

# 4 Germany - Hitler

## The global context

- authoritarian state: ruling regime is not accountable to people; political pluralism and civil rights are restricted or abolished
- Germany is a totalitarian state driven by ideology
- authoritarian regimes are given their opportunity due to economic, social, political disruption caused by conflict and disillusionment produced by terms of peace
- Italian fascism serves as model for Hitler: factors for rise are similar in Italy and Germany

## 4.1 The emergence of the authoritarian state in Germany, 1919-1934

### Hitler's rise to power

- Weimar democratic system: established in Germany after First World War
- National Socialism gains support of military: domestically last major obstacle
- Weimar as desperate experiment in democracy whose decisive failure has consequences
- pessimistic view of Germany: triumph of National Socialism as inevitable and irresistible force
- at no point (before one-party state) did NSDAP achieve support of majority of electorate
- Nazis achieve power not because most Germans desire it but because of circumstances
- pessimists/catastrophists: had there been strong democratic sentiment in Germany, Hitler would never have come to power
- Germanophobes: inherent inability in German character to accept democratic principles
- problems (internal, external) facing democratic experiment and mistakes made by political parties and individuals that brought about Nazi success
- conditions in which authoritarian state emerges: discredited parliamentary system, revisionism and revanchism due to Paris Peace Settlement after WWI, economic crises, fear of Left, vested interests (groups resisting changes) underestimating Nazis, semi-legal assumption of power, appeals of leader in terms of pragmatism, millenarianism, propaganda, paramilitary forces
- rise of authoritarian regimes is the result of circumstances leading to popular disillusionment
- in Germany: popular demand for change and unwillingness to defend preceding system

### The Weimar Republic, 1918-1933/34

- November Revolution (9. Nov. 1918): Philip Scheidemann (SPD) declares republic and signs armistice with Allied powers two days later
- removal of dynasty and German defeat produces vacuum in political life (extremists exploit it)
- Jan. 1919: convention elected producing a constitution; convention held at Weimar
- constitution replaces autocratic and dynastic rule with one based on popular sovereignty
- Weimar's existence is plagued by domestic and external problems

### Stage 1: 1918-1919

- military leaders claim Germany's defeat in 1918 is a „stab in the back“ by internal enemies
- peace settlement is likely to prove punitive
- Wilhelm II's abdication and democratic form of government can be seen as means of trying to reduce damage that might be inflicted on Germany
- Hindenburg and Ludendorff's maneuver is an attempt to soften punishment rather than a commitment to democratic principles
- lack of familiarity with practice of democracy as factor inhibiting success of Weimar system
- lack of “revolution from below”: fragile base for development
- in Britain and France democracy is an outcome of popular pressures
- democratic government becomes linked to betrayal, defeat and national humiliation

- Versailles Treaty produces bitterness of perceived injustice and punishments inflicted
- Article 231 deeply resented: paves way for Allies to strip Germany of territory, colonial empire, military capacity and to enforce payment of reparations
- Germany still retains the potential for recovery (economically, geopolitically)
- few Germans accept “dictated peace”, it is a national shame
- nationalists hold governmental system responsible for signing armistice
- summary of terms of Treaty of Versailles: Germany is named but not held solely responsible, territorial provisions (13% of European territory, Alsace-Lorraine to France, Malmedy to Belgium, Posen and West Prussia to Poland, Danzig becomes international city, Memel to Lithuania, Northern Schleswig to Denmark, Upper Silesia to Poland, Saar under control of League, Anschluss with Austria forbidden), financial penalties (reparations), military provisions (demilitarization of Rhineland, Germany’s army restricted, navy restricted, air force not allowed)

