated Germans were coming to accept the idea that they were heirs to a homogeneous culture that separated them from what were sometimes referred to as ‘superficial’ civilisations, such as Britain, France and the United States. This thinking resulted in the glorification of patriotic history and the idolisation of national heroic figures. The words ‘volk’ and ‘volkisch’ became connected with this national solidarity and the collective mission to reach this destiny. The nation had been blessed with a mysterious essence, which was in danger of being corrupted by decadent influences such as socialism and cosmopolitan ideas, epitomised by the Jews.

The volkisch movement in Germany was fragmented. In the main, there seemed little interest in creating a political movement, let alone creating a state. It is therefore better to think of volkisch thought as a cultural movement that promoted its central ideas through a range of methods. These included novels that celebrated the purity of the German peasant, and journalism that attacked foreign influence. There were also historians and thinkers who wrote about the volk in occult and pseudo-anthropological terms. Examples of such writers include the Austrians Guido von List and Lanz von Liebenfels. The central theme of their thinking was ‘the imminent regeneration of the German people through otherworldly powers once they have thrown off the literally sub-human influence of feminists, socialists, homosexuals and Jews’.¹ Volkisch ideas were seen in the host of social and political leagues that appeared in Germany after 1870, such as the Agrarian League and the Colonial Society. They all promoted the myth of a nation based on ethnicity, not statehood. It was in the context of volkisch thought that biological ideas of Aryan supremacy were developed and expressed.

Three heroes?

Hitler rarely acknowledged particular influences on the development of Nazi ideology; however, he did hold up three individuals as influences on the movement that he led: Richard Wagner, the composer, Wagner's son-in-law, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, an author, and the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Wagner and Chamberlain's association with the ideas of racialism, anti-Semitism and *volkisch* thought can easily be seen. Nietzsche's influence on Nazi ideology, however, is more complex.

RICHARD WAGNER

Hitler is alleged to have said 'Whoever wants to understand National Socialism must know Wagner', and stated that he had gained his world view, *Weltanschauung*, from Wagner. Indeed, one of Hitler's biographers, Joachim Fest, argues that Hitler's ideology was formed by Wagner's operas and political writings. The German operatic composer was a rabid anti-Semite, and he had no love of democracy or bourgeois materialist values. However, his hope was that Germans, due to the special gifts they had, would enrich the world, not rule it.



SOURCE 5.2 A performance of Wagner's *The Ring Cycle*

HOUSTON STEWART CHAMBERLAIN

One of the most important influences on Hitler's thinking was the Englishman Houston Stewart Chamberlain. As a teenager, Chamberlain became besotted with all things German. In his late twenties, Chamberlain met Wagner, and in 1908 married his daughter Eva.

In 1899 Chamberlain published his most notable work, *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, in which he argued that to understand history and the basis of civilisation, one had to examine race. Chamberlain wrote that modern civilisation became possible with the appearance of the **Teutons**. The more pure Teutonic blood a nation could claim, the greater the importance of that nation. Chamberlain's chapter on Jews is full of crude anti-Semitism. He claims that Christ was not a Jew, but an Aryan, if not by race then by his opposition to the Jewish religion. Chamberlain's conclusion was that the future wellbeing of the world lay in the hands of the Teutons and their civilisation.



SOURCE 5.3 Houston Stewart Chamberlain

Teutons

A Germanic tribe reaching back into ancient times. Teuton and Teutonic are terms often used to mean German or Aryan.



Wagner

alleg-images/picture/alliance/dpa/DB Enrico Nawrath

bpk





Chamberlain's book was a major success in Germany, and had sold more than 100 000 copies by 1914. It also flourished during the Nazi period. Chamberlain's work was eagerly read by Germany's upper classes, and Kaiser Wilhelm became an ardent disciple. Chamberlain met Hitler for the first time in 1923 and was immediately captivated by the Nazi leader. Hitler was equally taken by Chamberlain, both for his writings and the fact that he was part of the Wagner family. Chamberlain quickly joined the party, and though in poor health he contributed articles to the Nazis' various publications. He died in 1927; Hitler and several party leaders attended his funeral.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Hitler and many other prominent Nazis were fond of evoking the ideas of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. In particular, they drew on two ideas – the *Übermensch* and the 'will to power'. The idea of the *Übermensch*, often translated as 'Overman' or 'Superman', was first expressed by Nietzsche in his book *Thus Spake Zarathustra* as an ideal to which people should aspire. An *Übermensch* was an individual who

had transcended simple notions of good and evil, as developed in formal religion such as Christianity, and had defined their own personal values. *Übermenschen* were people who live lives of fulfilment. The 'will to power' was a related idea that described the driving force of those who strive towards becoming a high being.

Nietzsche himself had little time for rampant German nationalism. He did not hold the German people in high regard and he was not an anti-Semite. However, after his death in 1900 his ideas were readily adapted and adopted to the cause of radical German nationalism.



Nietz b



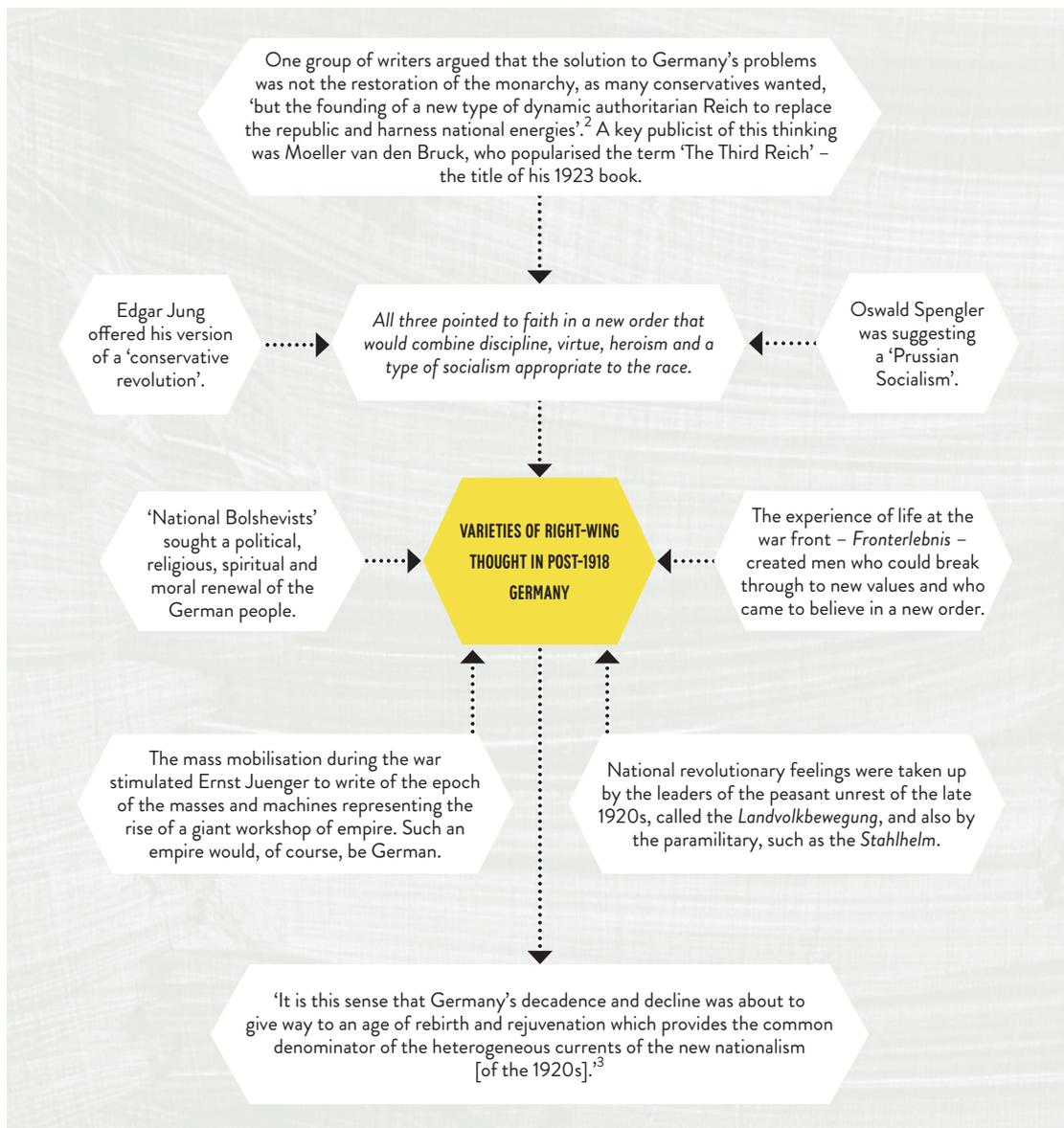
bpb/Bayerische Staatsbibliothek/Archiv Heinrich Hoffmann

SOURCE 5.4 Hitler poses with a bust of nineteenth-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.

The impact of 1918

Germany was fundamentally shaken by the impact of 1918–19 as it tried to come to terms with defeat, humiliation, the 'stab in the back', foreign occupation, a 'foreign' constitution, the Treaty of Versailles and social disintegration. In this chaotic environment, a host of extra-parliamentary groups, patriotic societies, student bodies and paramilitary forces such as the *Freikorps* appeared. They published newspapers, journals, novels and philosophical works that expressed their views. They organised politically to oppose the recently established Weimar Republic. Volkisch thought, racism, anti-Semitism and the re-reading of Nietzsche were prevalent, in varying degrees, among these many groups. They shared a hostility towards Marxism and communism, a commitment to an often poorly described idea of German socialism based on the premise of race, and a belief that a national renewal or resurrection was necessary in order to restore Germany socially and culturally, and to return the nation to its rightful place on the world stage.

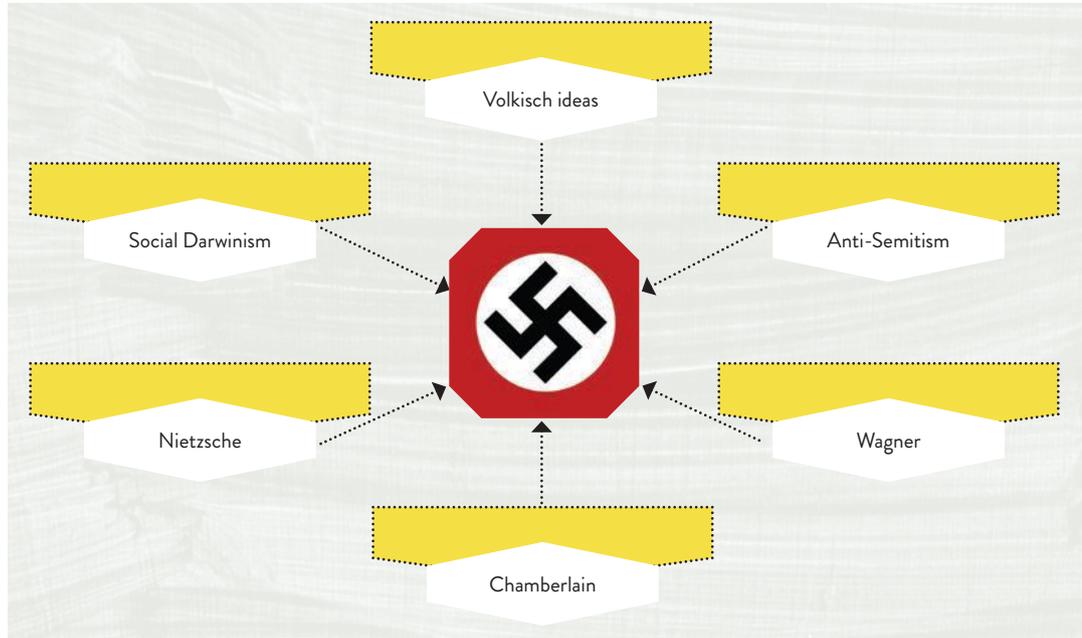
It was against this backdrop of ultra-nationalism that the German Workers' Party was founded by Anton Drexler in January 1919. At first it was little more than a talking society, with fewer than 60 members. Its meetings railed against Jews, communism and the peace, while calling for the



SOURCE 5.5 Post-1918 thinking inside Germany

foundation of a new people's community (*Volksgemeinschaft*). At this early stage Ernst Röhm, Alfred Rosenberg, Rudolf Hess and Hans Frank, all figures who would later become prominent in the Nazi party, were associated with the group, which held its gatherings in beer halls and meeting rooms. It was at one of these meetings, in August 1919, that Hitler came to the party. Sent by the army as an intelligence officer to monitor the new group, he intervened in a debate and was asked by Drexler to join. With the army's approval, he did so. Despite the myth promoted by Hitler himself, he was not the party's seventh member, but he was an early member of its organising committee. In early 1920, the same year the group changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers' Party, Hitler became the group's chief of propaganda, and in 1921 its chairman and Führer, a position he would hold until 1945.

- 1 Construct a mind map, similar to that shown below, which can be used to summarise the key aspects of Social Darwinism, volkisch ideas, anti-Semitism, Nietzsche, Wagner and Chamberlain that influenced the development of Nazi ideology.



Dreamstime/Alexmilios

- 2 Why did volkisch thinking oppose socialist and cosmopolitan ideas?
- 3 How did Aryanism enter into post-1918 thinking?
- 4 Who first coined the phrase 'the Third Reich'?
- 5 What was the *fronterlebnis*?
- 6 What was the common theme running through all the various ultra-right strands of thought in Germany after the war?

The 25 Point Program

In 1920, the German Workers' Party proclaimed its 25 Point Program. Written by Anton Drexler, Gottfried Feder, Dietrich Eckart and Adolf Hitler, it articulated the political goals of the party. When the DAP became the NSDAP in February 1920, the 25 Points were retained as the party's program. As the 1920s progressed there were attempts to revise or update it, but these were rejected by Hitler on the grounds that the program was inviolable.

- 1 We demand the union of all Germans in a Great Germany on the basis of the principle of self-determination of all peoples.
- 2 We demand that the German people have rights equal to those of other nations; and that the Peace Treaties of Versailles and St. Germain shall be abrogated.
- 3 We demand land and territory (colonies) for the maintenance of our people and the settlement of our surplus population.
- 4 Only those who are our fellow countrymen can become citizens. Only those who have German blood, regardless of creed, can be our countrymen. Hence no Jew can be a countryman.





- 5 Those who are not citizens must live in Germany as foreigners and must be subject to the law of aliens.
- 6 The right to choose the government and determine the laws of the State shall belong only to citizens. We therefore demand that no public office, of whatever nature, whether in the central government, the province, or the municipality, shall be held by anyone who is not a citizen.
We wage war against the corrupt parliamentary administration whereby men are appointed to posts by favour of the party without regard to character and fitness.
- 7 We demand that the State shall above all undertake to ensure that every citizen shall have the possibility of living decently and earning a livelihood. If it should not be possible to feed the whole population, then aliens (non-citizens) must be expelled from the Reich.
- 8 Any further immigration of non-Germans must be prevented. We demand that all non-Germans who have entered Germany since August 2, 1914, shall be compelled to leave the Reich immediately.
- 9 All citizens must possess equal rights and duties.
- 10 The first duty of every citizen must be to work mentally or physically. No individual shall do any work that offends against the interest of the community to the benefit of all.
Therefore we demand:
 - 11 That all unearned income, and all income that does not arise from work, be abolished.
 - 12 Since every war imposes on the people fearful sacrifices in blood and treasure, all personal profit arising from the war must be regarded as treason to the people. We therefore demand the total confiscation of all war profits.
 - 13 We demand the nationalization of all trusts.
 - 14 We demand profit-sharing in large industries.
 - 15 We demand a generous increase in old-age pensions.
 - 16 We demand the creation and maintenance of a sound middle-class, the immediate communalization of large stores which will be rented cheaply to small tradespeople, and the strongest consideration must be given to ensure that small traders shall deliver the supplies needed by the State, the provinces and municipalities.
 - 17 We demand an agrarian reform in accordance with our national requirements, and the enactment of a law to expropriate the owners without compensation of any land needed for the common purpose. The abolition of ground rents, and the prohibition of all speculation in land.
 - 18 We demand that ruthless war be waged against those who work to the injury of the common welfare. Traitors, usurers, profiteers, etc., are to be punished with death, regardless of creed or race.
 - 19 We demand that Roman law, which serves a materialist ordering of the world, be replaced by German common law.
 - 20 In order to make it possible for every capable and industrious German to obtain higher education, and thus the opportunity to reach into positions of leadership, the State must assume the responsibility of organizing thoroughly the entire cultural system of the people. The curricula of all educational establishments shall be adapted to practical life. The conception of the State Idea (science of citizenship) must be taught in the schools from the very beginning. We demand that specially talented children of poor parents, whatever their station or occupation, be educated at the expense of the State.
 - 21 The State has the duty to help raise the standard of national health by providing maternity welfare centres, by prohibiting juvenile labour, by increasing physical fitness through the introduction of compulsory games and gymnastics, and by the greatest possible encouragement of associations concerned with the physical education of the young.





- 22 We demand the abolition of the regular army and the creation of a national (folk) army.
- 23 We demand that there be a legal campaign against those who propagate deliberate political lies and disseminate them through the press. In order to make possible the creation of a German press, we demand:
- (a) All editors and their assistants on newspapers published in the German language shall be German citizens.
 - (b) Non-German newspapers shall only be published with the express permission of the State. They must not be published in the German language.
 - (c) All financial interests in or in any way affecting German newspapers shall be forbidden to non-Germans by law, and we demand that the punishment for transgressing this law be the immediate suppression of the newspaper and the expulsion of the non-Germans from the Reich.

Newspapers transgressing against the common welfare shall be suppressed. We demand legal action against those tendencies in art and literature that have a disruptive influence upon the life of our folk, and that any organizations that offend against the foregoing demands shall be dissolved.

- 24 We demand freedom for all religious faiths in the state, insofar as they do not endanger its existence or offend the moral and ethical sense of the Germanic race.

The party as such represents the point of view of a positive Christianity without binding itself to any one particular confession. It fights against the Jewish materialist spirit within and without, and is convinced that a lasting recovery of our folk can only come about from within on the principle:

COMMON GOOD BEFORE INDIVIDUAL GOOD

- 25 In order to carry out this program we demand: the creation of a strong central authority in the State, the unconditional authority by the political central parliament of the whole State and all its organizations.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Which of the points in the Nazi Party Program were specifically aimed at the concerns of German nationalism?
- 2 Hitler would later move away from the socialist aims of the party. Identify the parts of the party program that were specifically socialist in nature.
- 3 Which parts of the program would have appealed to racist elements?
- 4 Some elements of the program could have been in any party's program. Identify them.
- 5 Which parts of the program suggest the style of government the Nazis were envisaging?
- 6 Right-wing political thinking generally emphasises nationalist, racist and authoritarian ideas; left-wing political thinking generally focuses more on state ownership and control, social welfare and measures aiming at equality. With these broad definitions in mind, to what extent do you think Nazism was 'of the left' or 'of the right'?

Ideas and Nazi ideology



The 25 Point Program of the NSDAP was a summation of the movement's political goals. However, as a policy statement, it does not encompass the full range and scope of Nazi thought. Underpinning the movement's political program was the closely related and broader set of ideas that might be thought of as ideology – the systems of beliefs, understandings and principles that shaped the movement's understanding of the world and its aspirations.

Nazi publications

From the 1920s the Nazi Party published a broad range of periodicals. Many of these first appeared before the seizure of power, and in some cases continued to be published throughout the war. Among the most significant of these periodicals were:

- the *Völkischer Beobachter*, published daily from 1923
- the *NS-Briefe*, a party newsletter, initiated by Gregor Strasser and edited by Joseph Goebbels
- *NS Monatshefte*, a monthly journal, first published in 1930 and edited by Alfred Rosenberg
- *Der SA Mann*, the weekly newspaper of the SA
- *Der Angriff*, a Berlin-based party newspaper published from 1937
- *Das Schwarze Korps*, the weekly newspaper of the SS, published from 1935
- *Der Stürmer*, a weekly newspaper that emphasised anti-Semitic themes, published by Julius Streicher from 1923.

In the case of Nazism these ideas were expressed in a variety of forms. Most obviously, because by 1921 he was the party leader, Adolf Hitler's speeches and his political autobiography *Mein Kampf* are important expressions of Nazi ideology. However, as many historians now argue, the Nazi movement was not simply Hitlerism. These ideas were also shaped by a range of other figures, including those who had contributed to the 25 Point Program, such as Gottfried Feder and Dietrich Eckart, as well as the brothers Gregor and Otto Strasser, Heinrich Himmler, Alfred Rosenberg, Walther Darré, Hans Gunther, Julius Streicher and Joseph Goebbels. Each of these figures, and countless others, contributed to the development of Nazi ideology through speeches, books and Nazi publications.

Importantly, the tone of Nazi ideology was set by Hitler, but, as historians of the Functionalist/Structuralist schools note, there were competing and often differing groups within the party. These factions, as Joseph Nyomarkay notes, 'did not organise against Hitler, but instead strove to the last minute of their existence to gain his support. Their objective was not to challenge Hitler's leadership, but to capture him for their respective point of view. As the source of authority, the leader could not be challenged, he could only be claimed.'⁴

This characteristic distinguished Nazism from Marxist political movements, which were based on claims of orthodoxy determined by adherence to party ideology, not the authority of the leader.

Roger Griffin

Roger Griffin is the Principal Lecturer in History at Oxford Brookes University. He has written extensively on various aspects of political ideology. His speciality is European fascism, and his works deal not only with Germany and Italy, but also with British fascism and fascism outside of Europe. In the following extract, Griffin discusses the nature of the 'Nazi message' as it had evolved by the end of the 1920s.

... The message spelt out turgidly in *Mein Kampf* (which had nevertheless sold some 300 000 copies before its author became the German Chancellor), and implicit in the thousands of articles and speeches by Nazi faithful great and small thereafter, was a cluster of interlocking themes current in radical right circles ever since the war: the *Zusammenbruch* (collapse) of 1918 as the work not only of treacherous socialists, but especially of the Jews, who had set in train a process of national decadence which long predated 1918; the need for racial regeneration at a biological, spiritual and political level which would enable Germany to rescind the terms of the Versailles Treaty, eliminate the Jewish-Bolshevik assault on the



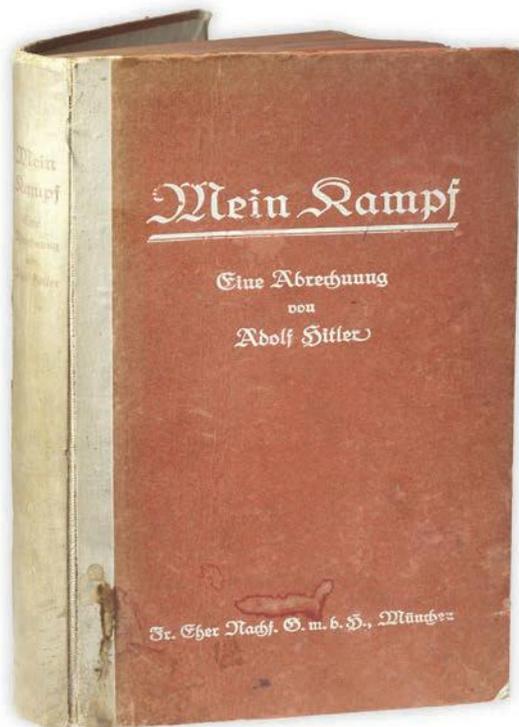
→ nation, rearm, create a Greater Germany by uniting all ethnic Germans into a single homeland, and proceed to conquer 'vital space' in the East. The mission of the NSDAP would be to make this possible by replacing the Weimar Republic with the Third Reich, which unlike the previous two, would be based not just on the leadership principle but on the primacy of the Volk, in other words the *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community) ... this programme invited all those of ultra-right leanings to project their own visions and aspirations on to the 'Hitler-movement' ... For them the practical implications or coherence of specific policies faded into insignificance behind the overriding sense that Germany was rising from the ashes, that a national rebirth was taking place ...

Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, Routledge, London, 1991, pp. 97–8

QUESTIONS

- 1 How does anti-Jewish thinking feature in the Nazi message?
- 2 What aspects of 'rebirth' does Griffin see as the Nazi goal?
- 3 What does Griffin identify as the ultimate goal of Nazi ideology?
- 4 What was the mission of the NSDAP?
- 5 Why were the various ultra-right groups that fell in behind the Nazis willing to overlook 'the practical implications or incoherence of specific policies'?

Alamy Stock Photo/interfoto



SOURCE 5.6 An early edition of *Mein Kampf*

Mein Kampf

As Hitler set the tone of Nazi ideology, it is important to understand the expression of his ideas first. While Hitler would deliver countless speeches between 1919 and 1945, the essence of his outlook was expressed most clearly in *Mein Kampf*.

Following the failure of the Munich Putsch in November 1923, Hitler was tried for treason and sentenced to five years in prison. He served only nine months, in Landsberg Prison, where he was given access to books and was allowed frequent visits from his party comrades. It was during this time, and during the following year at the Haus Wachenfeld near Berchtesgaden, that Hitler wrote his autobiographical treatise, *Mein Kampf*, or 'My Struggle'. Hitler had originally wanted to call his book 'Four and a Half Years of Struggle against Lies, Stupidity and Cowardice'.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote at length on what were to become the main themes of Nazism – race, *Lebensraum*, the need to destroy France before Germany considered expanding eastwards, and the authoritarian nature of a future Nazi government, which, of course, would be led by a dynamic Führer. Of prime importance were Hitler's lengthy descriptions of the race issue, the superiority of the Aryan race, and the corrupting influence of the Jews.

Mein Kampf is a turgid read. Hitler may have been a spellbinding speaker, but he was not a stylish writer. The work deals not only with the Nazis' political ideals, but also meanders across a range of bizarre topics. Hitler writes about boxing, the theatre, the cinema, comics, art, sex, marriage and prostitution. In one section, he devotes 10 pages to a detailed discussion of syphilis. These tangents, nonetheless, link back to his central preoccupation: race.

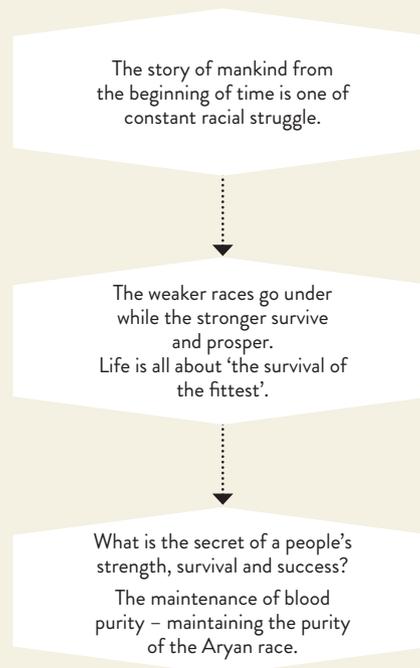
Some historians, particularly those of the earlier intentionalist school, such as Karl Dietrich Bracher and Eberhard Jäckel, regard *Mein Kampf* as a blueprint for all future Nazi programs and policies. While Hitler outlines his thinking and rationale in this work, it is merely an articulation of these ideas, not a political program. In practice, the regime was more pragmatic in its outlook, adapting and responding to developments in a manner that drew on these ideas.