## Stage 2: 1919-1923

- before republican constitution, new government (under Friedrich Ebert) faces threats to survival
- Ebert agrees with Wilhelm Groener (Chief of Staff of German military): in return for support against enemies of new Republic, army remains “state within state”: rather than serving the people and its elected representatives it acts in its own interests
- army makes clear it will not act against forces it considers good German nationalists
- proportional representation identified as a major weakness of system: plethora of political parties are often unable to form long-term stable governments
- political parties committed to democracy are SPD, DDP, DVP, Centre, BVP
- Article 48 constitutional weakness: president entitled to suspend basic principles of constitution and rule by emergency decree in event that public order and security are endangered
- constitution is one of most progressive documents of its time: did it fail or was it failed?
- Weimar labors under economic and political burdens from beginning not of its own making: defeat of war, peace treaty, reparations, nostalgia for pre-1914 authoritarian structures political extremism and putschism
- Weimar, due to its hasty establishment, inherits many administrators, bureaucrats, judges and army officers from the time of the Kaiser; Hitler and Lenin do not make the mistake when creating single-party regimes: rapid cleansing of state apparatus results in loyal machine
- Franco-Belgian occupation of Ruhr results in “currency delirium”
- France is infuriated in reparation payments and determined to enforce Versailles Treaty
- reaction to Ruhr occupation is passive resistance and non-cooperation by workers; they are paid by government: by resorting to printing press, inflation accelerates destroying confidence
- inability of Weimar to cope with crisis of 1923: provides basis for growth of support for authoritarian and totalitarian movements when second economic crisis strikes (1929)
- Aug. 1923: Gustav Stresemann as Chancellor: recovery from economic disaster, aided by USA (Dawes plan: American loans, reduce annual reparations, boost Germany’s economy, prevention of communism growing in Germany)
- before recovery, extremists seize opportunity to exploit situation by staging unsuccessful uprisings against government (Communists in Hamburg, Nazis in Munich)
- subsequent trial allows Nazis to articulate their ideology nationally for the first time
- achievements of Golden Era deprive extremists of opportunity to flourish
- 1929: recovery of Nazi fortunes made possible with onset of Great Depression
- Hitler as classic example that political extremism arise out of economic misery
- NSDAP originally tasked by military intelligence; Hitler joins party and helps drafting 25-point program; 1921 becomes leader
- program contains mixture of points that can be pitched to wide range of audiences
- attempts to wean population from existing party allegiances proves unsuccessful until economic crisis of 1929 onwards
- treason trial of putschists allows Hitler to justify his actions to national audience and it reinforces extent to which judicial system is unsympathetic to democratic principles
- Hitler and Ludendorff are dealt with leniently (Hitler serves 9 months of 5-year sentence)
- lack of sympathy for Republic underlines that Weimar remains unwelcome and unloved

## Stage 3: the Golden Age, 1924-1929

- Gustav Stresemann: chancellor for three months in 1923, then as Foreign Minister until death in Oct. 1929: period of remarkable recovery in terms of growth after crisis of hyperinflation

- voting patterns reflected in Reichstag elections; go to left
- appears to voters that challenges of Weimar are over
- achievements of Stresemann era: resolution of Ruhr problem (reparations to France and Belgium with help of USA), restoration of Germany's finances, suppression of physical threats from extremists, reconciliation with France, recognition of Germany's new status, Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928, renounce use of force in settlement of international disputes)
- failures of Stresemann era: enemies of Republic treated leniently if they are of nationalist persuasion (treating perpetrator of political assassinations differently according to political affiliation), successor of President Ebert (78-year old Hindenburg is elected: favors old order; balance shifts to presidential power), end of accountable government in March 1930, Germany's reliance on US loans (vulnerable to problems should these be withdrawn), coalition governments (unlikely to provide firm foundation), agrarian distress (farmer's debts accumulate, even before depression), low industrial production (unemployment high), reorganization of NSDAP (reorganized as national movement)
- movement's decision to reject any more putsch attempts; pursue parliamentary road to power
- Alfred Hugenberg's appointment as leader of DNVP in 1928 is important to Nazi success
- Hitler is able to cloak himself in the respectability that Hugenberg's support would provide

### Stage 4: decline (1930-1933)

- foreign aid from USA to save economy proves to be a double-edged sword: when America's economy collapses the fragile nature of Weimar's economic structure is revealed
- 3. Oct. 1929: Stresemann dies; later that month Wall Street collapses
- Germany rapidly plunges into depression: US short-term loans are recalled
- by 1933 a third of all German workers are unemployed
- in Germany the political system buckles under pressure
- frustration with Republic moves votes to extremes and industrial leaders want to deprive Reichstag of power and establish an authoritarian government
- rule by presidential decree after March 1933
- Hindenburg appoints Heinrich Brüning chancellor; deflationary economic policies, emphasis on increased taxation, reduced welfare benefits: antagonizes left and fuels Nazi propaganda
- Brüning is dismissed, Hindenburg gets advice from those surrounding him
- van Papen is appointed new chancellor; fails to deal with economic and political unrest
- Nov. 1932: elections: electoral support for left rises and for right declines
- van Papen is replaced by Schleicher who resigns again in Jan. 1933
- van Papen gives Hindenburg the advice to offer Hitler the position of chancellor; believes that Hitler can be controlled
- Weimar founders because: collaboration of elites that seek to use Hitler against greater threat (communism), failure of left parties to combine, reorganization of Nazi movement, Nazi propaganda campaign

### Stage 5: from democracy to dictatorship (January-March 1933)

- never an absolute electors majority for Nazis; even after manipulation, bribery, intimidation
- Hitler is appointed chancellor by Hindenburg (not elected by majority of German voters)
- van Papen is vice chancellor; only three National Socialists in cabinet (Hitler, Goering and Frick); following months illustrate how Hitler had been misjudged
- with Goering's help he makes himself a semi-legal dictator
- failure of left to unite in defense of the Republic: unwillingness of SPD and KPD to recognize the danger of Hitler's movement
- skillful manipulation of circumstances by Nazis
- crushing of Spartacus uprising and murder of its leaders: leads to accusations by KPD that SPD are traitors to workers' movement
- hostility between these two parties of the Left is not resolved until it was too late
- March 1933 Hitler is chancellor and August 1934 he is the Führer