Interestingly, Hitler also wrote a second book in 1928, but it was not published until after World War II. According to Adam Tooze, a historian of Nazi economics, this second book, which focused on foreign policy, was not published at the time because the publisher feared that the new work would detract from *Mein Kampf*.

Race as the essence of Nazi thinking

Nazi concepts of race were very much shaped by the ideas of Social Darwinism and the notion of struggle, in which strong races come to dominate and weak races are ruled or die out. These ideas are clearly apparent in Nazi ideology. The Aryan race was understood to be the race that was capable of creating culture. According to Nazi race theorists, all great cultures were created by Aryans, including those of Greece and Rome. Over time, these great societies had been weakened through interbreeding with lesser races, such as Slavs or Africans. The Germanic or Nordic race, Nazis argued, were the bearers of the purest Aryan blood, and so this was the race that needed to be preserved in order for culture and greatness to be maintained.

According to Nazi theorists the opposite of the Aryan race was the Jewish race. Unlike the creative Aryan race, it was believed that the Jewish race could only destroy culture. In modern times, Nazi ideologues argued, Jewish influence on society, through values such as equality and ideas like liberalism and communism, was destroying culture. Here we can see the way Nazi ideas were shaped by the scientific belief of the time that race was unchangeable.



SOURCE 5.7 The essence of Nazi thinking

Hitler on race

Hitler dwelled extensively on the nature of race in his writings and speeches. The following extracts, taken from *Mein Kampf*, provide an insight into his thinking on the issue of race.

“ ... All great cultures of the past perished only because the originally creative race died out from blood poisoning ... Those who want to live, let them fight, and those who do not want to fight in this world of eternal struggle do not deserve to live. ”

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1962, p. 289

Hitler explained the danger of an inferior mating with a superior; the offspring will always be inferior to the superior parent, he argued, and any continuation of this process will gradually increase the preponderance of the inferior.

“ ... Such mating is contrary to the will of Nature for a higher breeding of all life. The precondition for this does not lie in associating superior and inferior, but in the total victory of the former ... ”
Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1962, p. 285

Hitler then related this idea specifically to the issue of race.

“ ... No more than nature desires the mating of weaker with stronger individuals, even less does she desire the blending of a higher with a lower race, since, if she did, her whole work of higher breeding, over perhaps hundreds of thousands of years, might be ruined in one blow ... Blood mixture and the resultant drop in the racial level is the sole cause of the dying out of old cultures; for men do not perish as a result of lost wars, but by the loss of that force of resistance which is contained only in pure blood. ”
Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1962, pp. 286, 296

To further support his argument about the importance of blood purity, Hitler then attempted to show the result of Aryan racial superiority.

“ ... All the human culture, all the results of art, science and technology that we see before us today, are almost exclusively the creative product of the Aryan...If we were to divide mankind into three groups, the founders of culture, the bearers of culture, the destroyers of culture, only the Aryan could be representative of the first group. From him originate the foundations and walls of all human creation ... ”
Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1962, p. 290

Hitler then explained that the first cultures came into being where the Aryan had subjected inferior peoples to his will. Such peoples became the technical instrument of the progress of culture. This type of thinking was to fit well with the ultimate Nazi ambition of *Lebensraum*. The new empire for the master race was to be in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. These areas were populated by inferior Slavs whose ultimate purpose was to be the future slave force of their Aryan masters.

“ ... Thus, the road which the Aryan had to take was clearly marked out. As a conqueror he subjected the lower beings and regulated their practical activity under his command, according to his will and for his aims ... ”
Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1962, p. 295

If the Aryan stands at the top of the racial hierarchy, the Jew stands at the bottom, according to Hitler. The Jew has no culture, but merely takes from others; the Jews are not a religion but a race; the Jew is a parasite that settles in another's land and takes; the Jew, over hundreds of years, gradually infiltrates society (Germany), and eventually claims to be German.

“ ... To strengthen his political position he tries to tear down the racial and civil barriers which for a time continue to restrain him at every step. To this end he fights with all the tenacity innate in him for religious tolerance ... ”
Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1962 edition, pp. 314–15

Hitler explained at great length the stage-by-stage process by which the Jew gradually infiltrates and takes over his new land. If the Jew is not stopped, he will contaminate the nation's religion, culture, ethics and morality. The result?

“ ... In a few years he tries to exterminate the national intelligentsia and by robbing the peoples of their natural intellectual leadership makes them ripe for the slave's lot of permanent subjugation ... ”
Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1962 edition, p. 326

- 1 Explain the basis of Hitler's thinking about the importance of blood purity. Does he imply any scientific basis to his thought?
- 2 What evidence does Hitler give to justify his belief in the superiority of the Aryan race?
- 3 Explain the Jewish threat in Hitlerian terms.

Julius Streicher and *Der Stürmer*

Julius Streicher, even by Nazi standards, was a virulent anti-Semite. He served during World War I, and in the early postwar period became involved in radical nationalist politics. On first hearing Hitler speak, in 1922, he 'converted' to Nazism, bringing to the party his followers from the German Working Community. An old fighter of the party, Streicher participated in the failed Munich Putsch and from 1925 was Gauleiter of Franconia. After the Nazi seizure of power he maintained this role, but from 1940 his position in the Reich was marginal.

Streicher's notoriety stems largely from his anti-Semitism and his weekly newspaper, *Der Stürmer*. While not an official Nazi paper, it was endorsed by other leading Nazis, and it enjoyed a wide circulation, reaching a peak sales figure of nearly half a million between 1935 and 1937. The paper's motto, '*Die Juden sind unser Unglück*' (The Jews are our Misfortune') clearly sets the tone of the paper, which was enduring and persistent in its attacks on Jews. In practice this entailed reviving myths of ritual murder, exposing the Jewish world conspiracy, and almost voyeuristic accounts of sex crimes. Each issue generally included a cartoon based on such themes.



SOURCE 5.8 Julius Streicher



SOURCE 5.9 The front page of *Der Stürmer*, 17 July 1936



SOURCE 5.10 An example of the representation of Jews from an issue of *Der Stürmer*

QUESTIONS

- 1 Outline Julius Streicher's background.
- 2 Explain the purpose of *Der Stürmer*.
- 3 Identify the methods used by *Der Stürmer* to vilify Jews.

Ian Kershaw is one of the world's leading experts on Nazi Germany. His two-volume biography of Hitler, *Hitler 1889–1936: Hubris* and *Hitler 1936–1945: Nemesis*, is considered by many to be the finest work that has been produced on the life of the Führer. Kershaw has said that he owes a great debt to the German historian Martin Broszat, who encouraged him to pursue research into how ordinary Germans felt about and coped with the Nazi regime.

In this extract, Kershaw discusses the role of ideology in Nazi Germany and the impact of changing perspectives in this area.

... Perhaps the most significant shift in perspective, compared with the position in the early or mid-1980s is the seriousness with which Nazi racial ideology is now viewed as a key motivating force of action. Given the ragbag nature of Nazism's assemblage of phobias and prejudices, it has always proved tempting to see ideology as no more than an amalgam of ideas at the service of propaganda and mobilisation. In some ways this has become almost reversed: propaganda and mobilisation are now seen to have served a racial ideology of central importance to the 'cumulative radicalisation' of the regime ...

... More recent studies have ... seen no need to pose a contradiction between the instrumentalisation of ideas and the genuine motivational force of an ideology of racial purity and racial conquest which underpinned the regime's ceaseless dynamic. The ideology of race was sucked in by a generation of well-educated Germans who came to maturity during the years after the First World War, and later came to prominence in the leadership of the SS, police and security apparatus, the ideological executive of the regime and most important motor of race policy ... [New studies have also] shown how vital Hitler's pathological anti-Semitism, his own 'mission' to 'remove' the Jews from Germany, then from Europe, was to the shaping of the 'racial state', fuelling the aggression of the activists, and providing legitimation for those directing and planning race policy. Not least, it is plain that Hitler's authorisation was crucial at decisive junctures ...

Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, Arnold, London, 2000, pp. 263–4

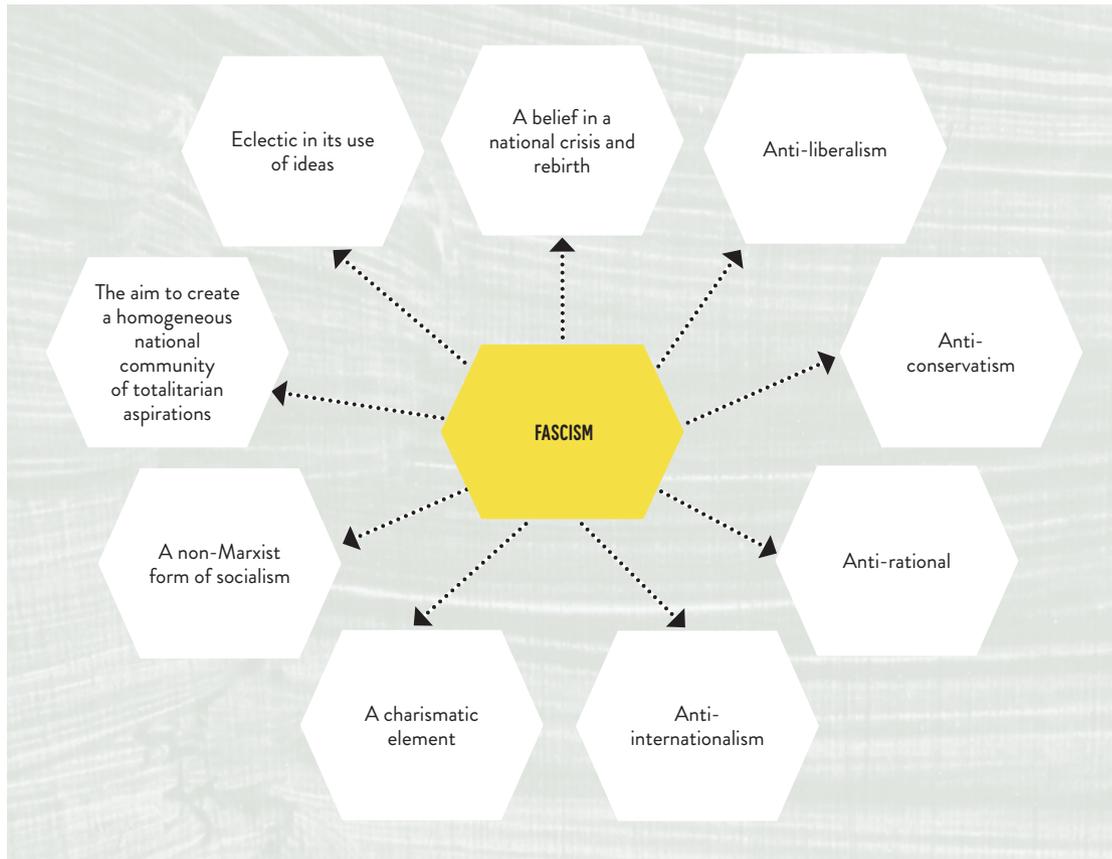
QUESTIONS

- 1 What conclusion does Kershaw draw about the change in the way Nazi racial ideology is viewed by historians?
- 2 How is the role of racial ideology in the Nazi regime now viewed?
- 3 What comment does Kershaw make about 'well-educated' Germans?
- 4 To what extent is Hitler's role in racial ideology now seen as crucial?

Nazism as fascism

For many years it was common for historians and political scientists, such as AJP Taylor and Lewis Namier, to regard Nazism as unique – a culmination of processes, which led to dictatorship and genocide, that was the product of the *Sonderweg* path of German history. To a lesser degree, historians of the intentionalist school, such as Karl Dietrich Bracher and Eberhard Jäckel, tended to see Nazism and its ideology as a product of Hitler's world view.

Over recent decades, however, it has become increasingly accepted that Nazism is best understood as a form of fascism, as it emerged in Europe during the interwar years. This assessment is borne out in the writings of historians such as Roger Griffin, Stanley Payne, Roger Eatwell and Michael Mann.⁵ Griffin's definition of fascism, (see chapter 2, pp. 35–36) is summarised in Source 5.11 and will be used to illustrate that Nazism was a form of fascism.



SOURCE 5.11 The characteristics of fascist ideology

A belief in a national crisis and rebirth

The defeat of Germany in World War I, the imposition of the Treaty of Versailles, the establishment of the democratic Weimar Republic and the underlying racial threat posed by Jews were understood to be examples of the national crisis. The Nazi movement and the establishment of the Third Reich was the means of national rebirth and renewal.

Anti-liberalism

Nazism rejected liberalism as it placed emphasis on individual rights. The nation, the Germanic race, was all important, and individuals were to be subject to it.

Anti-conservatism

Nazism opposed the restoration of the German monarchy and rejected the authority of traditional elites because of its lack of race consciousness. The Nazi party, while celebrating the past, did not want to turn the clock back.

Anti-rational

Nazism rejected the rationality embodied in Enlightenment ideas, and celebrated – in an almost religious manner – notions of heroic struggle, sacrifice and the authority of the Führer in the pursuit of national rebirth.

Anti-internationalism

Its emphasis on the racially defined nation meant that Nazism was fundamentally opposed to international cooperation to achieve its goal.

A charismatic element

The cult of the Führer clearly demonstrates the charismatic aspects of Nazism. Hitler was recognised by his followers as the bearer of a world-changing social vision.

A non-Marxist form of socialism

National Socialism was a socialism of racially defined community, and differed significantly to the Marxist model, which was defined by class. In economic writings Nazism's socialism was frequently expressed in terms of corporatism, an economic system organised by large interest groups, such as labour, the military, farmers and other specialists, which had emerged in the late nineteenth century as an alternative to Marxist socialism.

The aim to create a homogeneous national community of totalitarian aspirations

The *Volksgemeinschaft*, the people's community, was the national racial community of Nazism. The system was totalistic in the sense that all individuals were to be engaged with the national community through the activism and actions of the movement.

Eclectic

Nazi thought drew from a range of sources, such as nineteenth-century racial theory, Social Darwinism, volkisch nationalism, adaptation of Nietzsche's notions of the will to power and the *Übermensch*, and non-Marxist forms of socialism, in order to create an integrated world view: its ideology.

- 1 Why do you think post-World War II writers, especially British writers, sought to present Nazism as a distinctly German phenomenon?
- 2 Explain the Nazi/fascist idea of rebirth.
- 3 How did Nazi 'socialism' differ to Marxist 'socialism'?

Beyond Hitler

Nazism, like any political movement, had internal divisions. As discussed further in chapter 6, these groups did not challenge Hitler's ideas or his vision, but 'worked towards the Führer', seeking his support or endorsement. These variations in Nazi thought usually stemmed from individuals with particular interests, such as economics, socialism, racial theory and unadulterated anti-Semitism, and so tended to emphasise their particular concerns in their writings and speeches.

Gregor Strasser and the Nazi left

A significant example of a faction of the Nazi movement of the 1920s was the group generally identified as the party's left wing or Strasserites, because the group was closely associated with the brothers Otto and Gregor Strasser. The faction, which included Joseph Goebbels, focused on anti-capitalist themes of National Socialist ideology, such as the break-up of large estates, the exploitative nature of capitalism, and the need to redistribute wealth. They also argued that the path to power was to mobilise the working class in support of the national revolution. At a series of party meetings that culminated in the 1926 Bamberg conference, the Strasserites advocated the so-called urban plan, and sought revisions of the 25 Point Program. Unable to garner Hitler's support, the Strassers failed to achieve their goal. However, both brothers left the conference committed to the movement and to Hitler's leadership. Gregor in particular would be instrumental in moving the party from the political fringe to a serious contender in national politics.

GREGOR STRASSER (1892–1934)

Gregor Strasser served as a junior officer in World War I and was active in the Freikorps movement in the early stages of the Weimar Period. He established and led his own small party, the *Völkischer Wehrverbund*, which merged with the Nazi Party in 1922. Gregor was with Hitler during the abortive November 1923 Munich Putsch, and only avoided prison because he was a deputy in the Bavarian regional parliament. While Hitler was in prison, Gregor built up the party organisation, and following Hitler's release, became responsible for party affairs in northern Germany. In 1926 he

became party propaganda chief, and from 1928 oversaw the party's national reorganisation along electoral lines, a key to the party's electoral success in the 1930s. Gregor withdrew from the party and political life in December 1932, after Kurt von Schleicher offered him the Vice Chancellor role, which Strasser had refused on Hitler's instructions. Gregor was executed in 1934 during the Night of the Long Knives.



Getty Images/Alamy

Gregor Strasser, *Thoughts about the Tasks of the Future*, 15 June 1926

... We are socialists. We are enemies, deadly enemies of today's capitalist economic system with its exploitation of the economically weak, its unfair wage system, its immoral way of judging the worth of human beings in terms of their wealth and their money, instead of their responsibility and performance and we are determined to destroy this system whatever happens!... And yet it is not enough just to change the system, to replace one economic system by another; what is needed above all is to change the spirit! The spirit to be overcome is the spirit of materialism! ...

There has been much talk in the *volkisch* movement about the emergence of a new political leadership, and the call for such a leadership is compatible with what I have been saying. But the ways it recommends for solving the problem, examining people's blood, re-nordification, etc, etc ... seem to my practical nature somewhat dubious as far as their feasibility, their value, and even their effectiveness is concerned! ...

Gregor Strasser, *Thoughts about the Tasks of the Future*, 15 June 1926

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why might one almost expect Strasser to be on the left of German politics, rather than in the Nazi Party?
- 2 With which points of the Nazis' 25 Point Program do you think Strasser would be most sympathetic?
- 3 Compare what Strasser is saying on the issue of race with what Hitler was writing in *Mein Kampf* (see pp. 115–16). In what ways do they differ? How do you think this would have affected their cooperation within the party?

Other ideologues

While the Strasserites might be regarded as a faction, most other variations in Nazism were associated with individuals. Among the most notable ideologues associated with Nazism were Alfred Rosenberg, a Baltic German who settled in Berlin after 1918. Rosenberg was one of the earliest members of the German Workers' Party, joining eight months before Hitler became a member. His writings displayed a continuing preoccupation with issues associated with race, and a hostility towards Christianity, the threat of communism and the influence of Houston S Chamberlain. Whereas Hitler and Gregor Strasser were more concerned about the struggle for power, Rosenberg was most at home in articulating his ideas, which he did as editor, from 1923, of the *Völkischer Beobachter* and in his books, most notably in *Der Mythos des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts* (*The Myth of the Twentieth Century*). While generally regarded as the principal ideologue of the party, many within the leadership were disparaging of Rosenberg's efforts. Even Hitler claimed not to have read *Der Mythos des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*.

Other early key leading ideologues whose membership of the party predated Hitler were Gottfried Feder and Dietrich Eckart. While both were anti-Semites, their major preoccupations were with economic issues. Both helped draft the 25 Point Program with Hitler and the party's founder, Anton Drexler.

Later joiners of the party, however, also made contributions to the movement's ideology. The Agriculturalist Richard Walther Darré, for example, joined the party in 1930, having spent most of the 1920s associated with more volkisch societies linked to the Blood and Soil movement, such as the Artaman League. Darré's contributions were again racial in foundation, but celebrated the purity of the German peasant and attacked the influence of Christianity on German culture. Similarly, Hans Günther, a professor of race and eugenics who joined the party in 1932, had been associated with the radical right through the 1920s. Unsurprisingly, given his vocation, race was a central preoccupation. In his writing he argued that Aryanism was the only basis for a healthy civilisation, and he believed that if eugenics was placed at the centre of policy making, Aryanism could be bred back into the Germans.



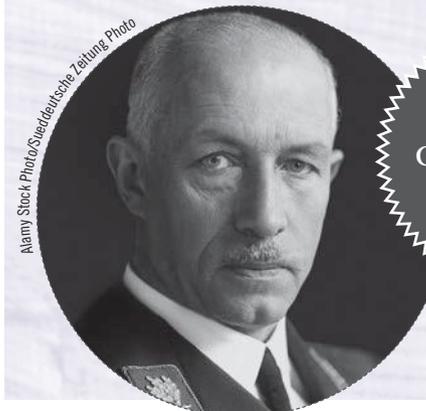
Amy Stock Photo/Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo

Alfred Rosenberg

National Socialism stands or falls by its Weltanschauung. Germany will regard the Jewish question as solved only after the very last Jew has left the greater German living space ... Europe will have its Jewish question solved only after the very last Jew has left the continent.

Anti-Semitism is the unifying element of the reconstruction of Germany.

Today we believe that in the true sense there is no world history, but only the history of different races and peoples.



Amy Stock Photo/Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo

Gottfried Feder

The breaking of the interest slavery of productive work in all professional fields will grant it the primary position due to it. Money will once again be returned to its sole appropriate role of being a servant in the enormous enterprise of our national economy. It will become once again what it is, an indication of performed work and therewith the way will be paved to a higher goal, the rejection of the frenzied financial greed of our age.

Our economic principle is: the duty of the national economy is to provide the necessities of life and not to secure the highest possible profits for capital.

Alamy Stock Photo/Granger Historical Picture Archive



Richard Walther
Darré

Every available means should be used to achieve the goal that the creative blood in the body of our people, the blood of human beings of the Nordic Race, should be preserved and increased because on this depends the preservation and development of our Germanness.

The unity of blood and soil must be restored.

The concept of Blood and Soil gives us the moral right to take back as much land in the East as is necessary to establish a harmony between the body of our Volk and the geopolitical space.

Alamy Stock Photo/Quendtsche Zeitung Photo



Hans Gunther

Only improvement of the stock and re-nordification will save Germanness from destruction. The tall, blond, blue-eyed German is still felt to be genuinely German.

A race shows itself in a human group which is marked off from every other human group through its own proper combination of bodily and mental characteristics, and in turn produces only its like.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Suggest ways in which Alfred Rosenberg, Richard Walther Darré and Hans Gunther would have been in agreement.
- 2 Identify possible socialist thinking in Gottfried Feder's comments.



Know your
German terms

Conclusion

Nazi ideology drew on a variety of nineteenth-century ideas, such as Social Darwinism, anti-Semitism and volkisch nationalism, in a unique synthesis shaped by the events following Germany's defeat in 1918. Although the central premise of Nazi ideology was race, it can readily be seen as a form of fascism, and it shared with other such movements a hostility towards liberalism, communism and internationalism, and a fear of an imminent national crisis that could only be confronted by a revolutionary renewal of the German race. Hitler, as the Führer, articulated this broad vision, but others before and after the Nazi rise to power would expand and contribute to the discussion of national socialist ideas. These ideas, while embodied in the party's 25 Point Plan, were not always expressed as programmatic policy statements. Indeed, the movement, like so many other political organisations, realised that opportunism and pragmatism were crucial in the path to power and the attainment of their aims.

Chapter summary

- The origins of Nazi ideology can be traced to late-nineteenth-century Social Darwinism, racial theory and German volkisch nationalism.
- Following World War I, a new form of German ultra-nationalism emerged, of which the Nazis were one of many minor parties.
- The central idea of Nazi ideology was race and racial conflict. All other aspects of Nazi ideology and its political program flowed from the premise of race.
- Hitler was a key figure in the development of Nazi ideology, but numerous others also contributed to the development of these ideas.

Additional resources

- Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1962 edition
- Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, Arnold, London, 2000, Chapter 10
- Roger Griffin, *Fascism*, OUP, Oxford, 1993
- Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, Routledge, London, 1991
- CM Vasey, *Nazi Ideology*, Hamilton Books, Lanham, 2006
- Lucas Carter, *How did Friedrich Nietzsche's ideas influence the Nazi regime in the Third Reich?*

Endnotes

- ¹ Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, Routledge, London, 1991, p. 87
- ² Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, Routledge, London, 1991, p. 91
- ³ Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, Routledge, London, 1991, p. 93
- ⁴ Joseph Nyomarkay, *Charisma and Factionalism in the Nazi Party*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1967, p. 5
- ⁵ Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, Routledge, London, 1991; Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1995; Roger Eatwell, *Fascism: A History*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1996; Michael Mann, *Fascists*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2004

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

- 1 What role did the Jews play in volkisch thinking?
- 2 What term did Hitler use to describe his 'master race'?
- 3 What was the common denominator of most ultra-right thinking after 1918?
- 4 What does *Mein Kampf* mean?
- 5 Why did Hitler focus so much on the need for Aryan racial purity?
- 6 How did liberalism fit into the Nazi way of thinking?
- 7 What did Julius Streicher and Hans Gunther focus on in their thinking on Nazi ideology?
- 8 Why did Darwinian ideas appeal to Hitler?
- 9 Who were the *Untermenschen*?
- 10 What was Hitler's view of Richard Wagner's operas?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 11 Who was Joseph Arthur de Gobineau? Outline his views on race. How influential was he on Nazi thinking?
- 12 Select an extract from *Mein Kampf*. Summarise its contents and outline what you think it might suggest about Hitler's thinking.
- 13 *Mein Kampf* was republished recently in Germany. How did Germans react to the reappearance of Hitler's book?

EXTENDED WRITING EXERCISE

- 14 To what extent could it be argued that Nazi ideology was merely a synthesis of earlier thinking within Germany?
- 15 How could it be argued that the Nazi view of racial hierarchy was a logical consequence of nineteenth-century science?

06

Control and opposition in Nazi Germany 1933–39

SYLLABUS OUTCOMES

In this chapter, students will examine how the Nazis maintained control and the extent of opposition.

Aspects to be covered include:

- terror, propaganda and censorship,
- the role of the law,
- key individuals,
- the extent of opposition to the Nazis.



SOURCE 6.1 Hermann Goering, President of the Reichstag (left) and Heinrich Himmler, leader of the SS (right), circa 1935



Introduction

By late 1934 the Nazis were firmly entrenched in power. The process of Gleichschaltung had neutralised all possible avenues of opposition. Business and the army had swung strongly behind the regime, and the threat of Röhm and his SA had been eliminated. After the death of President Hindenburg, Hitler assumed the powers of both Chancellor and President, and the German army swore an oath of allegiance to Hitler personally.

Nazi control was never seriously questioned before the war years. This was due to a combination of factors. The public nature of repression and the regime's willingness to exercise terror were enough to cow the vast majority of people into submission. However, it would be wrong to suggest that the majority of Germans in the 1930s were walking around in fear, expecting to be arrested at any moment. For many Germans life had improved significantly since the early 1930s. Goebbels' propaganda played up the positive benefits of the regime while keeping a lid on those things the Nazis did not want out in the open. The cult of personality that centred around Hitler in Goebbels' cleverly constructed 'Führer Myth' convinced many to fall in with the regime, even if they did not actively support it.

Opposition to the Nazi regime did exist, but it was on a very small scale. There were always those on the left who were not seduced by the regime, and not all army officers trusted Hitler. Some young people were indifferent to the blandishments of the regime, and a few brave people actively opposed it. However, Nazi laws, repression and propaganda were so pervasive that such opposition came to nought.

Control and opposition in Nazi Germany 1933–39

- 1933**
 - 4 February** Decree for the Protection of the German People enacted
 - 28 February** Reichstag Fire Decree issued
 - March** Opening of Dachau Concentration Camp
 - Opening of Oranienburg Concentration Camp
 - Establishment of the Gestapo
 - 13 March** Creation of Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda
 - 21 March** Potsdam Day
 - 10 May** Book burnings in universities across Germany
- 1934**
 - 22 May** Creation of the Reich Culture Chamber
 - 4 October** Jews forbidden to work in journalism
 - April** Himmler takes control of the Gestapo
 - Establishment of the People's Court
 - 13 July** Himmler's SS takes control of the concentration camps
 - September** Leni Riefenstahl films the Nazi rally in Nuremberg
- 1936**
 - August** The Berlin Olympics are held
- 1937**
 - 1 July** Arrest of Pastor Martin Niemöller
- 1938**
 - 15 July** Opening of Buchenwald Concentration Camp
 - 8 November** Opening of 'The Eternal Jew' exhibition
 - May** Opening of Flossenbürg Concentration Camp
 - August** Opening of Mauthausen (Austria) Concentration Camp
 - 9 November** Kristallnacht – The Night of Broken Glass
- 1939**
 - May** Opening of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp

Terror and repression



Topography of
Terror Centre

As explained in chapter 4, the Nazis did not hide their use of violence and brutality against their opponents. Opponents of the regime knew the cost of displaying their opposition. The general population was well aware that the price of even the mildest dissent could be an on-the-spot beating at best, and possibly an extended spell in a concentration camp. It quickly became expected that people would greet one another with 'Heil Hitler', give freely to the constant party charity appeals, salute with an outstretched arm and display Nazi flags on celebratory occasions. Refusal to do such things gave the appearance of dissent, and dissent was not tolerated. The March 1933 Law against Malicious Gossip made it possible to arrest people for even the most innocuous comments.

During the early months of the regime, it was the SA that was feared. The brown-shirted bullyboys were free to roam the streets and inflict violence on whomever they chose. However, SA influence was greatly diminished after the Night of the Long Knives and the murder of Röhm. It was now Heinrich Himmler's SS-police system that was feared. Himmler's vision for the SS was the creation of an elite within the regime. Himmler saw the SS as a highly disciplined, unquestioningly obedient and racially pure force. Its members were younger than the SA members had been, and they were better educated. Recruits had to provide proof of Aryan ancestry and undergo a strict physical examination. SS men were only allowed to marry racially pure Aryan women. The SS would run the Nazi regime's concentration camps.

The future commandant of Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Rudolf Höss, trained under the first SS commandant of Dachau, Theodor Eicke. He describes the 'psychological' training prescribed by Eicke for the SS men under his command.



Geography

Rudolf Höss

It was Eicke's intention that his SS-men, by means of continuous instruction and suitable orders concerning the dangerous criminality of the inmates, should be basically ill-disposed towards the prisoners. They were to 'treat them rough', and to root out once and for all any sympathy they might feel for them. By such means, he succeeded in engendering in simple-minded men a hatred and antipathy for the prisoners which an outsider will find hard to imagine. This influence spread through all the concentration camps and affected all SS-men and the SS leaders who served in them ... All the torture and ill-treatment inflicted upon the prisoners in the concentration camps can be explained by this 'hate indoctrination' ...

Rudolf Höss, *Commandant of Auschwitz*, Pan, London, 1961, pp. 83–4

QUESTIONS

- 1 What does Höss mean when he refers to 'hate indoctrination'?
- 2 What do you think the impact of Eicke's instructional work would be, both inside and outside of the camps?



SOURCE 6.2 Reconstructed inmate quarters at Dachau



SOURCE 6.3 SS guard house, Dachau Concentration Camp



As the regime became more confident of its position, most concentration camp inmates were gradually released. By late 1937, only four concentration camps remained – Dachau, Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald and the women’s camp of Lichtenburg. The composition of concentration camp inmates began to change. At the beginning of Nazi rule the camps had been used to house real or potential political opponents; from 1937 onwards, they began to fill up with ‘social undesirables’ such as criminals and deviants, and the racially degenerate.

The SS had its own Security Service, the Sicherheitsdienst or SD, soon to be headed by Reinhard Heydrich.

“ Unsentimental, cold, efficient, power-hungry and utterly convinced that the end justified the means, he soon won Himmler over to his ambitious vision of the SS and its Security Service as the core of a comprehensive new system of policing and control. ”

Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, Penguin, London, 2005, p. 54

In March 1933, Himmler and Heydrich took control of the Bavarian police service, and over the succeeding months took over police services in other states, too. However, they faced opposition from Goering, who had established the Gestapo in Prussia, headed by a career police officer, Rudolf Diels. Considered too detached from the regime’s political goals, Diels was replaced by Himmler in April 1934. Himmler’s eventual control of all German police came with Hitler’s decree of June 1936.

Over the next few years, state police forces and the SS began to merge as professional officers joined the SS, and SS men joined the police. The effect of this was to vastly increase the power of both Himmler and Heydrich, and to free the Gestapo and the SS from judicial control. There could be no appeal against any action taken by Himmler’s police.

Powerful though Himmler was, and brutal as his police system was, and as frightening as the concentration camp system became, it would be wrong to conclude that Germany was swarming with Gestapo agents, lurking on every street corner and in every bar or workplace. In fact, as postwar research has shown, the number of Gestapo agents was small. The town of Essen, in the industrial Ruhr region, had a population of 650 000, and just 43 Gestapo agents.

Most Gestapo officials were office workers burdened with painstaking bureaucratic tasks. Himmler’s police services initiated few investigations of their own. Instead, they reacted to information supplied to them by ordinary German citizens who took it upon themselves to ‘denounce’ enemies of the regime. Such denunciations numbered in their thousands. In fact, fewer than 10 per cent of all cases examined by the Gestapo came from investigations they had initiated themselves. The motives for such denunciations were many – for some it was a genuine patriotic act, for some it might have been to prove one’s loyalty to the regime and avoid the attentions of the police, and for others it was simply a way of settling a personal grievance.

The overall effect of Himmler’s efficient system, the network of camps and the frequency of denunciations was to atomise German society. It became almost impossible to trust anyone – work colleagues, friends at school, even family members. People came to believe that even a casual comment or a lax word could lead to a denunciation and arrest. Germans learned to keep their views to themselves and simply tried to get on with their lives and avoid politics if at all possible. This meant that any effective opposition to Nazi rule was next to impossible. Evans sums up the impact in this way:

“ ... Whatever the way in which a denunciation occurred, it was obviously dangerous to speak freely in public; people could never be sure who was listening. It was the unpredictability of denunciation, rather than its frequency, that mattered. It caused people to believe that agents of the Gestapo, paid or unpaid, were everywhere, and that the police knew everything that was going on ... What counted was not whether or not there really were informers everywhere, but the fact that people thought there were ... ”

Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, Penguin, London, 2005, pp. 103, 105



Everyday Germans would probably never have any contact with a Gestapo agent. However, they would have frequent contact with a block warden. A block warden was a party official, often SA, whose function was to keep an eye on a small local group of citizens, perhaps a group who lived in a block of flats. It paid to humour this man as he could make life difficult, and could of course also become a 'denouncer'.

- 1 In what minor ways were German people forced to display support for the Nazi regime? What were the consequences for failing to show such support?
- 2 How did the composition of concentration camp inmates change throughout the 1930s?
- 3 What was Heydrich's role in the Nazi system of control?
- 4 How extensive had Himmler's control become by the late 1930s?
- 5 Explain the role of denunciation in Nazi control of Germany during the 1930s.

HEINRICH HIMMLER (1900–1945)

age fotostock/The Hollywood Archive



Heinrich Himmler was born in Munich in 1900. He left school in 1918, desperate to fight in the war, but his army training came too late. He attended university and studied agriculture, graduating in 1922. For a short time he worked as a chicken farmer. By this time he had also fully absorbed the racist volkisch writings available.

Himmler joined the Nazi Party in August 1923, and in November joined Hitler in the ill-fated Munich Putsch. Three years later he became secretary and personal assistant to Gregor Strasser, and in early 1929, Hitler appointed him head of the fledgling SS. By 1933, thanks to Himmler's industry and organisation, the SS had grown to 52 000.

In early March 1933, Himmler became President of Police in Munich and was soon head of the Bavarian police service. In 1934 Himmler took control of the Gestapo, and played a key role in Operation Hummingbird, which saw the destruction of Röhm and SA power. Hitler made the SS independent and answerable only to him,

another factor ensuring the growing strength of Himmler's SS-police system. By July 1936, Himmler had been placed in charge of all police forces. In 1939, Himmler placed Heydrich in charge of the Reich Main Security Office, centralising all police and security services.

During the war years, Himmler transformed the SS into a virtual empire. It ran the concentration camps, had its own schools, factories and transport systems. It even had its own army, in the form of the Waffen SS, which took part in many of the major military engagements.

Himmler was obsessed with the notion of race, racial purity and breeding, and tried to institute breeding programs to establish a pure, fit, untainted Aryan race. Once the decision had been made to exterminate the Jews, it was Himmler who organised the construction of the first camps for this purpose. 'Gas vans' and shootings proved inefficient, so Himmler ordered the construction of new camps complete with gas chambers to improve the operation. By late 1942, such camps were in operation at Chełmno, Sobibór, Treblinka, Belżec and Auschwitz.

Once the war seemed lost in early 1945, Himmler made an attempt to deal with the Allies, but he was captured. Before he could be tried, he committed suicide on 23 May 1945.



→ Michael Burleigh gives his verdict on Himmler:

... Routinely outmanoeuvring his foes, his empire spread between the interstices of state, Party and army, throughout Germany, and then across the whole of occupied Europe. His manner may have been distracted and unassuming, but the coldness, moralising, prying and suspicion kept him in absolute control of subordinates, whose own utter ruthlessness

was accompanied by human frailties which Himmler lacked ... Himmler insisted that the SS equivalent of livestock breeders cast an instructive eye over the candidate, in search of subjective character defects. Suspicious watchfulness was also part of a personal and institutional desire to create fear ...

Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, Pan Books, London, 2001, pp 191, 192

REINHARD HEYDRICH (1904–1942)

Reinhard Heydrich was born in Halle in 1904. Doubts about his Jewish ancestry plagued him throughout his life, possibly resulting in his fanatical anti-Semitism. In 1920 he joined a Freikorps group battling communists, and in 1922 he joined the German navy. By 1928, he had become a lieutenant and was working in intelligence. An uncontrollable womaniser, his sexual activities got him into trouble and he was forced out of the navy. In 1931 Heydrich joined the Nazis and soon came to head the SD, the intelligence service of the SS. In 1932 he became Himmler's Chief of Staff, and the two would have a close working relationship until Heydrich's death.

As Himmler built up his SS-Police system, Heydrich's power increased. It was Heydrich who drew up the death lists for Operation Hummingbird in 1934. He was cold, calculating and totally lacking in compassion, and soon came to be feared, especially by those within the party.

Heydrich was very much a 'behind the scenes' operator. He was instrumental in the purging of the leading army generals Blomberg and Fritsch in 1938, and organised pro-Nazi activities in Austria and the Czech region of the Sudetenland before the takeover of each. In 1938, he set up the Gestapo Office of Jewish Emigration, to be headed by Adolf Eichmann.

In 1939, Heydrich was placed in charge of the Reich Main Security Office, which centralised the police and security services under his control. Following the invasions of Poland and the Soviet Union, Heydrich organised SS murder squads called Einsatzgruppen to hunt down potential opponents and Jews.

In January 1942, Heydrich convened the Wannsee Conference in Berlin, which laid out the plans for the 'Final Solution'. In September he became Deputy Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia (Czechoslovakia), and established the Jewish ghetto of Theresienstadt.

On 27 May 1942, Heydrich was shot by British-trained Czech resistance fighters. He died on 4 June. Nazi retribution was swift and severe, with thousands shot or sent to concentration camps. The town of Lidice was made an example of, and completely levelled.

British writer Edward Crankshaw described Heydrich in the following manner:

... He was very young, very handsome, save that his eyes were too close-set; an outstanding example of that blond mixture of effeminacy and toughness which may be observed in any Teutonic night-club. He had immense drive, which was liable to carry him too far; total ruthlessness in the attainment of his own ends, which were wrapped up in personal ambition; no active enjoyment of cruelty except sometimes, perhaps, almost as an afterthought; and a devilish sense of humor. Vain as a peacock, but mockingly aware of his vanity, clever, perhaps too clever by half, and contemptuous of the clumsiness of most of his colleagues and superiors, he nevertheless could be clumsy in his use of force and, unlike Himmler, was liable to over-reach himself. He was dynamite, like a character in an American gangster story; and in the S.S. he was able to canalise his nihilism into a constructive purpose ...

Edward Crankshaw, *Gestapo: Instrument of Tyranny*, Viking Press, New York, 1956



image/okimage Asset Management

1936 Berlin Olympic Games

In 1931, the International Olympic Committee awarded Berlin the right to stage the 1936 Olympic Games. At the time, the decision was welcomed as a sign that Germany was once again back within the family of nations. However, within two years, the Nazis were in power and there were calls for nations to boycott the event. These calls fell on deaf ears. The United States Olympic President, Avery Brundage, argued that politics had no place in sport. Forty-nine nations competed in the Games, with Germany having the largest team of 348 athletes. The Soviet Union did not attend.

For the Nazis, the Olympic Games provided a wonderful opportunity to show off the regime to the rest of the world. Anti-Semitic signs were temporarily removed and the German media toned down its anti-Jewish rhetoric. No expense was spared to provide the best facilities. A vast Olympic Stadium was built, seating 100 000 people, and another 150 structures were built for the Games. For the first time, the Olympic Torch was carried from Olympia in Greece to the main stadium.

The Nazis expected their blonde-haired, blue-eyed Aryan athletes to dominate the Games. Germany did perform very well, but the star of the Games was the African American athlete Jesse Owens. Owens won four gold medals – 100 m, 200 m, long jump and the 4 × 100 m relay. But in Nazi eyes, Owens was a racial inferior. Much was made of Hitler's refusal to congratulate Owens, although Hitler had not congratulated any athlete since the first day of the Games.

The Berlin Olympics was a media triumph. Leni Riefenstahl's film of the Games won the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale; some see this film as the greatest sports film ever made. Radio broadcasts were given in 28 languages and these Games were the first to have live television coverage, with more than 70 hours broadcast on large screens across Berlin, and even in some private homes.



SOURCE 6.4 Jesse Owens saluting on the podium as the German competitor beside him gives the Nazi salute



SOURCE 6.5 A cameraman films the diving at the Berlin 1936 Olympic Games.

Propaganda and censorship

The reality of terror and violence and the consequences of dissent was enough to quell opposition to the regime. However, the fact is, most Germans, even if they were not avid supporters of the regime, were at least happy to go along with it. This was largely the result of Goebbels' propaganda. Goebbels had been in charge of party propaganda for several years before he joined the cabinet as the Minister for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda on 13 March 1933.

Goebbels had a keen understanding of human psychology, and as discussed in chapter 4, he understood the principles of effective propaganda: keep the message simple, never intellectualise,

work on people's emotions and establish scapegoats on whom the nation's problems, past and present, can be blamed. Goebbels' propaganda skill was seen early on in his organisation of the Potsdam Ceremony on 21 March 1933 (see chapter 4).

In some ways, Goebbels' job was easy; he had some positive messages to relay. If there was one reason why German people were willing to support the Nazis in the 1930s, it was the fact that the Nazis seemed to have ended the Depression. The Ruhr steelworker who in 1932 could not feed his family now had a job. By 1936 there were even labour shortages in some areas of the economy. The bases of this economic improvement might have been built on sand, but as far as many Germans were concerned, life was now more secure. This was a message Goebbels was able to spread, and he made much of comparisons with other western countries that still had high rates of unemployment into the mid-1930s. The following table, produced by the League of Nations, illustrates Germany's apparent success in addressing unemployment compared to other countries in the 1930s.

Unemployment rates, 1929–1938

| COUNTRY | 1929 | 1932 | 1937 | 1938 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|
| World Index | 5.4 | 21.1 | 10.1 | 11.4 |
| Australia | 11.1 | 29.0 | 9.3 | 11.4 |
| Austria | 12.3 | 26.1 | 20.4 | 15.3 |
| Belgium | 1.9 | 23.5 | 13.1 | 17.6 |
| Canada | 4.2 | 26 | 12.5 | 15.1 |
| Czechoslovakia | 2.2 | 13.5 | 8.8 | 8.5 |
| Denmark | 15.5 | 31.7 | 21.9 | 21.4 |
| France | - | - | - | 8.0 |
| Germany | 9.3 | 30.1 | 4.6 | 2.1 |
| Japan | 4 | 6.8 | 3.7 | 3 |
| Netherlands | 5.9 | 25.3 | 26.9 | 25 |
| Norway | 15.5 | 30.8 | 20 | 22 |
| Poland | 4.9 | 11.8 | 14.6 | 12.7 |
| Sweden | 10.7 | 22.8 | 11.6 | 11.8 |
| Switzerland | 3.5 | 21.3 | 12.5 | 13.1 |
| United Kingdom | 10.4 | 22.1 | 10.5 | 12.6 |
| United States | 1 | 24.9 | 13.2 | 19.8 |

League of Nations, World Economic Survey: Eight Year 1938/39, Geneva, 1939, p. 128.

QUESTION

- 1 Suggest ways Goebbels might have tried to use evidence like the table above in his propaganda.

Hitler had stated repeatedly that he intended to rip up the Treaty of Versailles. Germany's foreign ambitions will be examined in chapter 8, but suffice to say that as far as most Germans were concerned, Hitler had kept his promises. Germany was rearming, was becoming stronger, had regained the Saar region and re-entered the Rhineland. These were easy messages for Goebbels to spread.

However, Goebbels was also prepared to use more heavy-handed methods to ensure the Nazi message was the only message that could be heard. Cinema was very popular in Germany; indeed, in

the 1920s the German film industry rivalled Hollywood. Imports of American films into Germany declined during the 1930s, and so the German public had to rely on home-grown products. In 1933, the government set up a Film Credit Bank to finance German films, and within a few years it was financing almost 75 per cent of film production. This, plus the creation of the Reich Film Chamber (1933) and the nationalisation of the two major film companies, UFA and Tobis (1934), gave Goebbels enormous control over the film industry.

But Goebbels was clever. He knew that the German people would soon become bored with nonstop propaganda, and so he ensured that most films produced were comedies and dramas. About a quarter of film production was political, which meant they could be easily mixed in with the more popular products. However, even the escapist films were expected to have villains who were Jews or Bolsheviks, and to follow the correct line set out by Goebbels.

Radio was far more important for getting the desired messages out to the people. Goebbels soon took control of radio, establishing the Reich Radio Chamber, and encouraged the production of cheap radio sets, known as the People's Receiver. By 1939, 70 per cent of German households had a radio. The radios were made with a limited range to prevent them being able to pick up foreign stations. As with cinema, Goebbels ensured the party line was followed, but he also ensured that most radio programs comprised light music, comedy and dramas. Hitler's speeches were frequently aired. In case people could not get to a radio set, loudspeakers were set up in public areas so people could hear the Führer.

Goebbels was also quick to establish the party's control over newspapers with the creation of the Press Chamber, and the Editors' Law being passed in October 1933. This gave the Nazis total control of editorial comment in Germany's newspapers. No independent editorial thought was allowed, and journalists were expected to report 'in the correct manner'. There were also official party newspapers, such as *The Racial Observer* and the more extreme *The Stormer*, produced by the party's racist ideologist, Julius Streicher.

Goebbels soon had the German media totally under control, and was able to deny airtime to views contrary to the party. He also quickly had various aspects of German culture in a straightjacket, with no aspect allowed to function unless it accorded with party ideals and policies. (This will be considered in chapter 7.)

Though Nazi control was total and opposition had been quashed, the regime still sought popular sanction for its acts, particularly regarding foreign policy. On several occasions, Hitler sought popular approval for foreign policy actions in the form of plebiscites, which would presumably be of propaganda value for the regime. Such votes took place after the German remilitarisation of the Rhineland, and the Anschluss with Austria in 1938. The 1938 vote reported 99 per cent approval of Hitler's action. However, if a person refused to vote they could be beaten or even placed in a lunatic asylum. Ballot papers were marked so that a voter's identity could be discovered. If a person voted their disapproval, consequences could follow.



SOURCE 6.6 An admiring crowd greets Adolf Hitler in Berlin on 1 May 1934.



The Hitler Myth

Within the Nazi Party, the position of Hitler had been raised up to an almost divine level for several years. Once in power, this mythic status was now pressed on a nationwide audience. Goebbels made much of Hitler's birthday and other anniversaries, such as the failed 1923 Munich Putsch. Across Germany, streets, city squares and parks were renamed in Hitler's honour.

Goebbels himself considered that his greatest propaganda triumph was his creation of the 'Hitler Cult'. Hitler was presented to the German people as a man who was both 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary'. On one level, Hitler was presented as a simple man of the people:

- he was a man of modest tastes and great humility
- a man who had served his country in time of war
- an abstemious man who eschewed life's indulgences, from women to alcohol
- a typical bourgeois who loved children and loved animals and cared for his friends
- above all, a man who had sacrificed all personal pleasures to dedicate himself to Germany.

However, on another level, it was clear that Hitler was a political genius and a far-sighted statesman:

- thanks to the Führer, the Depression had been brought to an end and prosperity had returned to Germany
- Hitler had promised to end the humiliation of the Treaty of Versailles, and he had kept that promise
- national pride, unity and hope had been single-handedly restored to the nation by the Führer
- Hitler had saved the nation from chaos and anarchy
- it was Hitler who had courageously saved the nation from the decadence, immorality and overbearing ambition of Röhm and the SA.

No one described the essence of the Hitler Myth better than Hitler himself when he spoke to the Reichstag on 28 April 1939:

“ I overcame chaos in Germany, restored order, enormously raised production in all fields of our national economy ... I succeeded in completely resettling in useful production those 7 million unemployed who so touched our hearts ... I have not only politically united the German nation but also rearmed it militarily, and I have further tried to liquidate that Treaty sheet by sheet whose 448 Articles contain the vilest rape that nations and human beings have ever been expected to submit to. I have restored to the Reich the provinces grabbed from us in 1919; I have led millions of deeply unhappy Germans, who have been snatched away from us, back into the Fatherland; I have restored the thousand-year-old historical unity of German living space; and I have attempted to accomplish all that without shedding blood and without inflicting the sufferings of war on my people or any other. I have accomplished all this, as one who 21 years ago was still an unknown worker and soldier of my people, by my own efforts ... ”

Adolf Hitler to the Reichstag on 28 April 1939, quoted at Der Spiegel Online, 30 January 2008



SOURCE 6.7 Heinrich Knirr's mid-1930s iconic painting of Hitler with the slogan 'One people, one country, one leader'

British historian Ian Kershaw pioneered the study of the Hitler Myth in the 1980s. Here, Kershaw summarises what he sees as the crucial importance of the development of the Hitler Myth.

“... The effective deification of Hitler by the state propaganda machine and by the Nazi Movement into a leader of supradimensional qualities, the embodiment of a historical ‘mission’, constituted a vital element in the power structure of the Third Reich ...”

Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, Longman, Harlow, 1991, p. 101

If criticisms were made of the regime – and Gestapo reports were full of low-level complaints about various aspects of life – those criticisms were seldom aimed at the Führer, but rather at his colleagues and lower-level functionaries. Hitler was above reproach. For a German in the 1930s, it was a perfectly rational position to love Hitler, yet hate the Nazis.

- 1 Identify three reasons why you think Goebbels’ propaganda proved to be so effective.
- 2 Why do you think so many ordinary Germans could ‘relate’ to Hitler?
- 3 What claims did Hitler make for himself?

Steven Bach and *Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl*



SOURCE 6.8 Leni Riefenstahl

into acting and during the 1920s became a significant actress on the German film scene, working on several ‘Berg’ or mountain films for director Arnold Fanck. In 1930, she produced her first directorial effort, *The Blue Light*, which won several awards. Riefenstahl came to Hitler’s notice and he persuaded her to produce films for him. These would include *Victory of Faith*, *Day of Freedom* and several smaller works on German artists and sculptors. In 1936, it was Riefenstahl who produced the groundbreaking film *Olympiad* on the Berlin Olympic Games.

However, Riefenstahl’s most famous work is *Triumph of the Will*, her film record of the 1934 Nazi Nuremberg Rally of the same name. It is widely recognised as one of the ‘great’ propaganda films of all time. However, Riefenstahl would spend half of her life (she died in 2003, aged 101) vehemently arguing that she was not producing Nazi propaganda, but that she was an artist, a film ‘auteur’, who was only concerned with her ‘art’. Historians have long debated Riefenstahl’s →

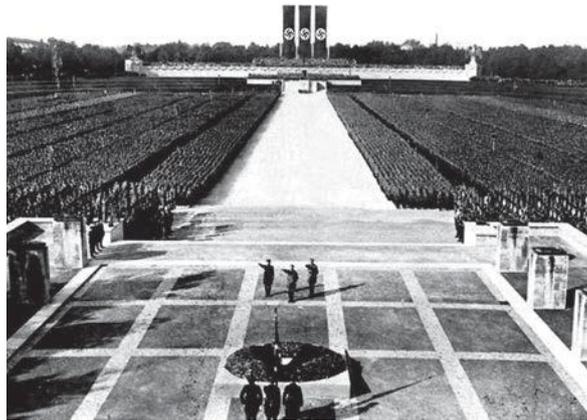
Steven Bach was for some time in charge of worldwide production for the American film company, United Artists. He now teaches at Bennington College and Columbia University in the United States. However, Bach is also a writer of note, having written biographies of major Hollywood figures such as Marlene Dietrich and Moss Hart. In 2007, Bach published a major title on the life and work of Leni Riefenstahl.

Leni Riefenstahl began her professional career as a dancer. Following an injury, she moved

→ position: propagandist or artist? Even if we accept that she was attempting to produce a work of art with *Triumph of the Will*, the end product was a film that sent out the Nazis' desired messages. Relations between Riefenstahl and Goebbels were often testy, but he had no doubt about the impact of Riefenstahl's film.

... Whoever has seen and experienced the face of the Führer in *Triumph of the Will*, will never forget it. It will haunt him through days and dreams and will, like a quiet flame, burn itself into his soul ...