### Stage 6: the establishment of the Führer state, August 1934

- from 1933 until 1945, Germans find themselves subjected to Hitler's movement
- not only due to errors of others; NSDAP works steadily to build up its organization and establish links with other movements since 1923

- Nazi government is expanded and departmentalized until it had virtually become a “shadow government”; no party prepares for power more thoroughly than Nazis
- impressive organization requires financing: magnates as Fritz Thyssen, Friedrich Flick and IG Farben chemical group make contributions
- industrialists seek to buy political insurance against eventuality of capture of government
- alliance with DNVP leader Hugenberg provides Nazis access to his communications empire: press and film: provides vehicle for Nazi propaganda
- meeting of Nazis, military leaders, industrialists (Harzburg, 1931): Hitler portrays himself as potential leader against dangers of communism
- many German voters find message of National Socialism attractive in post-1929 depression years: not all are committed to all points of Nazi package
- Nazis portray themselves as choice of significant German part: convince important groups to collaborate with them by 1933
- consistency in policy and fear factor allow Hitler to show himself as national savior
- parts of the Nazi package might have appealed: Hitler pursues all elements once in power
- early 1933 Nazis are still part of coalition government; only following months Party converts itself into virtual dictatorship
- Aug. 1934: Hindenburg dies, Hitler combines office of chancellor and president: Führer

## 4.2 Hitler's consolidation of power, 1934-1935

- Machtergreifung: describes appointment of Hitler as chancellor in Jan. 1933
- Jan. 1933 to Aug. 1934: Hitler focuses on converting position to one in more control by eliminating obstacles to Nazi rule; bribery and intimidation
- political elite and the Left fail combat his moves

### Hitler as Chancellor

- elections in March 1933 are Hitler's attempt to seek to improve Nazi election figures
- believes that NSDAP is able to achieve an absolute majority for first time in Weimar history

### The burning of the Reichstag

- 27. Feb. 1933: week before March election: interpreted as Nazi ploy to frighten voters
- appears that NSDAP stands to gain most from the fire
- contemporary authors blame NSDAP for fire: view it as a Nazi attempt to portray the incident as the beginning of a KPD insurrection: KPD are victims of Nazi conspiracy
- excuse that Germany is endangered by communist coup d'état, Hitler persuades Hindenburg to issue an emergency decree that temporarily suspends basic rights
- emergency decree as one of the legal cornerstones of the Nazi dictatorship

### The March 1933 election

- with propaganda campaign and anti-communist hysteria the NSDAP still does not achieve absolute majority (only 43.9%)
- collaboration with DNVP (8%) allows Hitler to form a majority coalition
- even at this stage after fire, majority of German voters are unwilling to give Nazis a majority
- remarkably, two-thirds of votes go to parties who are open enemies of Weimar democracy
- street violence precedes and follows March elections; SA members (brownshirts) attacking KPD and SPD paramilitary organizations, Reichstag deputies and offices
- breakdown of law is the excuse used by Hitler for tighter measures to save Germany from chaos which is largely manufactured by the Nazis themselves
- KPD as organization is forbidden; candidates are not removed from the list and gain deputies, but these are not permitted to sit in new parliament or vote on legislation

### The Enabling Act and the end of democratic government

- Enabling Act allows Hitler to rule by decree for four years, making him a dictator

- Hitler surpasses two-thirds majority: coalition with DNVP (52%), eliminating 12% of KPD, intimidating many SPD deputies from attending the meeting Kroll Opera House, offering Zentrum/BVP guarantees for protection of rights of Catholic Church
- all attending the meeting, except SPD vote for Enabling Act
- through bullying, banning and buying support of Catholic parties (Vatican's approval, already made agreement with fascist Italy in 1929), democratic government is buried in Germany
- Act as part of Gleichschaltung: intention of consolidating Nazi power over Germany
- institutions as Churches, military, labour movements, civil service have to be brought under control in order to make Nazi power a reality

## The purge of the civil service

- law of Re-establishment of civil service of April 1933: allows government to remove elements it considers anti-Nazi
- intention is to remove anyone hostile to National Socialism and Jewish descent
- free jobs as opportunities to reward loyal Nazis (those joining party before Sept. 1930)
- March Violets: attract those joining after 1933 to further their careers