Joseph Goebbels, quoted in Steven Bach, *Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl*, Little Brown, London, 2007, p. 123



SOURCE 6.9 The Blood Flag ceremony, commemorating the martyrs of the 1923 Munich Putsch attempt

Alamy Stock Photo/Collection: Christophel

In this extract, Steven Bach comments on the opening of the film *Triumph of the Will*. Hitler's plane descends from the clouds, Hitler emerges.

... The imagery is lyrical, expansive, unmistakably messianic. The sequence segues to Hitler's motorcade through Nuremberg and is constructed not on documentary techniques but on those of fiction films. Hitler stands solitary in his open Mercedes, photographed mostly in half-profile medium shots from behind as his car glides along the parade route like destiny – 'a Roman emperor', according to Shirer. Architectural details, fountains and statuary are intercut as visual emblems uniting the Führer with the German past. The Volk, in alternating shots suggesting his point of view, cheer ecstatically, their arms thrust high in the Hitler salute. The throngs are anchored and personalised by the occasional blond and comely figure in medium close up – usually a woman or a child – implying eye contact with the Führer and conveying joy through order, discipline and grateful submission. Shot and countershot continue. A cat on a windowsill (again) glances up as the procession continues to the Führer's hotel, where SS men grip each other's belt to form a human chain and lightbulbs spell out HEIL HITLER. The sequence occupies a full one-tenth of the film's length and is one of the most elaborate star entrances in film history. Ian Kershaw calls it 'a celluloid explosion of the Führer cult,' but others have characterised as a love story, one with a single star consummating his seduction of a supporting cast of hundreds and thousands, an entire nation ...

Steven Bach, *Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl*, Little Brown, London, 2007, p. 136



SOURCE 6.10 This is a typical shot of Hitler from *Triumph of the Will*, camera pointing up to the lonely leader, bearing the responsibilities of leadership.

Alamy Stock Photo/Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo



QUESTIONS

- 1 Why do you think Leni Riefenstahl proved so willing to work on the regime's films?
- 2 How is Hitler filmed in the sequence described? Why do you think Hitler has been filmed in this way?
- 3 What does the film say about the German people?
- 4 Why are various architectural landmarks included in the filming of Hitler's procession?
- 5 Based on this extract, why do you think Goebbels might have been so pleased with the film?

Laws: Party and state

The Nazis had never held the law in high regard, believing that extreme measures were always justified if they were in the interests of the state. The Third Reich inherited an immense bureaucratic structure from the Weimar Republic, and even from Bismarck's 'Second Reich'. In addition, the Nazis developed a whole system of party structures, which were essentially extra-legal, as they rested purely on the authority of the Führer.

Throughout 1933, clashes arose between the actions of the state and those of the party. Hitler sought to centralise affairs, but did not wish to create a focus of power for a potential rival. One man he did trust was Rudolf Hess, whom he appointed as Leader's Deputy for Party Affairs. Hess joined the cabinet in December 1933, and in July 1934, Hitler decreed that all laws emanating from Reich ministries had to go through Hess' office. A year later, Hess was given the power to vet all appointments and promotions within the civil service.

Hess was not an ambitious man, and Hitler's belief that Hess would not usurp his power was well-founded. However, the Chief of Staff in Hess' office, Martin Bormann, was quite different. Here was a man with great ambition. By the mid-1930s, Bormann had control of the management of Hitler's headquarters on the Obersalzberg in Bavaria. In this position, Bormann was increasingly able to wield his own influence by determining access to Hitler.

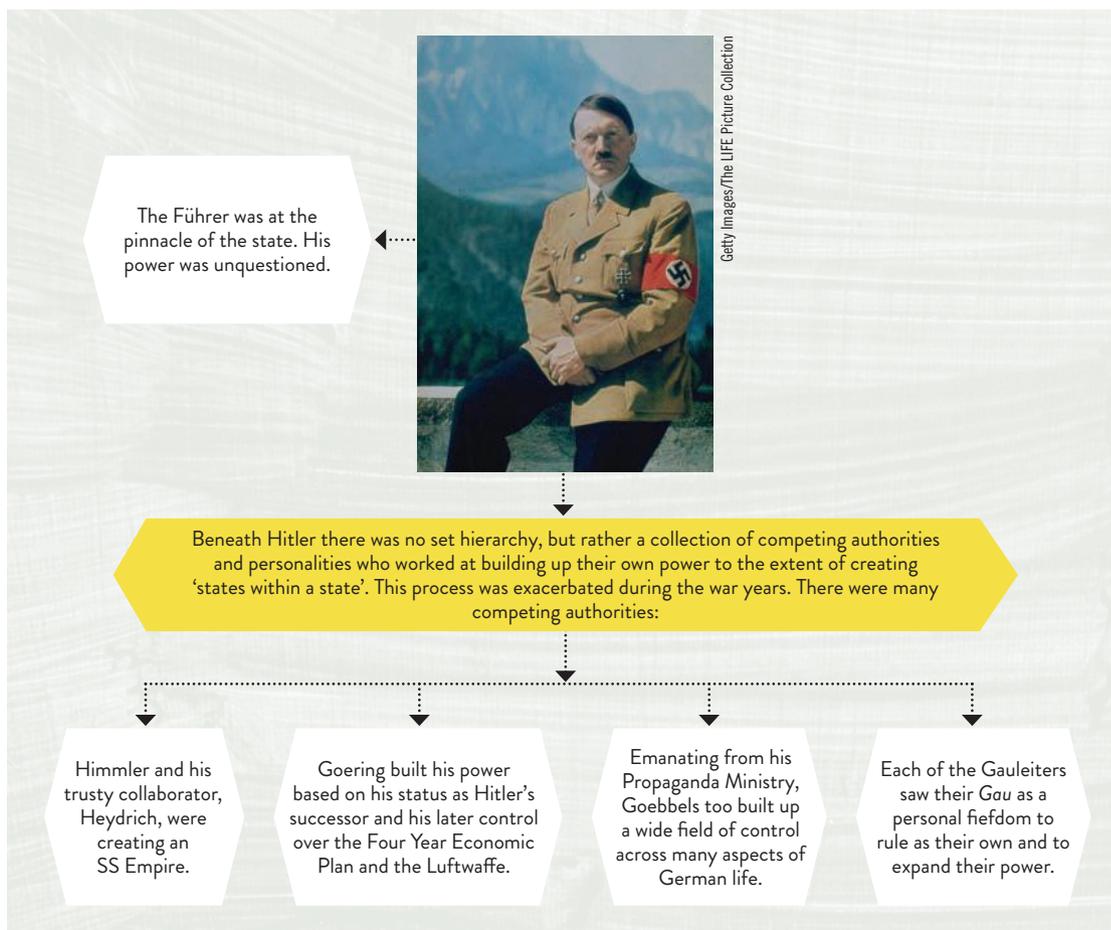
These developments highlight a crucial point about law-making within the regime. Historians who first wrote about the operation of the Third Reich presented an image of an efficient, disciplined, well-oiled machine. More recent research has shown that to be a myth. In some ways it is amazing that the regime managed to achieve all that it did, as in reality it was a chaotic mass of competing authorities. In December 1934, Hitler declared Goering as his successor. Over the next few years, Goering used his position to build up a personal empire, which Evans says amounted to a state within a state. As has been explained above, Himmler was involved in a similar exercise as he built up his SS empire. Meanwhile, Goebbels energetically expanded his own area of control, as did other Nazi leaders. This has led Evans to conclude that 'the real and formal distribution of power within the Third Reich had become a matter of personalities rather than constitutional rules and regulations'.¹

This situation led to what Kershaw has referred to as 'working towards the Führer'. After June 1934, Hitler's power and position was never in question. However, the Nazi regime was not a hierarchical system. Hitler's position towered above all, but beneath him was a host of competing personalities and authorities, each endeavouring to develop their own power bases. This is illustrated in Source 6.11. Hitler rarely gave specific instructions. His subordinates had to gauge for themselves what the Führer's will was, and then act in a manner that was 'working towards his will'. This approach had two major effects:

- Law-making became complex and confused, because systematic law-making, as would exist in a parliamentary democracy, was absent.
- As time went on, the regime became increasingly radicalised as each leading personality and each authority sought to outdo the other in its efforts to ‘work towards the Führer’.

This development, along with the atomisation of society, was another reason for ordinary Germans to keep their heads down and carry on as normally as they could. It could be argued that this administrative chaos actually assisted the regime’s control of the nation.

- 1 Comment on the efficiency of party-state organisation in Nazi Germany.
- 2 What does Kershaw mean when he refers to the idea of ‘working towards the Führer’?
- 3 What were the implications of ‘working towards the Führer’?



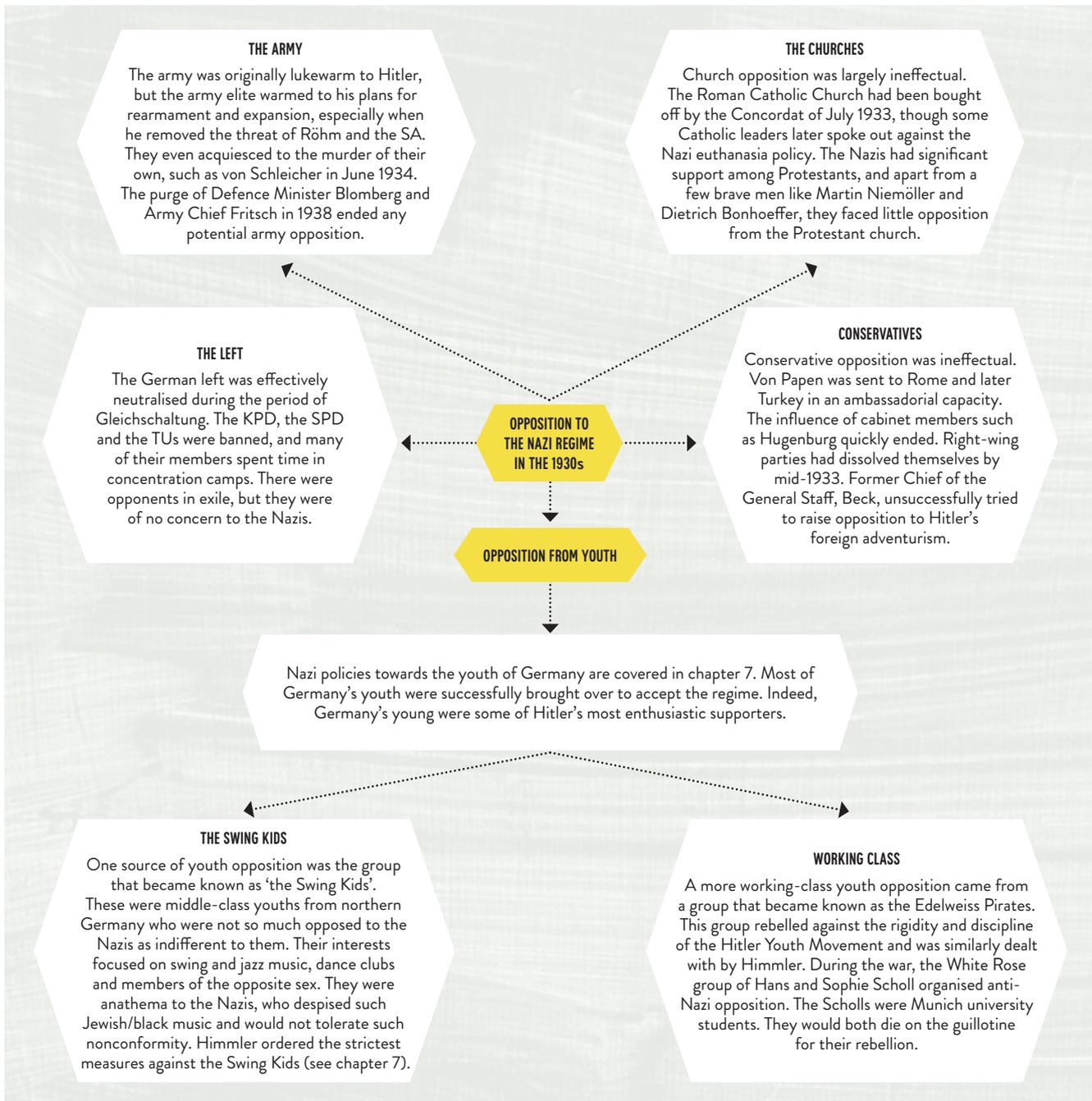
SOURCE 6.11 Power bases in the Third Reich

Opposition to the Nazi regime

Opposition to the Nazi regime was extremely limited. All possible sources of opposition had effectively been neutralised during the period of Gleichschaltung (see chapter 4). The impact of the Depression and the brutal suppression of the ‘left’ had ensured there could be no effective opposition from that

quarter. Those on the ‘right’ were generally in favour of what the Nazis were trying to do, even if they had doubts about some of their methods. Internal opposition within the party had been snuffed out during the Night of the Long Knives. The army had swung around behind the regime – to the point that they did not even protest when some of their own were murdered or purged. Church opposition was minimal, and certainly no threat to the regime. Youth in Germany were overwhelmingly behind the regime, and those who opposed the Nazis or were indifferent to Nazism were easily dealt with. Widespread grumbling about the regime was certainly prevalent, as Gestapo records showed, but such things do not overthrow dictatorships.

Source 6.12 summarises the nature of opposition to the Nazi regime in the 1930s.



SOURCE 6.12 Opposition to the Nazi regime in the 1930s

Conclusion

The Nazis used a variety of methods to maintain their control during the 1930s. Terror and the threat of violence always lurked in the background. Repression at the hands of Himmler's SS-police system was fiercely effective, and fear of the consequences was often enough to bring about the submission of the German people. Himmler and Heydrich became men to be feared. Opposition to the Nazis in the 1930s was extremely limited due to the achievement of the atomisation of society. Much of the Gestapo's work was initiated by ordinary German citizens who eagerly denounced opponents of the regime, real or imagined. Goebbels was able to utilise the resources of the state to spread the messages the Nazis wanted the German people to hear. Understanding the principles of effective propaganda, Goebbels easily played up the regime's domestic and foreign successes, but his greatest achievement was the development of the Hitler cult of personality. In his propaganda work, Goebbels was assisted by Hitler's favourite filmmaker, Leni Riefenstahl, whose work successfully presented the world with an image of Nazi Germany that the Nazis wanted to project.

Chapter summary

- Germans were expected to conform and display support for the regime, such as hanging out Nazi flags on certain occasions.
- Concentration camps were run in a brutal manner, with the aim of cowing the general population into submission.
- The SS developed its own Security Service under the leadership of Himmler's No 2, Reinhard Heydrich, who became one of the most feared men in Nazi Germany.
- Himmler's SS-Police system was actually quite small in number, and the Gestapo initiated few investigations, with most of its work originating from denunciations by ordinary citizens.
- The overall impact of terror was the atomisation of society.
- The 1936 Berlin Olympic Games proved great propaganda for the regime, though the star of the Games was not a blonde Aryan but the African American Jesse Owens.
- Goebbels proved to be a master of propaganda as he poured out the regime's positive messages. His control of all forms of media and his understanding of human psychology ensured non-conformist messages were denied exposure.
- Goebbels considered his greatest propaganda achievement the development of the Hitler Myth.
- Hitler's favourite filmmaker was Leni Riefenstahl. Her film record of the 1934 Nuremberg Rally, *Triumph of the Will*, is still considered one of the greatest propaganda films of all time. Riefenstahl also filmed the Berlin Olympics, and the result is considered one of the all-time great sporting films.
- Despite her film achievements, Riefenstahl would spend half her life countering claims by critics that she was nothing more than a Nazi propagandist.
- The organisation of the Nazi state was chaotic and confused, with party and state bodies often overlapping and duplicating functions.
- Hitler rarely gave specific policy instructions, instead only expressing a general line. It was left to his underlings to 'work towards the Führer'.
- Opposition to the Nazis was ineffective and often went no further than low-level grumbling. The process of Gleichschaltung had silenced potential opposition.

- The army was won over by the demise of the SA and the attractiveness of Hitler's foreign policy.
- There was some youth opposition, such as the Swing Kids and later the White Rose group (see chapter 7), but this was severely limited and easily suppressed.

Additional resources

- Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, Penguin, London, 2005
- Steven Bach, *Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl*, Little Brown, London, 2007
- Ian Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth: Image and Reality in the Third Reich*, OUP, Oxford, 1987
- Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1987

Endnote

- ¹ Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, Penguin, London, 2005, p. 50

CHAPTER REVIEW

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

- 1 How easy was it for a man to become a member of the SS?
- 2 Describe conditions inside Dachau for most inmates.
- 3 What was the process of denunciation?
- 4 Explain the role of the block warden. Why was such a man feared?
- 5 Identify three ways in which Goebbels controlled the German media.
- 6 Who was the British historian who pioneered work on the Hitler Myth?
- 7 What boasts was Hitler able to make in his April 1939 speech to the Reichstag?
- 8 Describe Goebbels' feelings about the film *Triumph of the Will*.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 9 Who were the Swing Kids?
- 10 What was the fate of Hans and Sophie Scholl?
- 11 Who were Generals Blomberg and Fritsch? Explain what happened to them in 1938. How did Hitler justify his actions? What was the impact of those actions?
- 12 Examine Leni Riefenstahl's film *Triumph of the Will*. Explain why so many critics see it as nothing more than propaganda.
- 13 What was Albert Speer's contribution to propaganda and the glorification of the Nazi regime in the 1930s?

EXTENDED WRITING EXERCISE

- 14 To what extent could it be argued that Nazi control of Germany between 1933 and 1939 rested solely on the widespread use of terror?
- 15 Assess the contribution of Goebbels' propaganda to the Nazis' ability to maintain control of Germany before 1939.

07

The impact of the Nazi regime on life in Germany

SYLLABUS OUTCOMES

In this chapter, students will examine the effect of Nazi rule on German life.

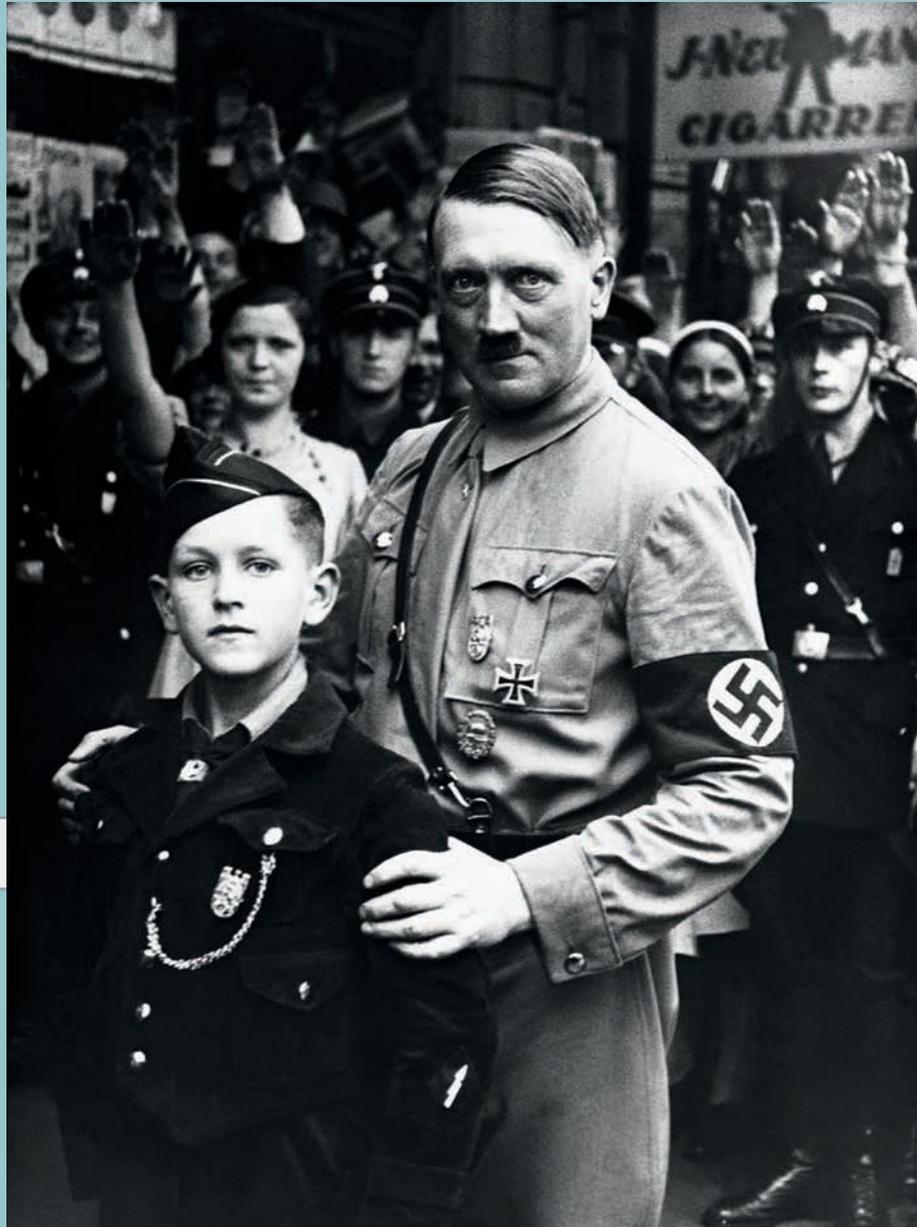
Aspects to be covered include:

- cultural conformity, religion, working life, youth, women, minorities, the Jews.



Getty Images/Corbis Historical
in History
syllabus

SOURCE 7.1 Adolf Hitler poses with a member of the Hitler Youth.



Introduction

The Nazi regime permeated almost every aspect of life in Germany during the 1930s, to the extent that the regime has been described as totalitarian. The terror state maintained the Nazis' firm political hold, while Goebbels did his best to control the minds of the people. From the beginning of the regime, Goebbels established firm control over all forms of cultural expression, which was not allowed to veer from the tenets of Nazi ideology. German youth were a major preoccupation of the Nazis, even before they came to power. Hitler realised that if his 'thousand-year Reich' was ever to be realised, it was crucial to win over the minds of the young. However, it was not only the minds of the young that concerned the Nazis. For the goals of *Lebensraum* and racial purity to be achieved, the correct development of the body was of equal importance.

Nazi Germany was arguably one of the most male-dominated and male-centred regimes in history. The Nazis viewed women as inferior to men, although this did not mean that women had no role to play in Germany's future. Hitler was condescending towards women, but he understood that without healthy, fertile, indoctrinated females, Nazism had no future.

thousand-year Reich

Refers to the 1934 Nuremberg Rally, when Hitler said that the Nazi revolution was complete and that there would not be another revolution for one thousand years

The impact of the Nazi regime on life in Germany

1931 ● Baldur von Schirach takes control of all Nazi Youth Organisations

1933 ● **March** Goebbels is appointed Minister of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda

● **21 March** Day of Potsdam

● **1 April** The Nazis call for a national boycott of all Jewish businesses

The Law for the Restoration of the Civil Service leads to mass sackings of Jews and those considered politically unreliable

The Law for the Encouragement of Marriage is passed

● **1 May** Abolition of trade unions

● **2 May** Creation of the German Labour Front

● **10 May** Book burnings across Germany

● **September** Jews are denied entry into the legal profession

● **22 September** Creation of the Reich Chamber of Culture

● **July** The Concordat is signed with the Vatican

By late 1933, there are 2.29 million members of Nazi Youth Organisations

● **November** The Strength Through Joy program is launched

1934 ● **January** The Law for the Ordering of National Labour is passed

● **April** The Reich Church is established under Reich Bishop Müller

● **September** Leni Riefenstahl films the Nazi rally in Nuremberg

1935 ● **September** The Nuremberg Laws are announced by Goering at the annual party rally in Nuremberg

1936 ● Membership of the Hitler Youth becomes compulsory

● **August** The Berlin Olympic Games are held

1937 ● **March** Papal Encyclical attacks Nazi violation of the Concordat

● **July** Arrest of Pastor Niemöller

Opening of the House of German Art

1938 ● **November** Kristallnacht – The Night of Broken Glass

1939 ● **January** Hitler's address to the Reichstag threatening the annihilation of Jews in Europe

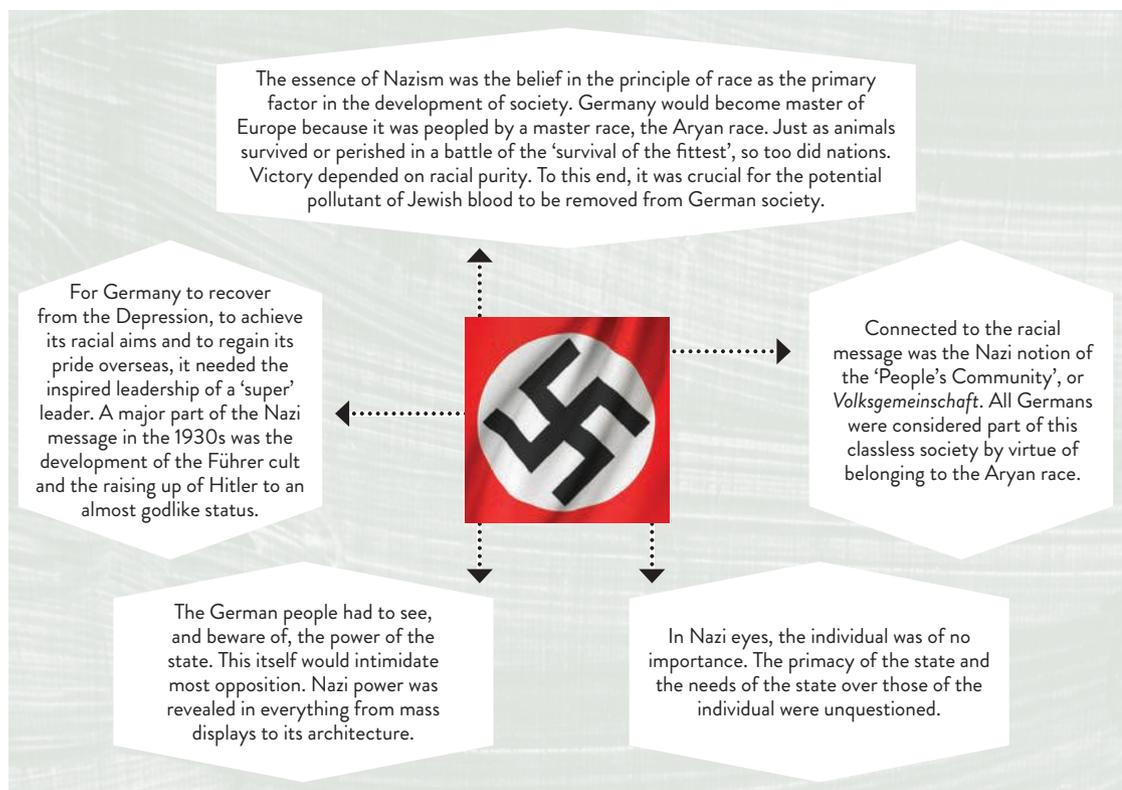
By mid-1939, there are 7.28 million members of Nazi Youth Organisations

Though workers were grateful for the speedy end of the Depression in Germany, the Nazis never really won them over to their cause. As explained in chapter 6, there was no chance that worker discontent would ever become anything more than occasional grumbling, but the Nazis understood the need for a cooperative labour force if their long-term goals were to have any chance of success. Thus, though one of the regime's first actions was to destroy the trade union movement, the Nazis did much to try and at least win the workers' tolerance and cooperation.