## The abolition of trade unions

- Socialism in Marxist sense is not same as National Socialism; Hitler's use of term is based on idea of community; some Nazis reject power of big businesses but Hitler accommodates them to gain financial and political support
- labour movement as Leftist influence: Nazis want to break trade unions and organized labour
- May 1933: such organizations are abolished and replaced by German Labour Front (DAF)
- single-party state is established by July 1933 when all parties apart NSDAP are abolished
- Zentrum/BVP voluntarily dissolve with prospect of signing concordat with Nazis and Vatican
- DVP and DNVP bow to pressure or promise of guarantees of job security in the new Germany and accept self-dissolution

## The Night of the Long Knives (1934)

- after purge of civil service, there is a purge of Sturmabteilung (SA) on 30. June
- reasons for purge: rivalry between SA leader Ernst Röhm and leading Nazis such as Heinrich Himmler (chief SS) and Göring, claim that Röhm is planning second revolution, fear that Röhm's ambitions to amalgamate SA and armed forces would antagonize the army
- 3. July 1934: Law relating to National Emergency Defence Measures justifying murder of victims of 30. June as necessary to suppress attempts at treason
- need to placate enemy groups to establish the Führerprinzip and eliminate a perceived rival
- purge of Night of Long Knives brings SA under control but also settles scores with left wing of the party and old enemies from Beerhall putsch: removed at pretext of rescuing from chaos
- administrative structures of new Reich: by 1934 state governments no longer exist and are replaced by scheme for central control and hierarchical system; Germany divided into clear parts to coordinate Nazi control throughout the state
- 10. Aug. 1934 Hindenburg dies and Hitler announces himself as Führer
- army is grateful for removal of Röhm and swears personal oath of loyalty to Hitler
- army is seduced by possibility of rearmament and increase of number
- Jan. 1933 to Aug. 1934 Hitler successfully transforms his position from leader of coalition government to ruler of a single-party state

## Hitler's methods

### Demonization

- groups and individuals are identified as hate symbols: policy of negative cohesion
- groups are: Jews, Marxist threat, November criminals (signed armistice of 11 Nov. 1918), Weimar traitors (signed Versailles diktat of June 1919)

### Violence, intimidation and murder

- Beerhall Putsch (1923): imitation of Mussolini's march on Rome, unsuccessful, permits a national platform for Hitler at the ensuing trial

- paramilitary organizations: SA and later SS: protect party meetings, disrupt other meetings, win control over streets
- intimidation of SPD deputies: intimidatory tactics to gain two-thirds majority for Enabling Act
- murder: 500-700 political murders of Nazi opponents between March and Oct. 1933

## Abuse of the democratic system

- after 1923/24 Hitler follows dual path: intimidation of enemies and pursuit of power (outvoting)
- transformation of NSDAP to national organization; organized into geographical sections; separate departments: allow well positioned for elections and campaigns by 1930 onwards
- collaboration with existing interest groups (industrialists) and political parties (BVP and DNVP)
- appointment of Hitler as chancellor by Hindenburg: legal to provisions of constitution
- passing of Enabling Bill

## Propaganda

- Joseph Goebbels is responsible for Nazi propaganda campaign from 1929
- credited with stage-managing of propaganda helping capture attention of potential supporters
- radio broadcasts, film shows, torchlight processions, mass meetings, loudspeakers, banners
- around 1930s: propaganda is greatly aided by Hugenberg providing access to press and film theaters of UFA and introduction to businessmen whose fundings pay for campaigns

## Charisma and powers of oratory

- emphasis on Hitler's charisma, hypnotic attraction to audiences
- Hitler acting as loudspeaker proclaiming the most secret desires

## The programme offering of National Socialism

- mix of palingenesis (national rebirth), ultra-nationalism, racism, revisionism, appeals to Volksgemeinschaft, anti-Marxism, German expansionism, anti-Semitism
- "catch all" nature of programme; acts as life raft for those seeking safety from unemployment

## Pragmatism

- Hitler's willingness to adapt to circumstances (drop parts of original Nazi programme) enables him to advance the cause of the NSDAP
- despite earlier hostility, he works with BVP, DNVP and Catholic parties (they are of help)

## Opportunism

- NSDAP recognizes opportunities presented by circumstances
- organization in previous years allows them to use Great Depression to their advantage
- Reichstag fire plays into Hitler's hands for March elections

## Bribery

- where force is ineffective, NSDAP buys support
- examples: alliance with DNVP for March elections (absolute majority), collusion of Zentrum/BVP (voting for Enabling Act), deal with army following Röhm's elimination

## Other factors

- lack of solid base for democratic experiment
- abuse of constitutional provisions (Article 48)
- failure of political parties to work system of proportional representation; too many unable and unwilling to work for success of parliamentary rule
- disillusionment of Weimar policies and inability to deal with economic crises
- failure of army to support democracy
- division of Left hinders any real attempt to unite against extremist parties of Right
- fear of Left by important sections of society
- Hindenburg's and von Papen's fatal underestimation of Hitler
- external factors: Franco-Belgian invasion of Ruhr in 1923 and US stock market crash

## The opposition during the Third Reich, 1934-1945

- Nazi state objective: exercise monopoly of power over all aspects of lives of population
- techniques of omnipresent surveillance, persecution, massive influencing of public opinion

### The nature of the opposition

- most Germans remain loyal to regime; most accommodate to domestic and foreign policies
- fear of punishment is partly responsible for attitude of tepid neutrality among potential resisters
- opposition ranges from silent opposition (refusing salute, jokes) to more active opposition (sabotage in workplace, circulation of anti-Nazi propaganda, plots to assassinate Hitler)

### The treatment of the opposition

- opposition to National Socialism faces an apparatus of terror that is effective
- April 1933: Göring establishes Gestapo (Geheime Staatspolizei)
- Heinrich Himmler is appointed leader of Gestapo (under control of SS)
- formidable structure of repression is instrument used to maintain order within Germany
- cooperation of informants who hope to benefit from turning in supposed enemies and atmosphere of fear are capable of stifling opposition throughout period of Nazi rule

### The main forms of resistance

- failure of opposition from Left contributes to Hitler's rise
- legacy of distrust remains even after 1933 during brutal repression
- two other major institutions who have the power to resist are Church and military, but fail

#### Opposition from the Left

- KPD and SPD are early victims of Nazi attack on Marxism
- Jan. 1933: Left finds itself target of physical violence from SA street fighters
- Reichstag fire leads to banning of KPD and intimidation of SPD deputies in March 1933 indicates what lies ahead for anti-Nazi opponents
- late March 1933: Dachau concentration camp set up: intern and re-educate political prisoners
- no trial is necessary under emergency regulations introduced by the regime

#### Opposition from the KPD

- late 1932: KPD gains significant electoral support
- waves of arrest render the party's organization structure on a national level ineffective
- some leave to Paris while others stay in Berlin to form resistance
- main activities undertaken are leaflets, underground newspaper, raising of red banners and continued circulation of official Party newspaper *Die rote Fahne*
- KPD believes that Hitler regime is last kick of desperate capitalism and would soon collapse
- printing of anti-Nazi propaganda does little to threaten developing Hitler state
- continued arrests of party members sap morale
- Aug. 1935: Comintern advocates policy of popular front; it is too late
- internal opposition of any substance does not materialize
- civil war in Spain in 1936: opportunity to fight fascism on foreign soil distracts German communists from lack of success in Germany
- Aug. 1939: Moscow and Berlin sign non-aggression pact: KPD members in dilemma
- only after Hitler's attack on Soviet Union (June 1941) renews resistance
- SPD remains skeptical of popular front: appears as policy to defend Moscow's interests and Soviet security rather than liberating Germany from National Socialism

#### Opposition from communist groups

- communist sympathizers are small in number and impact
- Gestapo's ability to identify and eliminate their threat in 1942 shows effectiveness

#### Opposition from the SPD

- SPD is well placed to organize resistance to the encroaching totalitarian system
- SPD deputies able to attend Reichstag meeting during debate on Enabling Bill are only ones to vote against its passage

- party is banned by June
- undertakes similar actions as KPD in exile: news-sheets and anti-Nazi leaflets
- full employment and demands from production leaves less time for clandestine meetings
- improvement in lives of supporters saps commitment to SPD underground programme
- nature of low-level activities and secrecy of meetings is not promoting serious resistance

### Opposition by the military

- during Weimar era the military had not committed itself to Republic wholeheartedly
- Aug. 1934: submit to Hitler state with an oath of personal loyalty
- as numbers increase, so does the number of officers who are committed Nazis
- later 1930s: elements of army leadership question the relationship
- as Nazi foreign policy becomes more adventurous, groups within military enter alliance with conservative German politicians who reject repressive nature of regime
- individuals who question Hitler's foreign policy are removed
- Hitler assumes supreme command of armed forces
- many professional officer corps remain bound by personal oath and are reluctant to actively challenge Hitler
- Chamberlain's active appeasement and lack of support render any coup of a group of conspirators impractical
- military successes breed support for the regime, at least a lack of will to actively undermine it
- what would replace Hitler state remains obstacle for Britain and USA
- approximately six assassination attempts are made unsuccessfully, most successful is Operation Valkyrie in July 1944
- Operation Valkyrie: plan to kill Hitler; timing of Valkyrie leads to claims that motives of conspirators are based not just on moral qualms about National Socialism but on the necessity to remove Hitler, negotiate a rapid peace with British and French and prevent invasion of German soil by advancing Red Army; Hitler survives the explosion