Ideology was at the root of the Nazi impact on German life. The official line was that class differences had no place in Germany; it was one's race that mattered. This thinking was the basis of the notion of *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community). In the racially pure world the Nazis envisaged, there was no place for minorities, be they homosexuals, the disabled or racial inferiors. The Nazis' anti-Semitic views were to become a key element of domestic policy in the 1930s, evolving into something far more terrible during the war years.

Cultural expression

Joseph Goebbels ensured that German cultural expression reflected the values and aims of the Nazi regime. Chapter 4 examined the methods and the psychology behind Goebbels' propaganda. Following his appointment as Minister for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda in March 1933, Goebbels quickly brought all areas of media under his control. His attention soon turned towards all forms of cultural expression. Artists and producers of any cultural form would not be allowed to promote values that did not reflect those of the Nazi regime. The Nazis had no sympathy for the cultural developments of the Weimar years, which they saw as decadent, inspired by inferior races and un-German. Goering is credited with saying, 'When I hear the word culture, I reach for my gun.' Hitler saw himself as a man of the arts, and made it a goal of the regime to place Germany back on the correct cultural path. Thus, the Nazis took control of cultural expression in order to entrench the messages of Nazi ideology (see chapter 5). Source 7.2 summarises the essence of these messages.



SOURCE 7.2 The Nazi message

Goebbels established the Reich Chamber of Culture in September 1933. It had seven sections – music, theatre, literature, radio, the press, film and fine arts. Jews, communists and anyone deemed ideologically or racially unsound were denied membership. Any writer, director, musician or artist had to belong if they wanted any chance of working in the cultural field.

Literature and theatre

All types of writers had to belong to the Reich Chamber of Culture, including novelists, dramatists, screenwriters and critics. However, compulsory membership also extended to publishing houses, libraries, bookshops and publishers of academic and scientific journals. Nazi control over cultural expression was immediate. The decree of 4 February 1933 allowed police to seize any book that might ‘endanger public security and order’. This power was amplified with the passing of the Reichstag Fire Decree in late February. A multitude of state and party bodies took it upon themselves to rid Germany of ‘dirty or trashy’ literature, and of course anything written by a Jew or containing Jewish themes or characters. By the end of 1933, more than 1000 books had been banned, including classics such as *Oliver Twist* and *Ivanhoe*. Forty separate censoring bodies in Germany succeeded in banning more than 4000 further titles in 1934 alone.

Germans were avid readers, and book sales remained high in the 1930s. Many best-selling titles had clear Nazi themes. Kuni Tremel-Eggert’s book *Barb*, which focused on the ideal Nazi female role model, sold 750 000 copies. Coelestin Ettighofer produced stories based on war themes, such as *Verdun: The Supreme Judgment*. Ettighofer’s aim was to counter the pacifism and horrific realism of Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which presented such a powerful anti-war message. Remarque’s work was a complete contradiction of the Nazi glorification of war and struggle. Ettighofer’s novel focused instead on courage and self-sacrifice. Also popular was Theodore Kroger’s ‘blood and soil’ novel *The Forgotten Village*, and the more openly anti-Semitic works of Hans Zöberlein, such as *Conscience’s Command*. Sales figures for such works were high, though this might have been due to a lack of competition from banned works, and the fact that the party put in bulk orders.

Goebbels was happy for the German public to escape into comic literature, such as Heinrich Spoerl’s *Burnt Rum and Red Wine Punch*. Also popular were scientific novels, which Goebbels was willing to sanction, such as Schenzinger’s *Anilin*.

The Theatre Law of May 1934 gave Goebbels the power to license all theatres, thus ensuring that only ideologically sound plays could be staged. Jewish actors, writers and technical staff were, of course, denied theatrical work. The President of the Reich Theatre Chamber was Rainer Schlösser, and he demanded that any theatre or drama company, even amateur ones, produce four German plays for each foreign written play.

But Goebbels was careful not to flood German theatre with ideological and politically acceptable works, realising this would be counter-productive. He also allowed the staging of comedies and romances, as well as performances of the classics. Shakespeare was a popular and acceptable choice, even if the work dealt with issues such as tyranny. Of course, a play like *The Merchant of Venice*, with its depiction of the cunning and avaricious Jew, Shylock, was quite acceptable. Richard Evans notes:

“... Their flight into the classics was a form of escapism to which Goebbels, who was always alive to the political advantages of allowing people to get away temporarily from the incessant demands of political mobilisation and propaganda, was never likely to object ...”

Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, Penguin, London, 2006, p. 160

One type of theatre that Goebbels quickly brought to a close was what was known as *Thingspiel* or ‘meeting play’. This type of theatre dealt with contemporary themes, often political, and involved audience participation and speech choruses. Goebbels’ suppression of *Thingspiel* saw the end of this genre by the close of 1935.

- 1 What were Goebbels' goals regarding the arts?
- 2 What type of books did the Nazis approve of, and what type did they disapprove of? Why?
- 3 Outline Goebbels' attitude towards the theatre.

The book burnings

The nineteenth-century German poet Heinrich Heine wrote in 1819: 'Wherever they burn books they will also, in the end, burn human beings.' With the benefit of hindsight, Heine's words come back to haunt us.

Close to midnight on 10 May 1933, thousands of university students marched along Berlin's main thoroughfare, the Unter den Linden, ending up at a square opposite Berlin University. Torches had been lit and they were hurled onto a giant pile of books. The university students, for whom the destruction of knowledge should have been a hateful thing, revelled as they danced around their literary bonfire.

The books of many of Germany's most famous writers went up in flames, including the likes of Thomas Mann, Erich Maria Remarque, Albert Einstein and Hugo Preuss, who was the main author of the Weimar constitution. The works of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud were also burned as the young students displayed their opposition to class struggle and the debasement of human psychology. Foreign writers were not spared either, with books written by HG Wells, Jack London, Emile Zola and Marcel Proust also joining the flames. One student proudly stated that the flames were the just destination for any book 'which acts subversively on our future or strikes at the root of German thought, the German home and the driving forces of our people'.¹

One particular target was the work of Magnus Hirschfeld. Hirschfeld was a pioneer in research into all the variations of human sexuality, and a supporter of homosexual rights. His Institute for Sexual Research was plundered on 6 May, and students gleefully hurled his work into the flames four days later.

The 10 May book burnings were by no means a one-off event; similar bonfires occurred all over Germany in the following months. As Nazi domination of culture and education gained ground, it became clear that academic freedom was no longer to be the basis of university life.



imagefolk/World History Archive

SOURCE 7.3 Thousands of books were burnt on 10 May 1933.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why do you think the Berlin University students were so keen to engage in the book burnings?
- 2 Do you think such a thing could be possible in Australia?

Sculpture and art

Goebbels maintained equally tight control over the fine arts. The Nazis' favourite sculptor was Arno Breker. Breker's work fitted in with the ideals of the regime perfectly. He produced monumental statues of Aryan men, endowed with muscles to typify the nature of the master race. Breker joined the Nazi Party in 1937, was appointed the party's 'Official State Sculptor' and was soon mixing with leading party figures. Breker's work became the standard for other German sculptors to follow. His creations were always lifeless, massive and devoid of any humanity – which is why his work was favoured by the

regime. Breker seemed to be foreshadowing the German male that Nazi cultural policy was working towards, one who was 'unthinkingly physical, aggressive, ready for war'.²

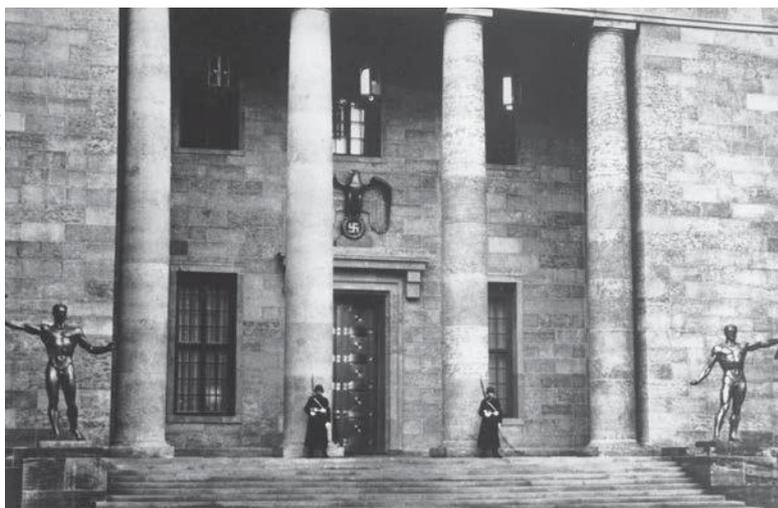
Art was one area of cultural expression in which Hitler took a major personal interest. Before the war he had twice tried, unsuccessfully, to gain admittance to the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. His limited talent did not prevent him from imposing his will on the nation's art. Hitler hated modernism and all its variants. He rejected recent modern styles such as cubism and Dadaism, anything that could be construed as 'cultural Bolshevism', and art that was international in its approach. Such things were condemned as being decadent and Jewish. The developments in art that had occurred during the Weimar Republic were to be discarded as the nation embraced racially appropriate Aryan art.

From the beginning of the regime, gallery directors, eager to court favour with the Nazis, began removing modernist works, such as those of Max Beckmann and Otto Dix, from their collections. Those who did not were quickly removed. In 1933, 27 art gallery and museum curators were sacked and replaced by Nazi loyalists. In 1937 Hitler personally opened the Museum of German Art in Munich, which featured displays of the racially sound human form. Adolf Ziegler specialised in such works, and soon became a favourite of Hitler's.

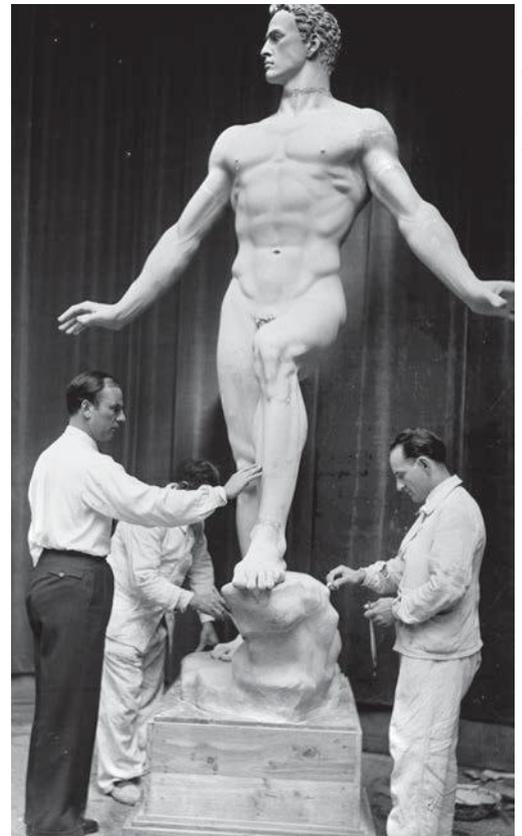
Exhibitions of 'degenerate art' were staged periodically under such titles as 'Chamber of Art Horrors'. In 1937, a major exhibition of degenerate art was staged in Munich, driving home the evils of modernist, foreign, Jewish and Bolshevik artistic styles. The atmosphere at the exhibition was intimidating, with loud commentaries denouncing the works, and party figures swaggering around making comments. Despite this, the exhibition did not remain open for long; it was proving too popular.

In May 1938, a Law for the Confiscation of the Products of Degenerate Art was passed. Thousands of works were taken. Goering managed to get hold of works by Van Gogh, Cezanne and Gauguin, which he sold for a tidy profit. This was an activity that Goering would keenly pursue during the war, when European art galleries were at his mercy.

Getty Images/ulstein bild DTI



SOURCE 7.5 Breker's 'Die Partei', outside the new Reich Chancellery building, designed by Albert Speer



SOURCE 7.4 Arno Breker's statue 'Der Sieger' ('the victor')

Getty Images/Roger Viollet



SOURCE 7.6 Adolf Ziegler's 'The Four Elements: Fire, Water and Earth, Air' as displayed in Hitler's Munich apartment. The women are meant to be seen as archetypal Aryans.

Alamy Stock Photos/Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo

Nazi art

Nazi art was positioned in opposition to what was generally described as decadent art: the arts of modernism, Jews and those that Hitler described in the opening of the Great Exhibition of German Art in 1937 as ‘babblers and crooks’. National Socialist art was believed to embody and convey German ideals and values. As a result, state-sanctioned art celebrated the themes embedded in Nazi ideology, such as race, and drew on established representational artistic conventions.



Farming Family from Kalenberg, 1939 (oil on canvas), Wissel, Adolf (1894-1973), Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Germany / Bridgeman Images

SOURCE 7.7 Adolf Wissel, *Bauerngruppe*, 1939



Alamy Stock Photo/Chronicle

SOURCE 7.8 HO Hoyer, *In the beginning was the word*, 1937



Das Urteil des Paris (the Judgement of Paris), 1936, Saliger, Ivo (1894-1997), Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin/A. Psille

SOURCE 7.9 Ivo Saliger, *Das Urteil des Paris* (The Judgement of Paris), 1936

QUESTIONS

- 1 Identify the Nazi values suggested in Source 7.7.
- 2 What image of Hitler is the artist trying to present in Source 7.8?
- 3 What is ‘the judgement of Paris’? Why might the Nazis have supported a painting such as this?

The wider impact of cultural conformity

Goebbels' control of artistic expression was extensive. As well as literature and art, he decided what music was acceptable. Modern American styles of music such as jazz and swing were not acceptable, as much of this music originated in the minds of 'blacks and Jews' – racial inferiors. Even classical music did not escape the knife. Concert halls in the 1930s no longer featured the works of Jewish composers such as Mendelssohn and Mahler.

As explained in chapter 6, Goebbels held a tight rein over what could be shown in the cinema. Here it was not only ideology that decided things, but also prudery. Films that showed any hint of nudity or sexual action were banned. This included the Tarzan and Jane films that were popular at the time. The works of Leni Riefenstahl were acceptable (see chapter 6), and Goebbels also allowed comedy, romance and crime drama, as long as fundamental Nazi values were not being questioned.

Nazism permeated all elements of society. Advertisers and manufacturers were quick to incorporate Nazi iconography in their products. Toothpaste packaging was emblazoned with swastikas, tea sets could be purchased with floral decorations mixed in with swastikas. Small boys were given toy Stormtroopers to play with, and dolls would play the **Horst Wessel song**.

The great German scholar and linguist Victor Klemperer kept a detailed diary during his years in Nazi Germany. He noted that even the language had changed, in what can only be described as an Orwellian manner. Words that previously would have seemed negative, such as 'fanatical' and 'uncompromising', were now perceived as being positive. Evans argues that the Nazis' influence on language was profound. Decisions were always 'forever', Hitler was referred to in religious metaphors, and government campaigns were always presented in military parlance, such as 'the battle for jobs'. This led Evans to conclude:

“... If language structures sensibility, and the words available to a society set the limits to what is thinkable, then the Third Reich was well on the way to eliminating even the possibility of thinking about dissent and resistance, let alone acting it out in reality ...”

Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, Penguin, London, 2006, p. 214



Horst Wessel song

Horst Wessel was a Nazi activist who was shot by communists in January 1930; he died a few weeks later. He was mythologised as a martyr by the Nazis, and a song he had written earlier became a Nazi anthem that was sung at all Nazi occasions.

- 1 Outline Hitler's view of art.
- 2 Why did exhibitions of degenerate art cause embarrassment for the Nazis?
- 3 How was music affected by Nazi control of the arts?
- 4 In what ways was language affected by Nazi control of the arts and media?
- 5 Language can affect the ways in which a society views an issue. Can you think of any present-day examples of this?

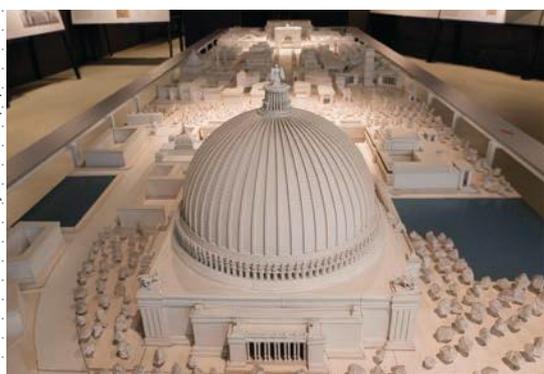
ALBERT SPEER: 'FIRST ARCHITECT OF THE REICH'

Alamy Stock Photo/imageBROKER



SOURCE 7.10 Adolf Hitler and Albert Speer discuss a model of a building in 1936.

Alamy Stock Photo/dpa picture alliance



SOURCE 7.11 Architectural model of Germania, the proposed Nazi capital, designed by Albert Speer

The demands of Nazi cultural policy also entered the world of architecture, seen most clearly in the work of Albert Speer. Speer was born in 1905, into a 'cold' but well-off upper-middle-class family. He excelled in mathematics but, following his father's dictates, pursued a career in architecture. Speer 'discovered' Hitler in late 1930 and soon joined the party. Having completed a few minor commissions for Goebbels and Goering, Speer was able to prove himself as a great propagandist, and his work was immortalised in Leni Riefenstahl's film *Triumph of the Will*. At the 1934 Nuremberg Rally, Speer produced the 'cathedral of light' effect, using 130 anti-aircraft searchlights aimed at the heavens. He constructed 34 giant flag platforms and set up the pseudo-religious 'Blood Flag' scene. The torchlight nighttime rallies were also his idea.

In March 1934, Albert Speer became the First Architect of the Reich. Speer's skills in this area were to bring him very close to Hitler, who had an enormous fascination with architecture. Hitler was enraptured with Speer's work, and Speer would later write that Hitler rarely questioned his judgement. Speer's grand vision in matters architectural seemed to match Hitler's megalomaniacal hopes.

Hitler's main architectural dream was his desire to rebuild Berlin. The future Aryan empire needed a capital that could surpass Paris or Vienna. Hitler toyed with grandiose plans for the city, and these were to form the basis of Speer's own plans and models. Hitler's new Berlin was to be called Germania. A 5-kilometre avenue stretching through the centre of the city would lead to a domed hall several times the size of St Peter's in Rome. There would be a triumphal arch to dwarf that of Paris, and at the other end of the avenue would be the Führer's palace.

The plans for the new city suggest that ideology was clearly having an impact on art; the vastness of Germania represented the will to conquer.

In an attempt to impress Hitler, Speer took his megalomania seriously,

and he planned for buildings of vast dimensions as seen in the building of the Reich Chancellery. Hitler wanted a building that would impress the power of the Reich upon diplomats and overseas leaders. Speer had 8000 men working on the project. The Reich Chancellery was arguably Speer's greatest architectural achievement; it certainly impressed Hitler, who awarded him the Gold Party Badge. In his book *Inside the Third Reich*, Speer later wrote that Hitler seemed particularly pleased with his study table, with its inlay of a sword half-drawn from its sheath. Hitler was amused at the fear this would instil in visiting diplomats.

Evans sums up the Nazi view of architecture as follows:

“ ... What distinguished Nazi civic architecture and city planning was not the Classical derivation of its style but the maniacal gigantism of its scale. Everything might not be very different from civic structures elsewhere, but it was certainly going to be vastly bigger than anything the world had so far seen ... ”

Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, Penguin, London, 2006, p. 186

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1 What was Speer charged with at the Nuremberg Trials of 1946?
- 2 How did he manage to avoid being executed?
- 3 What has been debated about Speer's Nazi career since the war?

Religion

Goebbels' propaganda, particularly his development of 'The Führer Myth', presented Nazism to the German people almost as a religion. There may not have been a god, but Hitler was clearly a messiah. Nazism had a holy book, *Mein Kampf*, and its own set of iconographic symbols, such as the swastika. Its intolerant dogma certainly echoed that of some religions, and the movement had its own preachers. For some, Nazi ideology even seemed to answer questions about the meaning and purpose of life.

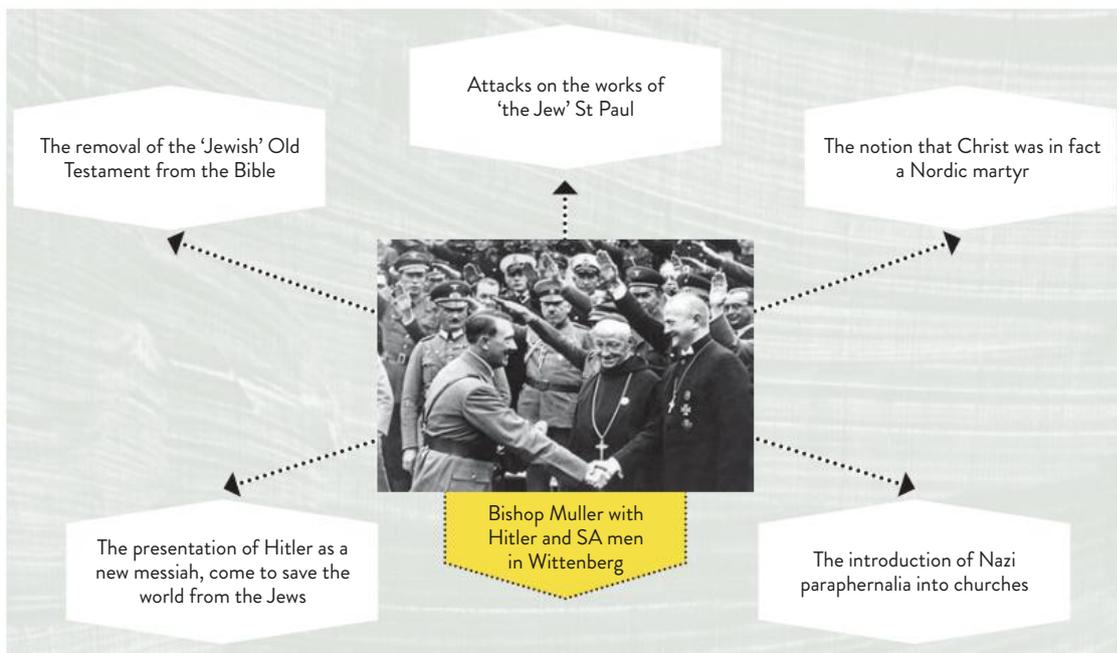
Of course, the majority of German people stayed with their traditional Christian faith: Catholic or Protestant. Hitler had been brought up Catholic, had sung in a church choir as a youth, and it is said he even contemplated joining the priesthood at one stage. Regardless of this, he viewed Christianity with contempt. Its focus on redemption and forgiveness did not sit well with the Nazi notions of strength and 'survival of the fittest'. However, as a politician he realised that the church could influence people, and wanted to neutralise this possibility.

In July 1933, the Nazis signed a **Concordat** with the Roman Catholic Church. The gist of the agreement was that the regime would respect the rights of the Catholic Church, would not interfere in the practice of its faith and would permit the continuation of Catholic education. In return, the Catholic Church would exclude itself from political life.

However, it soon became apparent that the regime was not honouring its side of the Concordat.

- From the summer of 1933, the regime began seizing the property of lay organisations. Newspapers were no longer allowed to call themselves 'Catholic', and from September 1933 in Bavaria Himmler stopped all activities on the part of Catholic organisations (except youth groups).
- Leading Catholics were among those killed during Operation Hummingbird.
- Goebbels used the weapons at his disposal to denigrate the church. From 1935, he widely publicised stories of monks accused of homosexuality and priests who were alleged to have sexually abused children. Goebbels mobilised the tabloid press to lead with sensationalist headlines. The truth of such stories was not important.

Protestants in Germany had been more supportive of the Nazis before Hitler came to power, as seen in the strong Nazi vote in Protestant-dominated regions of the country. The Nazis made an attempt to mobilise Protestant support further by organising an Evangelical Reich Church under the regime-appointed 'Bishop' Ludwig Müller. Müller and others in this 'church' attempted to change many of the accepted tenets of Christianity. Source 7.12 illustrates some of these new ideas.



SOURCE 7.12 The Evangelical Reich Church beliefs



Concordat

An agreement that the Vatican signs with a secular, non-religious body

Organised religion was in a difficult position. It desperately wanted to maintain its independence, provide spiritual sustenance and educate the young, but it was well aware that in the power balance of Nazi Germany it was completely outgunned. The Vatican frequently complained to the regime that the Concordat was being violated – complaints that Hitler ignored. Cardinal von Galen spoke out against the regime's euthanasia policy after 1939. Indeed, many Catholics were critical of some of the party radicals, but Hitler's standing did not seem to be affected. Evans suggests that the mute response of the Catholic Church stemmed from its desire to be fully accepted as part of the German nation. Some courageous Protestant pastors, such as Martin Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, spoke out against the Nazis, but with little effect. Niemöller would spend eight years in concentration camps; Bonhoeffer was executed in April 1945.

- 1 Why were the Catholic and Protestant churches in a difficult position when dealing with the Nazi regime?
- 2 To what extent did the Protestant and Catholic churches stand up to the regime?

The workers

The Nazis moved quickly to stamp out the possibility of opposition from organised labour. On 1 May 1933, the regime declared a national holiday on the traditional day of workers' celebrations; on 2 May, SA and SS men took over trade union offices and properties, closed down their newspapers, plundered their assets and marched hundreds of union members into concentration camps. It was the end of organised labour. In the place of the trade unions, the regime established the Deutsche Arbeitsfront (German Labour Front), or DAF, led by Robert Ley. It was compulsory to be a member, and failure to join meant little likelihood of employment. Jews were ineligible.

The position of workers in the Reich was a mixed one. Most workers were left-leaning politically, and the parties they might have supported – the SPD and the KPD – were silenced as quickly as their own trade union movement had been replaced by the DAF. The Nazis felt no affinity for the **proletariat**. For them, the quintessential German was a member of the *Mittelstand* (see chapter 3). Indeed, German workers had much to grumble about during the 1930s. Strikes, of course, were forbidden. Wages remained low, and were often forced lower by the party's constant demands for 'voluntary' contributions to such things as 'winter aid' for the poor. Hours were long. As the regime pursued rearmament as its number-one economic objective, consumer goods were often in short supply.