### Opposition from the Catholic Church

- German resistance receives little help from Allied powers: suspicion of motives
- Catholic Church in abetting rise of Nazis can be understood as its anxiety about Bolshevism
- papacy signs agreements with Mussolini in 1929
- growth of KPD in Germany frightens Catholic Church and its representatives (Zentrum/BVP)
- Zentrum and BVP abandon commitment to restoration of accountable democratic government after March 1933 when helping to pass Enabling Act
- July 1933: voluntary dissolution of party following Hitler's signing of Concordat with Catholic Church: promise not to interfere in Church affairs (including Catholic schools and youth groups) in exchange that Church abstains from interfering in political life
- Church is to be disappointed: Gleichschaltung envisages elimination of political opponents and also subjugation of religious institutions
- repressive apparatus of totalitarian state finds no major difficulties confronting a religious institution that had effectively dismantled its political parties in 1933 at the same time as giving respectability to Nazi regime when it appears to have Vatican approval
- gradual erosion of Catholic rights follow: religious education, press and youth groups limited
- at no time Vatican actively challenges increasing brutality of the regime
- as an institution the Catholic Church fails to provide any organized resistance

### Opposition from the Protestant Churches

- Protestant Evangelical Church is largest in Prussia
- regional Protestant Church organizations attempt to transform Church into one preaching specifically German national religion
- Reichskirche is short-lived: Confessing Church rejects false doctrine to the Reich Church

### Opposition from Jehovah's Witnesses

- stand out as steadfast opponents of Nazi state, though they are a minority
- banned soon after Nazis come to power; continue to challenge state by refusal of salute and joining Nazi organizations (armed forces): ruthlessly persecuted
- small numbers involved limit the impact of their dissent



### Youth/Student opposition

- much has been made of youth/student opposition; appears they have little effect
- activities are rather examples of youthful disobedience than political resistance
- Allies use arrests, trials, executions for propaganda purposes; impact of the group on Nazi war effort is minimal

## Propaganda and its role

- Joseph Goebbels: Reich minister of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda after March 1933
- stresses need to achieve mobilization of mind and spirit in Germany
- recruits talented, well-educated party loyalists to staff new departments of his ministry
- state establishes monopoly over all media, eliminating all materials hostile to spirit of National Socialism, to promote Nazi Weltanschauung
- instruction "avoid being boring" shows propaganda should be dynamic and up to date

## Broadcasting and the press

- main plank of Nazi propaganda is deification of Hitler; marking significant dates to remind people faithful of Nazi tribulations and how these had been overcome under Hitler's leadership
- cheap radios are mass produced, ensuring the message is broadcast to population
- late 1939: estimated 70% of household possess radio which is deliberately manufactured with a limited range of reception to block foreign broadcasts
- loudspeakers are installed in factory floors, public areas, bars, cafes
- by 1938 short-wave stations transmit in 12 languages to USA, South Africa and Far East
- in Weimar period the radio is a state monopoly: easy to take over
- press proves more difficult to implement monopoly over
- socialist and communist newspapers are banned early
- 1934: Reich Press Law imposes racially clean journalism
- existing newspapers are allowed to keep name and layout, but it is dictated which lines they have to follow
- Hitler state controls ownership, authorship and content of newspaper

## Literature, music, and film

- Propaganda Ministry influences fields of literature, music and film
- aim of propaganda is to promote Nazi ideology and attack and eliminate alternative views
- rigorous control over publishing houses, authors, bookshops and libraries ensure that only writing acceptable to Nazi party is printed and available for public consumption
- has to conform to four main categories: Fronterlebnis (German heroism), promoting Weltanschauung, Heimatroman (uniqueness of German spirit), Rassenkunde (superiority)
- *Mein Kampf* as model for German writing
- censorship justified on basis that they are a threat to National Socialist cultural aspirations
- Hitler's favorite composer Wagner is praised
- modern experimental music is banned: degenerate and atonal
- writers and musicians leave country because of the restrictions placed on them
- Weimar's cinema is considered stronghold of Jewish influence: purges of producers, actors, film music composers take place soon after 1933
- films are meant to show unity of party and cult of Führer and monolithic nature
- by WWII films with anti-Semitic bias are produced and wartime production is geared to sustain morale
- not even majority of feature films are overtly propagandistic; Goebbels understands that population requires more than simply a film diet of Nazi ideology

## The theatre

- Goebbels supervises: purging of actors and producers with Jewish and leftist sympathies
- Shakespeare and renowned German playwrights (Goethe, Schiller) are permitted
- theatre becomes vehicle for performances exalting virtues of German nationalism, past and present, and the evils of communism and democracy

## Art

- Reich Chamber of Culture and Chamber of Visual Arts are established to combat sickness and decadence in the arts
- many artists unable to work in such conditions leave country
- museums subject to raids by Nazi officials removing anything not in spirit National Socialism
- Nazi art: stress heroism, rustic family scenes, Storm Troopers marching with banners, fruit harvesting by bare-bosomed Amazons: purged of pretentiousness and crazy rubbish