In 1935, the 'workbook' was introduced. This was a record of a worker's skills and employment, which quickly became another way of reducing a worker's freedom – one could not get a job without the workbook. Thus, if an employer refused to hand over an individual's workbook, that person would not be able to work anywhere else. He became tied to his employer, almost like a medieval serf was tied to his feudal lord in the Middle Ages. And under the June 1938 Decree on the Duty of Service, people could be directed to work anywhere in the country.

However, the workers did have some compensations. Above all, they had security of employment. The unemployment of the early 1930s was becoming a distant memory. Wages might be poor, but at least they existed. In his propaganda, Goebbels made much of the fact that other countries were still wallowing in Depression throughout the 1930s – US unemployment was still over eight million in 1938, despite President Roosevelt's New Deal program – while in some sectors, the German economy was even experiencing labour shortages. The nature of this economic recovery, much of it based on military priorities, might be tenuous, but for the Ruhr steelworker who was now able to feed his family, such things could be overlooked.

proletariat

The term created by Karl Marx to refer to the industrial working class

The regime did attempt to provide some sweeteners for the workers. Part of the German Labour Front was the Kraft durch Freude ('Strength Through Joy') organisation, or KdF. Workers might joke about the over-the-top propaganda that accompanied the KdF, and complain about what they could not get, but the organisation came to be well patronised, and provided real benefits for millions of workers. Cheap holidays were available, ranging from weekends in the country to cruises, or skiing in the Bavarian Alps. Entertainment that previously would have been beyond the means of the average worker could now be enjoyed. The regime even had the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra visit factories to give concerts (though it is unclear how many workers appreciated this sort of thing).



SOURCE 7.13 German women enjoying a holiday provided under the KdF Strength Through Joy holiday package tour

The Nazis were proud of the achievements of the KdF. The following table illustrates the growth in holidays and trips taken by Germans as part of the Strength Through Joy organisation.

TABLE 7.1 Trips taken as part of the Strength Through Joy organisation

| TYPE OF TRIP | PARTICIPANTS IN 1934 | PARTICIPANTS IN 1938 |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Vacation journeys | – | 1 447 972 |
| Short trips | 2 120 751 | 6 811 266 |
| Cruises | 61 151 | 131 623 |
| Hikes | 99 408 | 1 937 850 |

J Noakes and G Pridham (eds), *Nazism 1919–1945, Volume 2: State, Economy and Society 1933–1939*, University of Exeter Press, Exeter, 2000, p. 155

Another element of the DAF was the Schönheit der Arbeit ('Beauty of Work') program, or SdA. The purpose of the SdA was to improve working conditions, obviously with the aim of increasing productivity. The program did bring some real gains for those working long hours in factories, mines and chemical works. New toilet facilities were installed, canteens were provided and ventilation was improved.

One of the most ambitious plans of the DAF was the introduction of the 'people's car', the Volkswagen (originally known as the KdFwagen), which was launched in August 1938. The Volkswagen was to be a cheap, mass-produced car for everyday people. Workers were invited to start making weekly payments for their car, which would be provided after four years' payments. But the advent of war meant the scheme came to nothing, as scarce resources were diverted to the war effort.



SOURCE 7.14 A 1930s advertisement promoting the KdFwagen

- 1 Why was effective worker opposition to the Nazi regime unlikely?
- 2 Imagine you are a German worker in 1937. Write a 'secret' letter to a 'trusted' friend listing your complaints about working under the Nazi regime.
- 3 Identify reasons why German workers were not totally dissatisfied with the Nazi regime.

Youth in Nazi Germany

Youth in Germany played a major part in Nazi thinking. It was the youth who guaranteed the future of the thousand-year Reich. Early on, Hitler had admonished those who might oppose him in the following way:

“ ... When an opponent says '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 but this new community ... ”

Adolf Hitler, 6 November 1933, quoted in William Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, Book Club Associates, London, 1983, p. 249

Nazi control of the youth of Germany was of crucial importance for three key reasons:

- 1 Their minds had to be moulded and filled with love for the Führer, and their unquestioning obedience had to be able to be taken for granted. Brainwashed in this way, they would never consider opposing the regime, and would readily lay down their lives for Hitler.
- 2 The ultimate purpose of Nazism was *Lebensraum*. This could only be achieved with a dedicated, fit population. As German youths passed through the various stages of Nazi youth organisations, great emphasis was placed on military training, drills and fitness, to ready them for the military duties that their Führer would demand of them.
- 3 Racial theory played a major role in the development of German youth. They were taught about the importance of racial purity and how crucial it was not to pollute the racial stock. For this purpose, both boys and girls had to maintain fit, healthy bodies, and be taught the correct breeding practice. Girls had to accept without question that their purpose was to breed future members of the Aryan race.

To achieve these aims, youth had to be properly organised. The Nazi plans for youth long predated the regime itself. The first Youth League of the Nazi Party was set up in 1922 under Gustav Lenk. It was assumed that at 18, its members would move into the SA. The Hitler Jugend ('Hitler Youth') was established in 1926 under the leadership of Kurt Gruber. It was Gruber who set up the various age groups, shown in Table 7.2. A girls' section – the Bund Deutscher Mädel, or BDM – was set up in 1930. In 1931, Baldur von Schirach took control as Reich Youth Leader, and by then membership had grown to more than 20 000. In 1933, von Schirach became Youth Leader of Germany, and by the end of 1933, membership exceeded 3.5 million. Table 7.2 outlines the stages through which German youth would pass in the Nazi world.



SOURCE 7.15 Hitler Youth



SOURCE 7.16 Bund Deutscher Mädel

TABLE 7.2 The organisation of German Youth

| AGE | BOYS | GIRLS |
|---------------|--|---|
| 0–10 years | Pimpfen (Little Fellows) | |
| 10–14 years | Jungvolk (Young Folk) | Jungmädel (Young Girls) |
| 14–18 years | Hitler Jugend – HJ (Hitler Youth) | Bund Deutscher Mädel (League of German Girls) |
| Over 18 years | Period of labour service or military service | Domestic service and the encouragement of early marriage and family |

One thing youths were not encouraged to do was think for themselves. They experienced constant indoctrination from youth leaders, and were bombarded with the full range of Nazi symbolism, including flags, uniforms, rallies and marches. Hitler Jugend meetings were held several days a week.

Great emphasis was placed on camp life. On the plus side, this provided many working-class youths with regular healthy meals, exercise and sport. However, camp life continued the brainwashing, emphasised many aspects of military life, from map reading to weapons training, and encouraged a Social Darwinist view of life. Competition was encouraged, even if it involved physical conflict between boys. One story passed down from these times involved a young boy who shot another because he could not remember the camp password. He was roundly praised for his actions.

It was impressed upon girls that their prime purpose was the production of healthy members of the master race, and that their place was in the home. Their job was to accept the three Ks – kinder, küche and kirche (children, kitchen and church). A new program called 'Faith and Beauty' was added to the BDM, which placed great emphasis on beauty education, health, sport and exercise, including mass gymnastic displays. However, the seriousness the regime placed on youth was not always shared by the youths themselves.

“ ... Some said the BDM initials stood for 'Bedarfsartikel deutscher Männer' (for the use of German men) or 'Bald deutscher Mutter' (will soon be a German mother) ... ”

Tony Barta, *Nazi Germany: Understanding the Third Reich*, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 1991, p. 30

BDM experiences

Ilse McKee was a member of the BDM. Some years later, she wrote of her experiences.

... I, and all the other girls of my age, had to attend classes twice weekly. We had to be present at every public meeting and at youth rallies and sports. The weekends were crammed full of outings, camping and marches when we carried heavy packs on our backs. It was all fun in a way and we certainly got plenty of exercise, but it had a bad effect on our school reports. There was hardly any time now for homework ...

... We were told from a very early age that we had to prepare for motherhood, as the mother in the eyes of our beloved leader and the National Socialist government was the most important person in the nation. We were Germany's hope in the future and it was our duty to breed and rear the new generation of sons and daughters who would carry on the tradition of the thousand year Reich ...

Frequently we (and the boys) would have to go to the auditorium where some important personage would give a lecture on racial problems and the necessity of raising the birth rate. He too would remind us of our duties as future fathers and mothers of the nation, and somehow I never managed to suppress a giggle when I looked at those spidery-legged, pimply little cockerels who were supposed to become the fathers of our children.

These lessons soon bore fruit in the shape of quite a few illegitimate small sons and daughters for the Reich, brought forth by teenage members of the BDM and conceived in the grounds of our Hitler Youth Home. The girls felt that they had done their duty and seemed remarkably unconcerned about the scandal. The possible fathers could be heard proudly debating as to who had done it, whenever there was a chance that the girls might be able to overhear ...

Ilse McKee, quoted in George Mosse, *Nazi Culture*, Schocken Books, New York, 1981, pp. 276–8

QUESTIONS

- 1 What advantages and disadvantages does Ilse McKee see in the time-consuming nature of the BDM activities?
- 2 As a girl, what was the key propaganda message that was pushed on McKee and her fellow BDM members?
- 3 What evidence is there that Ilse McKee did not take the lectures too seriously?
- 4 How did the young people seem to react to the prevalence of teenage pregnancies?

Education

The regime controlled education, from kindergarten to university. Teachers had to be members of the National Socialist Teachers' League, and of course Jews were gradually excluded from school education. Kindergarten children were told stories of brave SS men killing wicked Jewish dragons who were trying to ravage virginal Aryan girls. Primary school children were none-too-subtly indoctrinated during their language and mathematics classes. The following source study gives examples of this.

Education in the Third Reich

EXAMPLE 1: A DICTATION EXERCISE FOR A PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASS

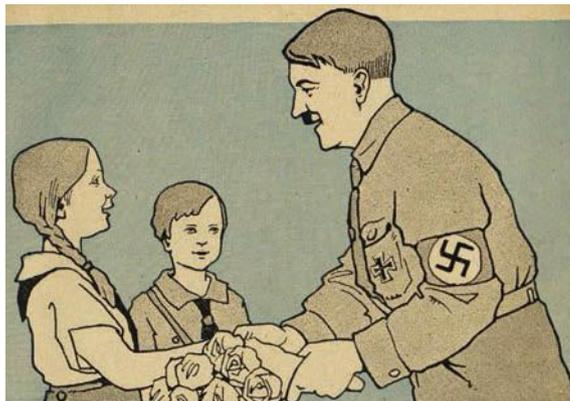
... Just as Jesus saved children from sin and from hell, Hitler saved the German nation from ruin. Jesus and Hitler were persecuted but while Jesus was crucified, Hitler became Chancellor ... The Apostles completed the work of the Lord. We hope Hitler will be able to complete the work himself. Jesus built for heaven; Hitler built for the German earth ...





EXAMPLE 2: AN ARITHMETIC PROBLEM FROM A MATHEMATICS TEXTBOOK

... A bomber aircraft on take-off carries twelve dozen bombs, each weighing 10 kg. The aircraft takes off for Warsaw, international centre for Jews. It bombs the town. On take-off with all the bombs on board and a fuel tank containing 2000 kg of fuel, the aircraft weighed about eight tonnes. When it returned from the crusade, it weighed 6.9 tonnes. How much fuel did it use up? ...



Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, Research Library for the History of Education, Berlin

EXAMPLE 3: A PRIMARY SCHOOL READING EXERCISE

SOURCE 7.17 A page from a 1936 primary school reader

*I know you well and love you as I do father and mother
I will always obey you as I do mother and father
And when I'm big, I'll help you as father and mother do
And you will be very pleased with me as father and mother are*

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why do you think Hitler is being compared to Christ in Example 1?
- 2 Why do you think a military example is used in the maths problem in Example 2?
- 3 In Example 2, identify the ways that anti-Semitic ideas are embedded in the maths problem.
- 4 Explain the reasoning behind the prayer in Example 3.

The impact of the regime also permeated higher levels of education. At university, science could no longer be studied objectively, and there was now only German physics and German chemistry. Racial science became a major area of study. Anyone of Jewish origin was soon driven out of university, and sometimes even the country, most notably Albert Einstein. History books were rewritten, and the past could now only be taught with pro-German or Aryan emphasis. Any ideas that did not conform to the main tenets of Nazi ideology were banned. Germany had a long-held tradition of academic excellence in many fields, and a long record of learning in many areas, but this suffered during the 1930s, as political priorities took precedence and educational standards declined.

Youth opposition

For most young people of non-Jewish background, Nazi Germany was a place of drama, excitement and power. Opportunities were provided to young people that had not existed before, and it was not necessary to be wealthy to experience these things. Detractors might have been concerned about lower educational standards, the loss of great minds to overseas, the appearance of Hitler Jugend thuggery and falling standards of discipline, both at home and at school, but from the perspective of many teenagers, to be young in Nazi Germany was to be able to enjoy life.



SOURCE 7.18 Edelweiss Pirates

attacked Hitler Jugend groups. During the war, some members of the Edelweiss Pirates were hanged.

- In Northern Germany, another group that chose not to conform to the Nazi ideal was the Swing Kids.

The Swing Kids

Based in the northern port towns of Hamburg and Kiel, an anti-authoritarian group known as ‘The Swing Movement’ arose in the late 1930s, which deliberately flouted the values of the regime. ‘The Swing Kids’, as they became known, refused to join the Hitler Jugend for as long they could. Like many teenagers throughout history, they created their own world based on the music they preferred: jazz and swing music emanating from the United States. Such music was anathema to the Nazis due to its black and allegedly ‘Jewish’ origins. The Swing Kids frequented dance clubs where the ‘in’ dance of the time was jitterbugging. They wore trendy English checked sports jackets, showy ties and ‘Anthony Eden’ hats. (Anthony Eden was a leading British politician opposed to Nazism.) They often wore their hair down to their collars.

The regime clamped down hard on the Swing Kids. This sort of opposition could not be tolerated. Following is an extract of a letter from Himmler to Heydrich, written on 22 January 1942, in which the SS leader demands firm action be taken against the Swing Kids.

“ ... I enclose a copy of a report that Reich Youth leader Axmann has sent me about the ‘swing youth’ in Hamburg ...

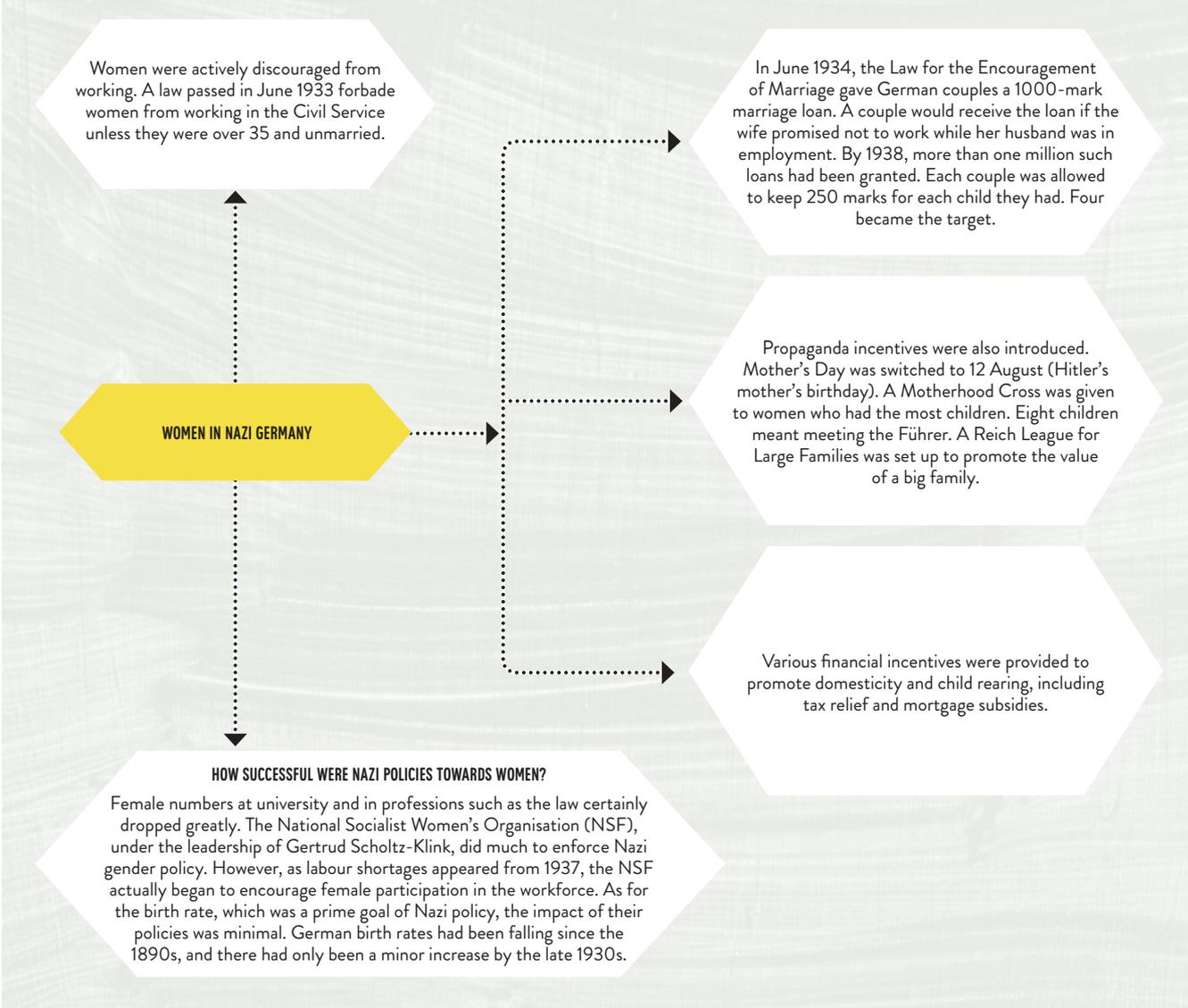
I am against mere half-measures here. All the ringleaders, and I mean ringleaders both male and female, and all teachers with enemy views who encourage the swing youth, are to be assigned to a concentration camp. There the youth should first be given thrashings and then put through the severest drill and set to work ... The spell these people should spend in concentration camp must be a fairly long one, 2–3 years ... ”

Quoted in Tony Barta, *Nazi Germany: Understanding the Third Reich*, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 1991, p. 35

- 1 Put yourself in Himmler’s position. Justify your position on the Swing Kids.

Women in the Third Reich

The Nazi view towards women was fairly straightforward. Nazi ideology believed women were inferior, and maintained that there were fundamental biological differences between men and women that meant each gender had different, specific roles to play in life. Women had been blocked from assuming leadership positions in the party since as early as 1921. The party had long opposed moves towards female equality during the Weimar years, including women being granted the vote. Politics and most careers were the preserve of men; women existed to bear children, care for their husbands and children, and look after the home. The production of a growing number of racially pure, Aryan children became a keen preoccupation of the regime. Source 7.19 summarises Nazi policies regarding women.



SOURCE 7.19 Nazi policies regarding women

However, while Nazi policy towards women could be reduced to the simple notion of 'kinder, küche, kirche', the reality was far more complex. While Nazi policy aimed to restrict women's roles to the domestic sphere, the party's *NS-Frauenschaft* (Women's League), under the leadership of Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, created a range of opportunities for women in the public sphere as educators and organisers of other women.

Women also supported the party because of their commitment to the movement's nationalist values. Furthermore, while women were expected to act as nurturing mothers, they also acted as informants and as local party organisers. While women were venerated as mothers, the influence of the party's youth movements undermined their place in the domestic sphere.

Women in Nazi Germany

HITLER ON WOMEN

The woman has her own battlefield. With every child that she brings into the world, she fights her battle for the nation. The man stands up for the Volk, exactly as the woman stands up for the family.

Hitler, speech to the National Socialist Women's Congress, published in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, 15 September 1935

GERTRUD SCHOLTZ-KLINK ON WOMEN

... as his followers it is our greatest task to awaken and strengthen this faith in those we are responsible for, and to transform it into action.

This inner command is equally binding for man and woman, for the blue collar and white collar workers of our people.

The National Socialist movement sees the man and the woman as equal bearers of Germany's future. It asks, however, for more than in the past: that each should first completely accomplish the tasks that are appropriate to his or her nature.

The woman, besides caring for her own children, should first care for those who need her help as mothers of the nation.

This primarily involves thinking about family law and supporting families, youth legislation, and protecting the youth. It also requires thinking about the occupational paths that female youth will follow in the coming years, since some men and women are still unemployed, and some changes in women's work will therefore be needed. Given our relations with each other, we affirm these temporary measures because we have firm faith that we have the strength to overcome the many present difficulties that our people faces. Our love for our people, however, will never allow these temporary difficulties to cause conflicts only for the sake of conflict, or that they be interpreted by sensation-hungry individuals as a failure of the National Socialist worldview.

Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, New Year speech, 1936



bpk/Lieselotte Purper (Orgel-Köhne)

SOURCE 7.20 In 1938 the Nazi regime introduced the Motherhood Cross as a way of acknowledging and celebrating women's contribution to the racial struggle.



imageid/Weimar Archive/Mary Evans

SOURCE 7.21 A Nazi propaganda poster celebrating the woman's role as a mother



QUESTIONS

- 1 Who was Gertrud Scholtz-Klink? What was her role?
- 2 Explain how Nazi ideology affected the regime's approach to women.

Impact on minorities

Nazi Germany was not a good place to be for anyone who belonged to a minority group. Anyone who failed to fit into the healthy, Aryan mould was deemed a member of a minority. This could apply to a person who was handicapped, be it physically or mentally. It could apply to a religious minority, and of course it could apply to those who belonged to a racial minority. The manner in which the Nazis would later 'deal' with these minorities ranks among the worst crimes in human history.

Historians have long debated the way Nazi policies developed into the **Holocaust** of World War II. 'Intentionalist' historians argue that the elimination of the Jews and other minority groups was a crucial part of Nazi ideology: it was always the Nazis' intention to destroy the Jewish race and eliminate other minorities that might pollute the Aryan racial stock. They point to what Hitler said in *Mein Kampf*, and his later frequent utterances. There may not have been a clear blueprint outlined in 1933, but it was always the aim of the regime.

'Structuralist' historians disagree with this view. They argue that the horrors of the Holocaust were the result of the growing radicalisation of the Nazi regime. This was partly due to what Kershaw called 'working towards the Führer' (see chapter 6). As Hitler generally gave sweeping guidelines rather than specific instructions, each element of the regime tried to outdo the other in its efforts to do the Führer's work. With the onset of the war, especially after the invasion of Russia in 1941, practical problems arose regarding the Jews and other minorities. The 'Final Solution' became the regime's way of 'dealing' with these problems.

Holocaust

The term used to describe the systematic murder by the Nazis of millions of Jewish people during World War II

Jehovah's Witnesses and the unfit

The Jehovah's Witnesses religious sect hardly posed any threat to the Nazi regime. However, it could not be tolerated. Here was a group that totally refused to swear any oath of allegiance to the Führer; they would obey only Jehovah. The Witnesses refused to fly Nazi flags, refused to give the Nazi salute and took no part in the regime's frequent public displays and celebrations. They refused to accept conscription.

According to Richard Evans, there were probably no more than 30 000 Jehovah's Witnesses, despite the regime's claim that there were over two million.³ Of these, 10 000 would be imprisoned, mostly in concentration camps, and about 1000 would die. When in captivity they were brutally treated, which only increased their pious desire to resist. Burleigh argues that the courts were so keen to hand down maximum sentences against the Witnesses in order to assert the courts' autonomy, which they believed was being challenged by the Gestapo's policy of keeping the Witnesses in detention.⁴



eugenics

The science of improving the quality of a population through carefully controlled breeding, aimed at ensuring the continuation of desirable characteristics

As well as the persecution of religious minorities like Jehovah's Witnesses, the Nazis sought to deal with what they saw as society's inferior groups. The practice of trying to breed out inferior medical or physical traits was considered rational policy not only in Germany. The idea that modern society was causing biological degeneration was accepted in many countries. **Eugenics** was taken seriously. London University had a professor of Eugenics in 1909, and in Uppsala, Sweden, an Institute of Racial Biology was set up in 1922. By the 1930s, 'thirty-five North American states eventually permitted the eugenic sterilisation of mentally handicapped people'.⁵ Of course, the Nazis took this trend much further.

The July 1933 Law for the Prevention of Hereditary Diseased Progeny allowed for the compulsory sterilisation of people who had one of the eight diseases listed under the law. These diseases included 'blindness and deafness' and 'depression'. Doctors were instructed to report such people to the authorities. The 'feeble-minded' were easy targets as they were already in institutions, and sterilisation of this group accounted for 60 per cent of the total. More than 200 Hereditary Health Courts were established to administer the program, and more than 5000 people died as a result of forced sterilisation operations.

By the late 1930s, thousands of marginalised people were being rounded up and placed in concentration camps. In Sachsenhausen by 1938, they comprised 75 per cent of inmates. These people included Sinti and Roma, drunks and the 'work shy'. These people would have to wear a black triangle in the camps, which differentiated them from criminals (green) and political inmates (red).

Sterilisation of undesirable minorities was only one step away from eliminating them entirely. Hitler had referred to such things as early as 1935, and with war looming, this 'euthanasia' practice was to become official policy. The Head of the Chancellery of the Führer, Philipp Bouhler, informed doctors and asylum officials that a certain proportion of psychiatric patients had to be euthanised to provide space for expected military casualties. Beginning in summer 1939 and continuing throughout the war, more than 6000 children were killed in the Children's Euthanasia Program. The preferred method in this program was either the use of luminal mixed with food, which had the effect of suppressing breathing, or overdoses of morphium-scopolamine.

By December 1939, the euthanasia program was in full swing, and by the end of the war it would account for the deaths of around 200 000 people. The majority of doctors and nurses involved in such work were volunteers. Some courageous figures, such as Roman Catholic Bishop von Galen, protested about this program. However, such protests achieved no more than brief temporary cessations of the process.

Shutterstock.com/Pavel Husepka



SOURCE 7.22 The Hartheim Euthanasia Centre



SOURCE 7.23 A chart showing the insignia concentration camp prisoners were forced to wear on their uniforms.

Alamy Stock Photo/maurilius images GmbH

Anti-homosexual laws (but not anti-lesbian laws) had long been present in Germany, and early Nazi actions against gay men were merely the enforcement of existing law. However, the Nazis found homosexuals particularly repugnant. They were seen as degenerate, effeminate and contrary to the Nazi ideal of true masculinity. They were also seen as a threat to the strength of the Aryan race because of their refusal to have any children. The irony of this seemed lost on the Nazis – if a man was homosexual, any child he fathered would surely, based on the eugenic thinking of the regime, be a danger to the blood stock?

Scientific opinion saw homosexuality as a perversion, but one that could be cured. Himmler believed that about 2 per cent of German homosexuals were beyond redemption, but that the other 98 per cent could be ‘cured’ in concentration camps if the correct punishments were regularly handed out as a deterrent. In the camps, homosexuals were forced to wear a pink triangle on their uniform.