## The effects of propaganda

- adulation of ideology and negative portrayals of alternatives through print, screen, stage, approved visual arts: heavy diet of indoctrination even among well-educated population
- active opposition exceedingly limited: repression, fear of denunciation, constant barrage of party doctrine, successes in economic and foreign policy
- Nazi supporters already idolized the state and Hitler
- non-Jews, non-communist, non-democrats have little to fear as long as they conform
- force of indoctrination diminishes urge to participate in any popular dissent

## The impact of foreign policy

- Nazis rise as product of economic despair and promise to solve Germany's economic problems
- appealing to many, though promises remain vague
- Hitler's foreign policy before 1939 and British and French appeasement policy allows expansion of Germany and its re-emerging as European great power 20 years after Versailles
- military campaigns of 1939-41 result in impressive victories in Europe until massive underestimation of Soviet Union
- destruction of National Socialism in 1945 is consequence of foreign policy decisions of Hitler
- decisions lead to formation of hostile grand alliance that, in economic, demographic and military terms, the Third Reich and its Axis partners cannot defeat

## The Nazi regime's foreign policy, 1933-1939

- foreign policy is desire to revise "Diktat" of Versailles: resentment is not exclusive for Hitler's party; Nazi differentiate with calls for Greater Germany and Lebensraum
- gaining land in Poland and USSR guarantees material resource and elimination of Soviet state
- in some respects Hitler continues trends observable in German foreign policy before Nazis
- Stresemann achieves international respect, but still pursues foreign policy to win concessions and preparing ground for revision of Versailles treaty in a peaceful manner
- Hitler pursues goals present under previous governments but far more brutally and ambitiously
- March 1935: Nazi government announces military conscription in defiance of Versailles treaty
- attack on Diktat allied to domestic policies linked to economic recovery and full employment means that most Germans not targeted as enemies of state give support in war effort
- Hitler receives support because he restores German pride
- German foreign policy gains are impressive and popular with reluctance of great powers
- union with Austria in March 1938 produces enormous personal gains for Hitler
- by 1938 Hitler presides over restoration of rich industrial Saarland, restoration of military, recovery of Rhineland, Anschluss with Austria without any bloodshed
- successes of foreign policy generate support for National Socialist state

## The Nazi regime's foreign policy, 1939-1945

- Hitler as high-risk gambler with no interest listening to advice, is liable to falter eventually since he becomes prisoner of his own myth and imagined infallibility
- errors of foreign policy after March 1939 lead to breaking of successes
- after 1941/42: overextension of German forces and lack of resources ensure Allied victory
- formation of grand alliance does not occur until late 1941, after June invasion of USSR, declaration of war on US and Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor

- just as foreign policy success had gained the regime popular backing, foreign policy failure is to provoke not only stirrings of internal opposition but overwhelming external opposition

## 4.3 The aims and results of Nazi policies

### Hitler's domestic policies, 1933-1945

- Nazis are expected to produce solutions to economic ills; unemployment most prominent

#### Employment

- Hitler comes to office as chancellor, unemployment at 6 million; by 1939 there is a labour shortage
- reduction in unemployment is linked to establishment of economy based on production for possible war after 1936 (and Four-Year Plan)
- large sections of populations are not in employment statistics: victims of purges, disincentives for married women to work, offering incentives to single women to give up employment and qualify for marriage loans, compulsory military conscription
- heavy industry as workplace in defiance of Versailles
- pursuit of economic self-sufficiency

#### Economic recovery

- Hitler views economic reconstruction as vital for future expansionist plans
- Allied blockade of WWI: necessity for economy avoiding dependence on other states
- economic crisis had destabilized Weimar republic; maintaining power means finding rapid solution to immediate problems
- series of ad hoc programs rather than well thought out blueprint
- contracts with German companies for partnership between regime and industry
- German industry thrives in enforced political stability; trade union free environment with lucrative government orders that provide benefits for businesses
- Hjalmar Schacht, Minister of Economics, prioritizes dealing with unemployment and plan for financing rearmament: partly linked; motorway construction for use in war
- Memo bills: government-sponsored promissory note via dummy company used by Reichsbank to covertly finance arms production: hides involvement of government in arms production: Germany still not strong enough to challenge arms restrictions of Versailles

#### Public works projects

- labour-intensive public works projects offer employment and sense of purpose
- Reichsarbeitsdienst (RAD): cheap regimented labour to promote recovery: at first it is voluntary, becomes compulsory in 1935 for all Germans between 19 and 25
- work camps ensure authoritarian control over recruits

#### Göring's Four-Year Plan

- Oct. 1936: Four-year Plan: major expansion in war-related industrial production
- within four years, two main tasks have to be achieved: operational armed forces and economy fit for war
- projected goals are not reached under Göring
- failure to produce strong war economy capable of withstanding any long-term conflict helps shape the Blitzkrieg military tactics
- shortages of consumer products and wages frozen at 1933 levels are compensated for by the fact that there is employment