There were homosexuals among the SA, including Röhm himself. After the Night of the Long Knives (see chapter 4), Himmler led a wave of homophobia within the Nazi Party, even claiming that Röhm had planned to establish a homosexual dictatorship in Germany. Arrests followed, both within and outside of the party, and sentences became stricter. In October 1936, a Reich Central Office for the Combating of Homosexuality and Abortion was set up. Police forces across Germany were ordered to raid gay clubs and increase their efforts to track down suspects. Between 1937 and 1939, more than 50 000 homosexual men were arrested. The persecution of this homosexual minority was brutal. However, it is worth considering that in the 1950s and the 1960s, in democratic West Germany and the United Kingdom, tens of thousands of gay men were arrested for ‘homosexual offences’.

“ ... The persecution of homosexuals under the Third Reich probably only directly affected a fraction of Germany’s gay men; but the knowledge of what might happen to them if they were denounced, arrested and convicted must have struck fear into them all. ”

- 1 What was the Nazis’ fundamental objection to the Jehovah’s Witnesses?
- 2 What were the consequences for many people of the combination of pseudo-scientific thinking and the basics of Nazi ideology?
- 3 Outline the Nazi stance on homosexual behaviour.

The Jews

Anti-Semitism was deeply embedded in European culture, and Germany was no more anti-Semitic than other countries in early twentieth-century Europe, and certainly less so than some, such as Russia. The origins of Nazi anti-Semitism were explained in chapter 5, and the ‘Intentionalist-Structuralist’ debate was outlined on page 163 of this chapter. This section will now outline the impact of Nazi rule on Germany’s Jewish community to 1939.



SOURCE 7.24 A Berlin park bench, 1945, with a reminder of Nazi times: ‘Not for Jews’



Ah i Semit i m



Treb ment of e ws

TABLE 7.3 Nazi racial policies to 1939

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| EARLY MEASURES 1933 | <p>Nazi attacks on Jews occurred very soon after Hitler's accession to power. Jews had long been used as 'scapegoats' in European history, and the Nazis were quick to blame the Jews for Germany's defeat in World War I, the Treaty of Versailles and the Depression.</p> <p>Early measures were often humiliating rather than life-threatening. Jews might be excluded from parks, swimming pools or public transport. Students at school would be singled out and humiliated about their 'racial inferiority'.</p> <p>Physical violence against Jews was rarely prosecuted.</p> |
| 1 APRIL 1933 | <p>On 1 April, a national boycott of Jewish shops and businesses was called for. SA thugs would stand outside Jewish premises and intimidate anyone who had the nerve to walk inside. The boycott was not particularly successful, but it was symbolic, and a sign of what was to come.</p> |
| APRIL 1933 | <p>The Law for the Restoration of the Civil Service led to the mass dismissals of Jews from the Civil Service.</p> <p>Restrictions were imposed on Jewish entry into universities.</p> |
| JULY 1933 | <p>Jews were excluded from the Marriage Loan scheme.</p> |
| SEPTEMBER 1933 | <p>Jews were banned from working in the legal system.</p> |
| MAY 1934 | <p>Jewish doctors were excluded from the medical insurance schemes.</p> |
| OCTOBER 1934 | <p>The involvement of Jews in the media and the arts was effectively brought to an end, though there were some exceptions.</p> |
| SEPTEMBER 1935 | <p>The Nuremberg Laws were passed, comprising 'The Reich Citizenship Act' and 'The Blood Protection Act' (see source study on page 167).</p> |
| AUGUST 1936 | <p>Campaigns against the Jews were eased during the Berlin Olympic Games. With so many international visitors, the regime did its best to present a positive image of Germany to the rest of the world.</p> |
| LATE 1930s | <p>There was a steady process of Aryanisation of Jewish businesses and property. Jewish owners were forced to sell to non-Jews at rock-bottom prices. They had no right of appeal.</p> |
| 1938 | <p>A law was passed forcing all Jewish men to use the middle name 'Israel' and all Jewish women to use the middle name 'Sarah'. This of course meant that they could more easily be recognised as Jews.</p> <p>The Catholic Church banned any clergy from practising if they had Jewish origins, even if they had been baptised.</p> |
| 9-10 NOVEMBER 1939 | <p>On 8 November, a German diplomat called Ernst vom Rath was shot dead in Paris by a young Jew called Herschel Grynszpan. In response, Hitler gave Goebbels the green light to launch a nationwide attack on the German Jewish community. This attack became known as 'Kristallnacht', or 'The Night of Broken Glass'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synagogues across Germany were attacked and burned to the ground. • Jewish homes and shops were smashed up. • 30 000 Jews were arrested and marched off to concentration camps. |
| 12 NOVEMBER 1938 | <p>The Decree for the Exclusion of Jews from Economic Life was introduced. The remaining properties, shops, factories and real estate in Jewish hands were taken over and sold at rock-bottom prices.</p> |
| JANUARY 1939 | <p>Hitler addressed the Reichstag and stated that if the Jews forced Germany into a war, it would mean 'the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe'.</p> |
| 1939 | <p>Many Jews – those who could – tried to get out of the country.</p> |

**The Nuremberg
Laws: September
1935**

In September 1935 the Nuremberg Laws were passed. These laws stripped the Jews of many of their rights and placed major restrictions on how they could live their lives.

- All rights that a German citizen might have, such as voting, were taken away; this of course meant the protections that a citizen might have were also taken away.
- Jews were not allowed to join the armed forces.
- Marriage between Jews and German citizens was now illegal.
- Sexual relations between Jews and German citizens were forbidden.
- Jews were not allowed to employ non-Jewish domestic servants under the age of 45.
- Jews were not allowed to fly the swastika flag, but they could hoist their own racial flag.
- A new category of person was created, called the 'Mischlinge'. This was a person who had only one Jewish grandparent, or who had two Jewish grandparents but was not married to a Jew and was not a practising Jew.

In a speech at the annual Nuremberg Party rally in 1935, Goering gave a speech outlining his justification for these laws.

... We must preserve the Germanic and Nordic purity of the race, and must protect our women and girls with every means at our disposal. In this pure blood stream will blossom forth a new era of Germanic happiness ... Never again will we let our Germanism be infected and ruined by Jewish infiltration ...

Tony Barta, *Nazi Germany: Understanding the Third Reich*, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 1991, p. 36



Alamy Stock Photo/Keystone Pictures USA

SOURCE 7.25 Hamburg, 1935: The woman's sign reads, 'I am the greatest swine and sleep only with Jews.' The man's sign says, 'As a Jew, I only take German girls up to my room.'

QUESTIONS

- 1 The Jewish community comprised less than 1 per cent of the German population. How do you account for the Nazi regime's preoccupation with anti-Semitic measures?
- 2 From the evidence presented above, which view of the development of Nazi racist policy do you think is the stronger: the intentionalist or the structuralist?

Stephen H Roberts was a Professor of Modern History at Sydney University. In the mid-1930s, he was able to drive around Germany extensively, was given wide access to party and state bodies, and met a wide range of people, from Hitler down. In this extract, he tries to come to terms with the fanatical adulation of Hitler that he witnessed among the youth of Germany and muses on what has happened to their minds.

... Their attitude of mind is absolutely uncritical. They do not see in Hitler a statesman with good and bad points; to them he is more than a demigod. Times out of number they answered my queries why they believed or did so-and-so by the reply: 'Because my Führer wills it!' There was no use going behind such a mandate; questioning was worse than heresy. The children of Germany believe that right and wrong are as distinct as black and white ... It was this lack of any objective or critical attitude on the part of youth, even with university students, that made me fear most for the future of Germany ... To rebel is unthinkable, to argue for themselves equally so. They must submit to mental uniformity which by its nature is degrading ... The outward husk (of the Hitler Youth Movement) is imposing, but beneath is only mental aridness. If only one of the boys I saw in the most impressive Hitler camps would have questioned the propagandist lectures to which they were listening, if only one of them had asked a penetrating question, I would have felt more hope for the future of Germany.

Stephen H Roberts, *The House that Hitler Built*, Methuen, London, 1937, pp. 208, 209, 210

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why does Roberts suggest it was a waste of time trying to debate the issue with the youths he met?
- 2 Why does Roberts seem so pessimistic about German youth and the country's future? (Remember, he was writing in 1937.)
- 3 Do you think Roberts is a reliable source for understanding Germany at this time?

Conclusion

The impact of the Nazi regime on life in Germany was enormous. It was impossible to escape the influence of Nazi thinking, Nazi actions and Nazi expectations. In some ways the impact had positive benefits. Workers had security of employment and some real gains were made from organisations such as Strength Through Joy. The youth of Germany were certainly fitter and healthier than many of their British counterparts. 'Aryan' women in Germany were looked after, as the regime sought to increase the birth rate of fit, healthy Aryan babies.

But in most ways, the Nazis had a major detrimental effect on German life. The cultural life of the country was placed into an ideological straitjacket. Individual ideas, self-expression and creativity were all sacrificed on the altar of uniformity and conformity to the party line. This was seen no more clearly than in the regular book burnings that took place across Germany. German churches were kept under tight control as the regime rejected the idea that Germans could have any loyalty other than that owed to their Führer. Women were excluded from many areas of life, with the regime attempting to confine them in the home, to have as many children as they could. The youth of Germany might be fit and well-fed, but as Stephen Roberts witnessed during his time in the country, their minds were closed and unquestioning. Worst of all was the fate that awaited minority groups within Germany, be they religious or what the regime deemed inferior and a danger to the blood stock. The Jewish community suffered persecution from the beginning of the regime, and this persecution intensified year by year.



Chapter summary

- Goebbels controlled all aspects of cultural expression and the media via his control of the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda.
- Cultural expression was expected to be in line with the party's ideals.
- Literature was tightly controlled, and unacceptable works were censored or ended up on ritual bonfires.
- Pacifist ideas, Jewish themes and anything considered un-German were banned.
- Theatre was just as tightly controlled, though Goebbels, knowing the people would ignore nonstop propaganda, allowed comedies, romances and musicals.
- Sculpture became focused on the idealised Aryan body.
- Degenerate art, and anything that smacked of modernism, was removed from galleries across Germany, promoting Hitler's preference for what he saw as a superior traditional German art.
- The regime's impact on cultural life stretched into music, cinema and the commercial world.
- The impact of the regime on architecture could be seen in the work of Albert Speer, with whom Hitler established a close working relationship.
- The regime tried to neutralise the Catholic Church with the Concordat, which it gradually ignored throughout the 1930s. The regime also set up an Evangelical Reich Church to control Protestants.
- Germany's workers had a mixed experience. They were controlled, their unions were banned and their conditions always provided grounds for grumbling. However, workers did have security of employment and enjoyed some benefits through organisations such as Strength Through Joy.
- In the late 1930s plans were introduced to provide workers with a Volkswagen car, but the advent of war meant that these plans came to nought.

- The youth of Germany were brainwashed from the cradle onwards, and grew into mostly unquestioning, obedient followers of Hitler.
- In the 1930s youth opposition was limited to groups such as the Swing Kids and the Edelweiss Pirates, and such opposition was brutally dealt with by the regime.
- Education was rigidly controlled by the regime, and educational standards fell throughout the decade.
- Women were eased out of the workforce as the regime sought to increase the birth rate, though economic needs brought many into the factories in the later 1930s. Women were always viewed by the Nazis as being inferior to men.
- The regime had no time for minorities. Sterilisation and euthanasia policies were just a prelude to what was to come during the war years.
- The small Jewish community was persecuted from the start of the regime, and by the end of the decade had effectively lost any rights or role in society. By 1939, the future for Germany's Jews did not look good.

Additional resources

- Tony Barta, *Nazi Germany: Understanding the Third Reich*, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 1991
- Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, Penguin, London, 2005
- Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, Pan Books, London, 2000, Chapters 3, 5
- Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in History and Memory*, Little, Brown, London, 2015, Chapter 12
- J Noakes and G Pridham (eds), *Nazism 1919–1945, Volume 2: State, Economy and Society 1933–1939*, University of Exeter Press, Exeter, 2000
- Stephen H Roberts, *The House that Hitler Built*, Methuen, London, 1937

Endnotes

- ¹ Quoted in William Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, Book Club Associates, London, 1983 edition, p. 241
- ² Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, Penguin, London, 2006, p. 168
- ³ Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, Penguin, London, 2006, p. 255
- ⁴ Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, Pan Books, London, 2001, p. 174
- ⁵ Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, Pan Books, London, 2001, p. 546

CHAPTER REVIEW

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

- 1 What kind of books provided the fuel for the book burnings?
- 2 Why was Goebbels happy to see productions of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*?
- 3 Describe the work of Arno Breker.
- 4 What do you understand the term 'degenerate art' to mean?
- 5 Outline some ways German women were encouraged to have more children.
- 6 How did the majority of non-Jewish youths in Germany react to the regime?
- 7 Why were workers in Nazi Germany highly unlikely to strike?
- 8 What was the fundamental reason many workers were happy to tolerate the Nazi regime?
- 9 How did the Nazis justify their policies of sterilisation and euthanasia?
- 10 What happened on Kristallnacht?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 11 Research the leading Nazi figures listed in the table below, then copy out the table and complete the details required for each.

| NAZI FIGURE | BACKGROUND | AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY | POLICIES IN THE 1930S | EVENTUAL FATE |
|------------------------|------------|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Robert Ley | | | | |
| Baldur von Schirach | | | | |
| Hermann Goering | | | | |
| Martin Bormann | | | | |
| Rudolf Hess | | | | |
| Joachim von Ribbentrop | | | | |

- 12 What was the Jewish Flats issue of 1939? How did this issue affect Albert Speer's reputation?
- 13 What was the impact of Kristallnacht on: German Jews; the Nazi regime; the German people at large; the international community?

EXTENDED WRITING EXERCISE

- 14 To what extent could it be argued that the lack of opposition to the Nazi regime was due in large part to the regime's popularity?
- 15 Assess the influence of the basic tenets of Nazi ideology on life in Germany in the 1930s.

08

The search for peace and security 1919–46

SYLLABUS OUTCOMES

In this chapter, students will examine international attempts to achieve peace and security between 1919 and 1946.

Aspects to be covered include:

- Nazi foreign policy aims, Japanese foreign policy aims, the League of Nations, the establishment of the United Nations.



SOURCE 8.1 Italian Foreign Minister Count Galeazzo Ciano, his German counterpart Joachim von Ribbentrop and the Japanese Ambassador Saburo Kurusu (front, from the left) leave the Reich Chancellery after the signing of the Tripartite Pact in 1940.



Introduction

Germany was never willing to accept the Treaty of Versailles. Even before the Nazis came to power, the Weimar Republic had attempted to negotiate treaty revisions, but with little success. For Hitler, the revision of Versailles was merely a means to an end. His long-term goal was the creation of a new German empire in the east, *Lebensraum*, based on racial grounds. He had no blueprint for action, but never lost sight of his long-term goals.

Japanese expansion in the Asia-Pacific was not simply about imperialism. Certainly, Japan sought control of its region for a variety of reasons, but its desire for expansion was tinged with idealism, an attempt to free the east of western imperialism. It sought to create a 'New Order' free of western exploitation – a new order, of course, under Japanese control.

When US President Wilson came to Paris in 1919, he had a vision of creating a League of Nations. The key aims of the League were to preserve peace and promote international cooperation. Despite some minor successes, the League's lack of authority doomed it to failure and eventual irrelevance. Learning from the lessons of the League's failure, and having witnessed the horrors of World War II, at the end of the war, world leaders endeavoured to introduce a stronger, more representative world body: the United Nations. Significantly, the United States decided to become a member of the United Nations, and would play a key role in its future activities.

The search for peace and security 1918–46

- 1918** ● **January** US President Wilson calls for the creation of a League of Nations in his Fourteen Points speech to the US Congress
- 1919** ● **28 June** Signing of the Treaty of Versailles
- 1920** ● **10 January** The League of Nations comes into existence
- 1922** ● Permanent Court of International Justice established
- 1926** ● Germany joins the League of Nations
- 1931** ● Japan invades Manchuria
- 1933** ● **30 January** Hitler is appointed Chancellor of Germany
- Germany and Japan leave the League of Nations
- 1935–36** ● Italy invades and occupies Abyssinia (Ethiopia)
- 1936–39** ● The League is helpless to do anything about the Spanish Civil War
- 1937** ● Italy leaves the League of Nations
- Japan invades China
- 1938** ● **March** Germany annexes Austria
- **September** Following the Munich Conference, Germany takes the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia
- 1939** ● **March** Germany takes over the rest of Czechoslovakia
- **September** Germany invades Poland. Start of World War II in Europe
- 1940** ● **August** Japan moves into French Indochina
- 1941** ● **September** Tripartite Pact between Germany, Italy and Japan
- **7 December** Japan attacks Pearl Harbor
- **8 December** US declares war on Japan
- **22 June** Germany invades Russia
- 1944** ● **July** Bretton Woods Conference
- **October** Dumbarton Oaks Conference
- 1945** ● **April** San Francisco Conference
- **8 May** VE Day – surrender of Germany
- **15 August** VJ Day – surrender of Japan
- 1946** ● First meeting of the UN Assembly and Security Council in London

Germany's ambitions in Europe



Nā ēre ġ pl ʻ

Hitler made little effort to hide his long-term ambitions in Europe. He had written at length in *Mein Kampf* about the necessity for Germany to achieve *Lebensraum* in the east. This new German empire would be created out of lands occupied by inferior Slavs of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Hitler wrote:

“ ... We must direct our gaze towards land in the east. In seeking further enlargement of the living space of our people we can only find it in Russia and the subject states upon her border. ”

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1962, p. 654

As well as offering space for Germany's projected 250 million-strong German population, Soviet lands also offered bountiful supplies of corn and oil.

Once the Master Race was in control, the Slavs would become a slave force, their purpose in life to serve their Aryan masters. Such people were subhumans – *Untermenschen*. The ultimate fate of the Jews was not clearly spelt out until much later.

However, Hitler did not have a neat plan that he would follow step by step. He was an opportunist, and flexible in his foreign policy – to the point of contradicting his ideological goals if the situation required it. In the medium term he had four clear goals:

- 1 to revise the Treaty of Versailles and reverse the shame that Germany had been forced to suffer
- 2 to rearm Germany
- 3 to return to the fatherland the German-speaking areas that had been taken under the Treaty of Versailles, and thus create a Gross Deutschland (Greater Germany)
- 4 to have a reckoning with France, who would not countenance such a German revival.

However, these steps were not the aims of German foreign policy, they were merely the means to an end – the creation of an Aryan empire in the east.

The following timeline outlines the steps Hitler took in the 1930s in preparation for his long-term ambitions. Source 8.3 shows the extent of Germany's expansion by the end of 1939.

National Socialist foreign policy developments to 1939

| | | |
|------|-------------------|--|
| 1933 | ● October | Germany withdraws from the Disarmament Conference Germany leaves the League of Nations |
| 1934 | ● January | Germany signs a 10-year non-aggression pact with Poland, a state Hitler always intended to take over |
| | ● July | Hitler plans to intervene in Austria following the murder of its Chancellor, but backs off in the face of Italian opposition |
| 1935 | ● January | The Saar region votes to rejoin the Reich |
| | ● March | Conscription is reintroduced and Germany's army quickly grows to 550 000 while rearmament continues apace |
| 1936 | ● March | Hitler sends troops into the Rhineland region, an act strictly forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles |
| | ● November | Germany and Japan sign the Anti-Comintern Pact |

Comintern

The organisation set up by Bolshevik leader Lenin in 1919 to help bring about world revolution and spread communism. It was controlled by the Soviet Union.



1936–39



Germany aids the Fascist side in the Spanish Civil War, providing troops, air support and supplies

1937



September

Italy joins the Anti-Comintern Pact, creating a Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis

1938



March

German troops enter Austria. Anschluss – the union of Germany and Austria – is achieved.



September

Following the Munich Conference, the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia, which contains three million German-speaking people, is given to Germany

1939



March

Hitler invades the rest of Czechoslovakia

Germany seizes the Lithuanian port of Memel and its surrounding area



May

Germany and Italy sign the Pact of Steel



August

Germany and Russia sign a non-aggression pact



September

Germany invades Poland. It is the start of the war in Europe.



Getty Images/Bettmann

SOURCE 8.2 Germany reoccupies the Rhineland in 1936.



SOURCE 8.3 Germany's expansion by the end of 1939

- 1 In what ways did Hitler's imperialist ambition and his racial ambition come together in the 1930s?
- 2 What were Germany's principal aims during the 1930s?

Japan's ambitions in the Asia-Pacific

Economic need, politics and ideology combined to form the basis of Japanese ambitions in the Asia-Pacific. The Depression had hurt Japan, and as its population steadily increased it desperately needed new lands to provide raw materials, markets, food and a place to send its surplus population. Western embargoes placed on Japan in the late 1930s exacerbated Japan's economic situation, and Japan's need for reliable oil supplies had become acute by the late 1930s, made worse by the US oil embargo in August 1941.

Civilian governments in Japan steadily lost power and influence as the armed forces came to dominate domestic and foreign policy. However, there was division in the armed forces between the 'Imperial Way School', or 'Kodo-ha', and the 'Control School', or 'Tosei-ha'. The Kodo-ha faction wanted to expand into the Soviet Union, but by mid-1936 it had lost power to the Tosei-ha, which wanted to expand southwards into China.

Japan's ambitions in Asia were presented by its leaders as an idealistic attempt to free Asia of western imperialist domination. The long-term aim of Japanese control flowed from the ancient notion of 'Hakko Ichiu' (eight corners of the world under one roof). Hakko Ichiu envisaged eventual Japanese control of the whole of the Pacific rim. As early as January 1934, Foreign Minister Kōki

Hirota asserted that Japan was entirely responsible for peace in east Asia. In April of the same year, the government issued the Amai statement, a kind of **Monroe Doctrine** for east Asia.

Connected to this idea of Japan's right to control the region was the notion of encirclement, which had long been a feature of Japanese propaganda. In September 1941, Colonel Hayao Mabuchi stated that Japan needed to break through the American-British-Chinese-Dutch East Indies encirclement. Earlier, Prime Minister Konoye had referred to Japan's immutable policy of setting up a new order in Asia. He was referring to the political and economic union of China, Japan and **Manchukuo**. In August 1941, this new order was redefined to include French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies.

There was also an element of racism in Japanese policy. Japan's duty was to drive western domination from Asia, whether it be British, American, French or Dutch.

Monroe Doctrine

The 1823 American declaration that opposed any European involvement in the western hemisphere, and further stated that the Americas should not be considered for future European colonisation

Manchukuo

The name given to the Japanese-controlled puppet state established in Manchuria following Japan's 1931 invasion of that region





SOURCE 8.4 Japan's expansion to December 1941

- 1 In what ways did Japan's internal political situation lead to its imperial ambitions?
- 2 How important was economics in the formulation of Japanese ambitions in the Asia-Pacific region?



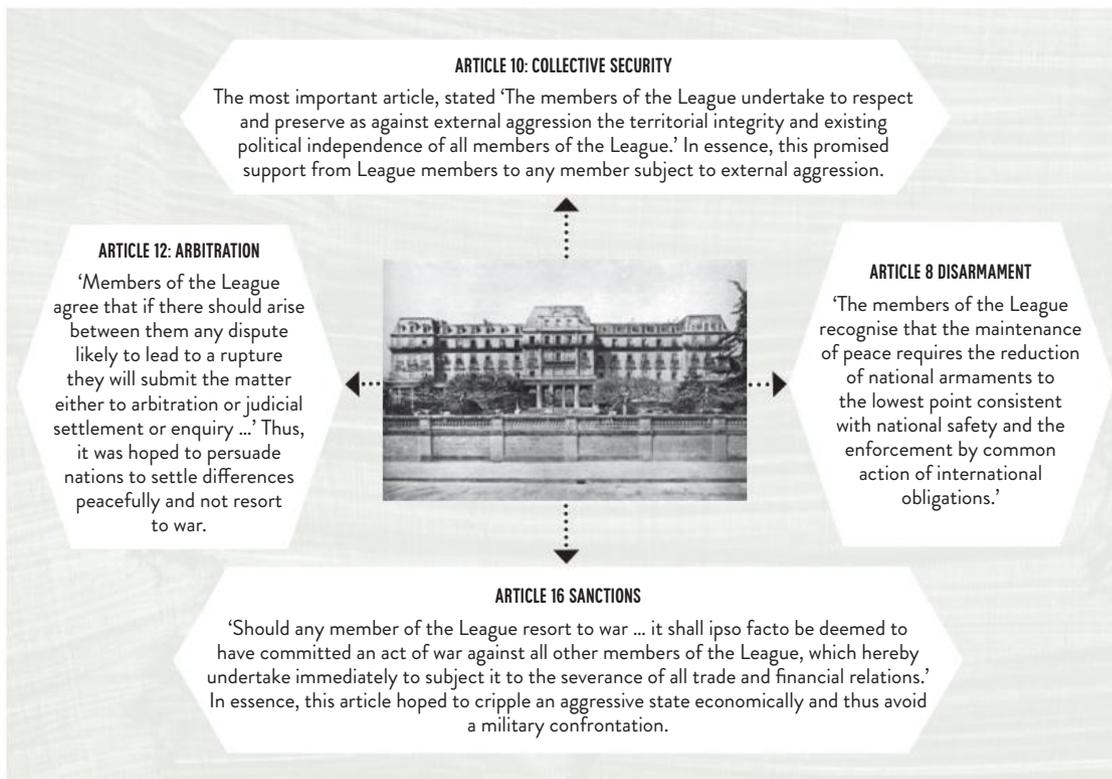
The intentions and authority of the League of Nations

The idea of a League of Nations was first formally presented by US President Wilson in his Fourteen Points speech in January 1918. His Fourteenth Point stated:

“ A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike. ”

Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp

Wilson's vision was of an organisation where nations could meet and sort out their differences. The League covenant comprised the first 26 articles of each of the post-war peace treaties. Source 8.5 summarises the most important articles of the League Covenant.



Alamy Stock Photo/The Print Collector

SOURCE 8.5 The key articles of the League Covenant

At its inception, the League had 42 members, and 58 at its height. During the 1920s, the League did manage to resolve some international conflicts, such as the Aaland Isles dispute between Finland and Sweden in 1921, and a dispute between Greece and Bulgaria in 1925. It also had a proud record of dealing with many non-political humanitarian issues, such as health, transport and finance. Perhaps the League's most notable non-political success was its work regarding refugees, thanks to the efforts of the Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen, who later won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work.

However, the League of Nations ultimately failed in its fundamental goal of maintaining world peace. There were several factors that accounted for this.

- The League rested on the principle of internationalism – the idea that nations would put the common international good above national self-interest. As was explained in chapter 2, Europe in the 1920s and 1930s became dominated by right-wing, nationally minded dictatorships for whom nationalism, often in an extreme form, reigned supreme.
- The major powers were often not members of the League. The United States never joined, while nations like Germany, the Soviet Union and Japan were members for only a short time.
- The League never had its own armed forces.
- Nations frequently denied the League jurisdiction in issues that concerned them, particularly when it came to minority rights issues.
- The onset of the Great Depression after 1929 led nations to turn inwards and prioritise national interests at the expense of internationalist involvement. By the 1930s, nations such as Germany, Italy and Japan acted as if the League did not exist.



The intentions and authority of the United Nations



The League of Nations ultimately failed in its prime aim of maintaining peace. However, several nations around the world still hoped to restore a similar body after World War II. For once, it appeared that it might be possible to learn from the mistakes of the past. The key Allied leaders met several times during the war, firstly to deal with issues relating to fighting the Axis powers, but also to work out arrangements for the postwar world.

In May 1943, delegates from Allied nations met to set up the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), which they hoped would speed up economic recovery after the war. In July 1944 at the Bretton Woods Conference, plans were drawn up for an International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the primary aim being to stabilise world currencies. In October 1944 at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference, early ideas for a United Nations charter were worked out. And at the Yalta Conference of January 1945, the Allied leaders – US President Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Churchill and Soviet leader Stalin – agreed to call a conference of delegates to meet in San Francisco in April 1945. There they would put together a charter for the United Nations.

The structure of the United Nations was similar in some ways to the League. It had a Security Council of the most powerful nations, a General Assembly of all the members, and a Secretariat, whose purpose was to coordinate non-political work. There was also an International Court of Justice.

Some of the weaknesses of the former League were overcome in the UN. Firstly, the United States, the most powerful nation in the world, became a member at the start and has remained a member ever since. Secondly, all the major powers have been members continuously. (Until 1971, China was represented by the Nationalist regime based in Taiwan; since 1971, China's Security Council seat has been held by the People's Republic.) Thirdly, the unanimity rule of the Assembly, whereby just one nation could prevent an action being taken, was ended.

The authority of the United Nations was thus immediately greater than that of the League of Nations. However, postwar differences between the United States and the Soviet Union grew steadily as **Cold War** tensions mounted. The Soviet Union used its **veto power** in the Security Council against the non-communist nations (Britain, France, the United States and the Republic of China) to prevent UN actions. By 1948, the Soviet Union had used its veto power more than 30 times. Yet despite the problems that the UN faced, and continues to face, the world has come to realise that it is beneficial to have a world body where nations can discuss issues and resolve differences.

Cold War

The term used to describe the conflict between the western, democratic/capitalist nations headed by the United States, and the eastern, communist nations headed by the Soviet Union after 1945. It is referred to as a 'cold war' because the two sides managed to avoid their differences escalating into a 'hot war'.

veto power

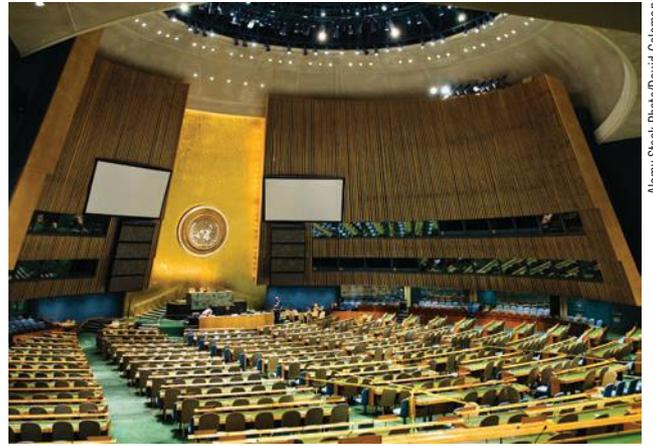
The power each member of the UN Security Council has to prevent a decision of the Council being put into effect



SOURCE 8.6 British Prime Minister Churchill, US President Roosevelt and Soviet leader Stalin at the Yalta Conference, January 1945



SOURCE 8.7 The United Nations building in New York



SOURCE 8.8 The UN General Assembly Hall

- 1 In what ways were the League of Nations and the United States similar?
- 2 What do you see as the fundamental reason for the failure of the League of Nations? Why?

Richard Overy

Richard Overy is one of the leading scholars of World War II, and Professor of History at the University of Exeter. His works on the war include *The Origins of the Second World War*, *Why the Allies Won* and *The Dictators: Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia*.

In this extract, Overy analyses issues relating to the authority, or lack of authority, of the League of Nations.

... The persistence of internationalist idealism in the 1920s masked important weaknesses in the international order. In the first place, there was a certain moral ambiguity about the British and French position. While they preached the virtues of self-determination and democracy, they strenuously denied granting either to the subject peoples of their empires. Although liberal enough at home, both states could be thoroughly illiberal in the colonies when they were dealing with nationalist forces hostile to European imperialism. When Britain adhered to the Kellogg-Briand Pact (outlawing war), it was only on the condition that it could still resort to force in its own empire. When the League of Nations tried to outlaw aerial bombing in 1931, Britain refused to abandon it as an instrument of colonial control. These double standards did not go unnoticed. The moral authority of the League suffered from what was perceived to be the hypocrisy and self-serving of the 'satiated' powers. The situation made it difficult for Britain and France to resist the claims of other states in the 1930s that wanted to build an empire, or to ignore the strident demands for self-determination from the national minorities created by the Peace Settlement.

Richard Overy, *The Inter-War Crisis*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2017, p. 84



→

QUESTION

- 1 Identify the ways Overy shows Britain and France to be hypocritical in their behaviour.
- 2 What does Overy mean by the phrase ‘the satiated powers’?
- 3 How did the behaviour of Britain and France affect the moral authority of the League?
- 4 How did the attitudes and behaviour of Britain and France affect their position in the 1930s?

Conclusion

Out of the catastrophe of World War I came the intense desire to make sure that the Great War was the war to end all wars. In an effort to achieve this goal, US President Woodrow Wilson introduced the world to his idea of a League of Nations. Although the goals of the League were worthy, several fundamental weaknesses would mean it was a failure. Against this background, Germany pursued its ambition of creating a racially based Aryan empire in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Japan was pursuing similar goals in the Asia-Pacific region, though its ambitions were also tinged with a desire to rid Asia of western imperialist domination. Though the League of Nations had failed, it was replaced after World War II with another world body, the United Nations, which it was hoped would be more successful. Though the UN entered the world with more authority, its effectiveness was restricted by the onset of the Cold War.

Chapter summary

- Hitler outlined his long-term goal of *Lebensraum* in *Mein Kampf*, written in 1924.
- Hitler’s idea of imperial expansion was closely linked to his racial beliefs.
- Despite having long-term goals, Hitler was flexible and opportunistic in his policies throughout the 1930s.
- Japan’s ambitions in the Asia-Pacific were motivated largely by its economic needs and the suffering brought on by the Depression.
- Internal politics pushed Japan on an imperialist path.
- Japanese ambitions were always shrouded in an idealistic goal of ending western imperialist domination and keeping Asia under Asian control, which in reality meant Japanese control.
- The League of Nations was established in 1920 with the primary goal of maintaining peace, which it failed to do. It was also deeply involved in various aspects of humanitarian work, and was far more successful in this area.

- The League suffered from the fact that it was reliant on the notion of internationalism in an increasingly nationalist world.
 - Despite the failure of the League of Nations to prevent the outbreak of World War II, there was a desire to create a United Nations in the aftermath of the war.
 - The UN had greater authority than the League, but its effectiveness would be limited by the rivalries of the Cold War.
-

Additional resources

- Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*, Penguin, London, 1998, Chapter 5
 - Ian Kershaw, *To Hell and Back: Europe 1914–1949*, Penguin, London, 2016, Chapter 6
 - Richard Overy, *The Inter-War Crisis*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2017, Chapter 7
-

CHAPTER REVIEW

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

- 1 What is meant by the term 'GrossDeutschland'?
- 2 Identify three territories that Germany took possession of in the 1930s.
- 3 Which countries had Germany become allies with by 1940?
- 4 What was the significance of the victory of the Tosei-ha over the Kodo-ha in Japan in the 1930s?
- 5 Outline Japan's attitude towards the presence of western imperialist nations in Asia.
- 6 Identify three areas Japan had taken control of or moved into by 1941.
- 7 What was the League Covenant?
- 8 What was the essence of Article 10 of the League Covenant?
- 9 Whose membership added greatly to the authority of the United Nations?
- 10 How did the Cold War affect the operation of the UN immediately after World War II?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 11 Who attended the 1938 Munich Conference? What decisions were made there? Why was the Conference of such importance?
- 12 How did Nanking suffer under Japanese attack and occupation in 1937?
- 13 The UN took military action against communist North Korea in 1950. Explain how it was possible for this to happen.

EXTENDED WRITING EXERCISE

- 14 Assess the impact of Japan's invasion of Manchuria and Italy's invasion of Abyssinia on the functioning and authority of the League of Nations.



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CONCLUSION

It took almost five years to put together the peace agreements that brought World War I to an end – longer than the war itself. The peace treaties, particularly the Treaty of Versailles between the Allies and Germany, were compromises that satisfied no one, especially Germany, which viewed the settlement as an unjust diktat. The peace treaties had long-lasting consequences. Empires had fallen, and the map of Europe was redrawn as millions of people found themselves living under new rule. It can even be argued that the origins of World War II lay, in part, in the settlement of World War I.

Early on, there were positive signs. In the early 1920s, the prevailing form of government across Europe was democracy, in one form or another. Only the Soviet Union, which emerged from its bloody civil war in 1921 under Communist control, was obviously dictatorial. However, this was not to last. Within a decade, democracies would disappear from Spain and Portugal, and almost every country in central and eastern Europe. This was the result of internal stresses and strains, the presence of charismatic leaders, poor constitutional arrangements and the impact of the Great Depression.

Germany emerged from World War I riven by divisions. There were attempts by both the left and the right to impose an authoritarian form of government on the country, and violence was everywhere. Germany's failure to keep up with reparation payments led to humiliation when French troops invaded the Ruhr. The German economy went into freefall, inflation reached unimaginable heights and the country went bankrupt. But remarkably, within a very short time, Germany's democratic Weimar Republic recovered, and a remarkable degree of economic prosperity and political stability was achieved under the guiding hand of Gustav Stresemann.

However, Germany's recovery was brought to a dramatic halt with the onset of the Great Depression. The impact of the Depression on Germany was both massive and immediate, and caused enormous social and economic distress. The economic crisis triggered a political crisis that soon saw Germany under presidential rule. As the deflationary policies of the government drove the economy deeper into Depression, the electorate became polarised, and Nazi support grew rapidly – by mid-1932, the Nazi Party was the biggest party in the Reichstag. But it was not the Depression, nor a violent overthrowing of the government (though Nazi violence in the early 1930s was extreme), nor an electoral majority that brought Hitler to power. It was the result of a backroom political deal engineered by Germany's elites, principally former Chancellor von Papen.

The elites believed they could control Hitler; he soon proved them wrong. Within a few months all effective opposition had been eliminated through the process of *Gleichschaltung*. A combination of sham legality, terror and propaganda resulted in total Nazi domination of the state. In early 1934, Hitler faced opposition from his own SA, headed by Ernst Röhm. Under pressure from President Hindenburg, who threatened martial law, Röhm and the SA leadership were brutally neutralised in the Night of the Long Knives. Within weeks, President Hindenburg was dead and the army was swearing an oath of allegiance to Hitler personally.

Nazi ideology contained many elements, but it rested firmly on Social Darwinist principles and the notion of the survival of the fittest. The essence of Nazi thinking was that the Aryan race was the master race, whose destiny was to control a new German empire that would be created from the lands in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The inferior Slavs of these regions would become a slave force, serving their Aryan masters. *Lebensraum* and race summed up Nazi ideology.

The Nazi regime allowed for no opposition. The process of *Gleichschaltung* had been extremely effective in removing all possible political opposition from the left and the right, and the unions had been destroyed. All aspects of German society were now controlled in various ways by the party. The Nazis' use of terror and violence was openly publicised. The regime wanted Germans to know that any opposition or dissent could result in a visit from the Gestapo and a spell in a concentration camp. But the scale of the Nazi law enforcement agencies was limited. Indeed, the majority of cases pursued by the Gestapo were prompted by ordinary Germans denouncing their fellow citizens.

Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry kept a tight hold on all forms of media and expression. Radio, cinema and the press had all lost their independence, and could only present the official views of the party. Literature, music and art were forced into a cultural straitjacket – independent cultural expression was a thing of the past. Goebbels claimed that his greatest propaganda achievement was his creation of what Kershaw would call 'The Hitler Myth'. Hitler was elevated in the eyes of the German people to an almost godlike status. The unquestioning adulation most Germans had for their Führer was another factor that made effective opposition to the regime even more unlikely.

Nazism affected all aspects of German society. The churches were quickly silenced. The Catholics were bought off by the Concordat, an agreement that the Nazis would soon renege upon, while many Protestant Germans were Nazi supporters. Workers' rights and power had been destroyed. However, the regime did much to try to win the workers over with programs such as Strength Through Joy. German youths were a special target of the Nazis, who understood that for the regime to continue, the young had to be won over. Most non-Jewish youth were enthusiastic about the regime, and were seduced by the excitement and opportunities that it offered. The small pockets of youth opposition, such as the Swing Kids, were easily dealt with.

Young women were told that their function in society was to marry early, keep house and have as many children as possible. The Nazis put in place a range of measures that were aimed at encouraging marriage and large families. These programs met with mixed success at best.

Though the youth and women might have had reasons to support the regime, Germany's minority groups had a very different experience. Groups such as homosexuals and Jehovah's Witnesses suffered violent persecution. Those deemed inferior and in danger of polluting the Aryan racial stock, such as the mentally and physically infirm, or those believed to suffer from congenital conditions, were forcibly sterilised. But the group that suffered most profoundly from Nazi attention was Germany's small Jewish population. Persecution of the Jews began from the earliest days of the regime, and gradually grew in intensity. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 stripped Jews of their citizenship and forbade sexual or marital relations between Jews and Aryans. The nationwide attack of Kristallnacht convinced many Jews it was time to leave the country, if they could.

Under Hitler, Germany's ambitions in Europe centred on expanding and achieving *Lebensraum*. However, Hitler had no blueprint for these aims, and his foreign policy leading up to World War II was opportunistic, and often contradicted Nazi ideology.

Japan had ambitions to gain control of the Asia-Pacific region, though this was couched in idealism and the desire to rid Asia of western imperialists, and for Asia to be ruled by Asians.

The League of Nations had some successes in the 1920s, but proved utterly incapable of dealing with German and Japanese aggression in the 1930s. However, despite the League's failure, a new world body, the United Nations, would be created in the wake of World War II.

Activities

1 Rearrange the list of events on the left into chronological order.

| RANDOM ORDER | CORRECT CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| German invasion of Poland | 1st event | The Paris Peace Settlement |
| Germany's hyperinflation | 2nd event | |
| Creation of the League of Nations | 3rd event | |
| Japanese invasion of China | 4th event | |
| Hitler's accession to power | 5th event | |
| Creation of the United Nations | 6th event | |
| Night of the Long Knives | 7th event | |
| Mussolini's 'March on Rome' | 8th event | |
| The Paris Peace Settlement | 9th event | |
| Kristallnacht | 10th event | |

2 Match each term listed at the top with the correct definition.

| Collective security, Dachau, Gleichschaltung, Volksgemeinschaft, Lebensraum, Enabling Act, Triumph of the Will, Night of Broken Glass, the Corporate State, Greater Co-Prosperity Sphere | |
|--|--|
| March 1933 law giving Hitler total power for four years | |
| Japan's idealistic description of its ambitions for Asia | |
| The notion that if one nation attacks another, other nations will line up against the aggressor | |
| The November 1938 nationwide attack upon Germany's Jewish community | |
| The first of Nazi Germany's concentration camps, opened in March 1933 | |
| Hitler's ultimate ambition to create a new German empire in the east | |
| Leni Riefenstahl's film of the 1934 Nuremberg Rally | |
| The Nazi idea of a people's community based on race, not class | |
| The process by which the Nazis coordinated German society in 1933 | |
| The term that is often used to describe the regime created by Mussolini in Italy | |

3 Match each person with the correct description.

| Robert Ley, Baldur von Schirach, Heinrich Himmler, Reinhard Heydrich, Heinrich Brüning, Joseph Goebbels, Hermann Goering, Albert Speer, Leni Riefenstahl, Franz von Papen | |
|---|--|
| I was a very talented architect and became personally very close to Hitler. | |
| I had overall responsibility for the police and security systems in Germany. | |
| I was a very talented film director, responsible for <i>Olympiad</i> , the film of the 1936 Olympics. | |
| I was Chancellor of Germany in 1932 and did much to enable Hitler's accession to power. | |
| It was my job to coordinate propaganda and ensure the media presented the correct views. | |
| I was in charge of the German Labour Front, established in May 1933. | |
| I was Chancellor of Germany from 1930 to 1932 and pursued a policy of deflation. | |
| I announced the Nuremberg Laws. I became Hitler's deputy. | |
| It was my job to coordinate all the various youth groups across Germany. | |
| I was Himmler's deputy and was responsible for the SD. | |

INDEX

A

Annunizio, Gabriele 33
anti-semitism 6, 67, 69, 94–5, 105–6,
117, 163–8
architecture 152
art 148–50
Asia-Pacific, Japan's ambitions in 176–8

B

Bach, Steven 136–7
Bolshevik Party 4, 42, 43
book burnings 148
Bormann, Martin 138
Breker, Arno 148–9
Brüning, Heinrich 72, 73–4
Bund Deutscher Mädel (BDM) 4, 156–60

C

censorship 132–8
Chamberlain, Houston Stewart 107–8, 122
Ciano, Galeazzo 2
cinema 134, 151
Clemenceau, Georges 2
Cold War 180
collective security 6
communism and authoritarian
dictatorships 27
Concordat 153
cult of personality 6
cultural conformity 151–2
cultural expression 146–62
literature and theatre 147–8
religion 153–4
sculpture and art 148–50
wider impact of conformity 151–2
women in the Third Reich 161–2
the workers 154–6
youth 156–60
Curzon Line 14

D

Darré, Richard Walther 113, 122, 123
Der Führer 6
Deutsche Arbeitsfront (DAF) 5
dictatorships (post WWI) 22–52
contributing factors 25
and European constitutions 27–9
forms of 23
impact of 1919 Paris Peace
Settlement 26–7
impact of WWI 26
importance of personalities 29–30
interwar period 31
Italy 32–41

Japan 47–50
pre-war situation 25
role of economics 30
Russia 42–7
threat of communism 27
time line 24
what made them possible? 24–32
Dörner, Bernward 94–5
Drexler, Anton 108

E

Enabling Act 7, 88
eugenics 164
Europe, Germany's ambitions in 174–6
Europe map
1920s 14
German expansion 1939 176
German territorial losses in 1919 11
new map 13–15
political map 1914 13
European constitutions 27–9
Evans, Richard 70

F

fasces 6
fascism 6, 34–6, 39–41
and Nazism 118–20
Fascist Party 4
Feder, Gottfried 113, 122
film industry 134, 151
Frank, Hans 109
Frick, Wilhelm 83

G

Genro 48
Gentile, Giovanni 2
George, David Lloyd 3
German Labour Front (*Deutsche
Arbeitsfront* DAF) 5
German Workers' Party 108
Germany
1933–39 126–41
1936 Berlin Olympic Games 132
ambitions in Europe 174–6
anti-semitism 6, 67, 69, 94–5, 105–6,
117, 163–8
censorship 132–8
collapse of Weimar Republic 54–78
and communism 85, 86–8, 90, 91, 95
cultural expression 146–62
economic crisis 72–3
elections (1930) 73
Enabling Act 7, 88
Great Depression 72–3, 186

impact of 1918 108–10
impact of Nazi regime 144–70, 187
impact on minorities 163–8
laws: party and state 138–9
Munich putsch 67, 69, 114
opposition to Nazi regime 139–40
peace and security (1919–46) 172–82
political crisis 72–3
post WWI 55
postwar peace treaties 13–19
propaganda 6, 132–8
and proportional representation 28
Reichstag fire 85–8
SA (*Sturmabteilung*) 5, 95–9
territorial losses in 1919 11
terror and suppression 128–38
thousand-year Reich 145
time line 55–6, 127, 145, 173, 174–5
Treaty of Versailles 13, 18–19, 67,
173, 186
unemployment rates 133
women 145
see also Nazi ideology; Nazi Party
Gestapo 5, 129
Gleichschaltung 81, 90–3, 127, 139, 186
Goebbels, Joseph 2, 69, 81, 83, 88, 93–4,
127, 132–3, 145, 146, 151, 187
Goering, Hermann 2, 83, 88, 126, 138, 146
gold standard 30
Great Depression 30, 71, 186
Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere 6
Griffin, Roger 113–14
Gunther, Hans 123

H

Hara Kei 47–8
Hess, Rudolf 109, 138
Heydrich, Reinhard 2, 129, 131
Himmler, Heinrich 2–3, 89, 126, 129, 130
Hindenburg, Paul von 3, 63, 72, 73, 80, 84
Hirohito, Emperor 3
Hitler, Adolf 6, 67–71, 77
early life 68
Mein Kampf 7, 69, 113, 114–15
Nazi ideology 115–18, 120–3
political power 81–99, 127
on race 115–18
speeches 113
and the Young Plan 71
Hitler Myth 135–7
Hitler Youth Movement 5, 10, 156–60
Holocaust 163
homosexuality 165
Horst Wessel song 151
Höss, Rudolf 128
hyperinflation 6

I

ideas and Nazi ideology 112–20
Hitler on race 115–18
Mein Kampf 7, 69, 114–15
Nazism as fascism 118–20

Il Duce 6, 39

Italy

dictatorship 39–41
economic decline 30
fascism 2, 34–6, 39–41
Fiume port 33
Mussolini 3, 36–9, 41
postwar dictatorship 32–41
post WWI 32–6

J

Japan

after WWI 47–8
ambitions in Asia-Pacific 176–8
democratic weaknesses 48
dictatorship 47–50
economics 49–50
expansion 173, 178
Manchuria 49–50
timeline 177

Jehovah's Witnesses 163–5

K

Kemal, Mustafa 12
Kempeitai 5
Kershaw, Ian 41, 118, 136
Kristallnacht 6

L

League Covenant 48
League of Nations 5, 173
Covenant 7
intentions and authority 178–9
Lebensraum 6, 145, 173, 186
Lenin 3, 42
literature 147–8

M

Manchuria 49–50
Mein Kampf 7, 69, 113, 114–15
minorities and Nazi Germany 163–8
Munich putsch 67, 69, 114
music 151
Mussolini, Benito 3, 36–9, 41

N

Nazi ideology 103–24, 186–7
and anti-semitism 105–6, 117
Gregor Strasser 121
beyond Hitler 120–3
Ian Kershaw 41, 118

and ideas 112–20
impact of 1918 108–10
origins 105–12
and racism 115–18
and Social Darwinism 105
time line 104
volkisch ideas 106
Nazi Party (Germany) 5, 74–7, 186
25 Point Plan 7, 112, 113
1933–39 126–41
Adolf Hitler 81, 127
and communism 85, 86–8, 90, 91, 95
consolidation of power 80–100
Gleichschaltung 81, 90–3, 127, 139
Hitler Myth 135–7
impact German life 144–70, 187
impact on minorities 163–8
'legal revolution' 84
Operation Hummingbird 98–9
opposition to Nazi regime 139–40
publications 113
racial policies 166
reality of terror 89–90
Reichstag fire 85–8
rise to 1930 67–71
terror and suppression 128–38
time line 81–2, 127, 145
youth 156–60
Nazism as fascism 118–20
Nietzsche, Friedrich 108
Night of the Long Knives 6, 128, 140,
165, 186
NKVD 5
Nuremberg Laws 7, 167

O

Olympic Games (1936 Berlin) 132
Operation Hummingbird 98–9
Ottoman Empire 24
Overy, Richard 181–2
OVRA 5

P

Paris Peace Conference 9, 33
Paris Peace Settlement 9, 26–7
peace and security (1919–46) 172–82
ambitions in Asia-Pacific 176–8
time line 173
League of Nations 178–9
United Nations 180–1
peace treaties, post-World War I 9–19, 186
balance of power 17
consequences 13–19
German power 16–17, 18–19
issue of national minorities 15–16
new map of Europe 13–15
Paris 11–12
time line 9
see also individual treaties

proletariat 154
propaganda 6, 132–8
proportional representation 28

R

racial policies 166
racism 115–18
religion 153–4
anti-semitism 6, 67, 69, 94–5, 105–6,
117, 163–8
Jehovah's Witnesses 163–5
Jews 165–8
Roman Catholic Church 153–4
reparations 6
Riefenstahl, Leni 136–7, 151
Roberts, Stephen H 168
Röhm, Ernst 4, 95–8, 109, 128, 165, 186
Roman Catholic Church 153–4
Rosenberg, Alfred 109, 122
Russia
Bolshevik Party 4, 42, 43
civil war 24
dictatorship 42–7

S

SA (*Sturmabteilung*) 5, 95–9, 128
sculpture 148–50
Service, Robert 46–7
Social Darwinism 6, 105
Speer, Albert 4, 152
SS (*Schutzstaffel*) 5, 128, 129, 138,
140, 141
Stalin, Joseph 4, 44–7
Strasser, Gregor 121
Streicher, Julius 117
Stresemann, Gustav 4
structural unemployment 30

T

terror and suppression 128–38
theatre 147–8
Third Reich 138
and women 161–2
thousand-year Reich 145, 156
Tokko (*Tokubetsu Koto Keisatsu*) 5
totalitarianism 6
Treaty of St Germain 11
Treaty of Neuilly 11
Treaty of Rapallo 33
Treaty of Sèvres 12
Treaty of Trianon 11
Treaty of Versailles 7, 9, 10, 186
Germany 13, 18–19, 67, 173
Trotsky, Leon 4, 43–4
Tsar Nicholas II 42
Turkey 12

U

unemployment rates 133
United Nations 5
 Charter 7
 international trade 30
 peace and security 180–1

V

van der Lubbe, Marinus 85
volkisch ideas 106
von Papen, Franz 3–4, 73, 82
von Schleicher, Kurt 73–7

W

Wagner, Richard 107
War Communism 42
Weimar Constitution 7
Weimar Republic 28, 29–30
 1930–33 71–7
 chaos and stability 56–66
 collapse 54–78
 Nazi Party 67–71
 time line 55–6
Wilson, Woodrow 4, 173, 182
women 145
 Bund Deutscher Mädel (BDM) 4, 156–60
 in the Third Reich 161–2
workers 154–5

Y

Young, Owen D. 71
youth 156–60
 Bund Deutscher Mädel (BDM) 4,
 156–60
 education 158–9
 Hitler Youth Movement 5, 10, 157
 opposition 159–60
 Swing Kids 160
Yugoslavia 28, 33



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