#### Cultural and social policies

- Kraft durch Freude movement (KdF): established by DAF; recreational organization to raise worker morale, boost output and contribute towards sense of solidarity
- harmony in workplace to produce social peace and increased production in national interest
- retrospective fondness in relation to social and economic provisions the Nazi state offered
- loss of personal freedom is compensated by perceived material benefits compared to Weimar

## The Nazi wartime economy

- performance of state depends on to extend it is a polycratic state: centralized, efficient, monolithic Führer state
- intentionalism: Hitler deliberately encourages chaos in Nazi state
- structuralism: development of Nazi party of opposition party to administration party
- overlap in intentionalism and structuralism: structure in regime with blurred clear lines and places where Nazi officials implement fragmented policies depending on interpretation
- Nazi failure to establish central wartime administration hampers successful mobilization
- army is unwilling to sacrifice production of high-quality weapons for large scale production
- goals of Four-Year Plan are not met and form Blitzkrieg tactics
- Hitler's military conquest of Europe is partly political but also attempt to ensure Germany's future through exploitation of resources of occupied territories
- racial war in Eastern Europe produces resistance
- war effort in Balkans, North Africa, Soviet Union and declaration of war on USA results in emergence of united military and economic opposition that far outweighs Germany's resources
- policy of "smash and grab" alienates occupied population
- Albert Speer significantly improves efficiency of arms production; massive programme of labour conscription from occupied states
- lacking resources of geopolitical supremacy means that Germany faces military defeat

## Youth and education policies

- Hitler requires future generations committed to Nazi world view
- conditioning of youth in schools and in extracurricular activities is regime priority

### The education system

- Nazis seek to Nazify school system
- schools and universities are cleaned of teachers unsympathetic to aims of National Socialism or unfit to be in charge of Aryan youth because of Jewish background
- indoctrination of young is undertaken to produce race consciousness and loyalty to regime
- sport is for healthy bodies, history for greatness of Germany's past, biology for race and eugenics (improving population through controlled breeding), "Germanics" for proving superiority of Germans as culture-producing race
- dangers of admixture of races
- regime makes special provision for education future leaders
- Ordensburgen to create potential recruits from Hitler youth

### Youth groups

- outside of formal institutions regime attempts to encourage conformity and apply techniques of indoctrination by establishing youth groups
- academic excellence not prioritized by regime which is suspicious of academic achievement
- 1933 Hitler creates Hitlerjugend for boys and Bund Deutscher Mädel to educate
- existing youth movements are banned (apart Catholic groups guaranteed by Concordat)
- 1. Dec. 1936 all young Germans are expected to join; March 1939 compulsory
- young are seduced by feeling of being something special
- parents are reduced to "bed and breakfast service"
- NSDAP seeks to monopolize life of young, wean them out of parental to party control
- youth organizations in theory promise liberation from evils of democracy, Marxism, Jews, restoration of German pride, revision of Diktat of 1919
- in reality they are imprisoned in huge bureaucratic organization

## The impact of policies on women

- Hitler's view of women is referred to as the attempt to subjugate them
- women's lives complement the man's life; relationship is a partnership in service of the nation
- Hitler claims his task is to renew the traditional role of women
- Germany's birth rate is (apart from Austria) lowest in Europe
- rejection of liberties for women is not peculiar to Nazis

## Pro-natalist policies

- policies to encourage growth in birth rate pursued: marriage loan (1'000 Reichsmark) which is repaid; amount to be repaid is reduced by a quarter for every child (if racially pure)
- condition of loan is that woman gives up employment
- further incentives: income-tax reductions for married couples with children, child support payments, maternity benefits, reduced school fees and railway fares, provision of facilities
- "Mother's Cross" award: gold for 8 children, silver for 6, bronze for 4 (if of Aryan blood)
- abortion is made illegal and birth centers are closed down

## Women in the workplace and the public sphere

- laws initially restrict number of females in higher education; goal to return women to "idyllic destiny" and make jobs available for unemployed males
- once labour shortages in rearmament programs appear the regime compromises ideology
- requirement to give up work when married is dropped and higher education is permitted
- Hitler insist until the end that women are excluded from judiciary and jury service; thinks they are unable to "think logically or reason objectively, since they are ruled only by emotion"
- women's role in political system is secondary

## The impact of policies on minorities

- asocials: those who do not conform desired social norms, term is flexible
- primary aim is to protect racially healthy community from such elements

## Beggars and the homeless

- early targets of the regime; classified into "orderly" and "disorderly" categories and registered
- issued with permits that require them to undertake compulsory work for accommodation
- fixed routes are introduced so whereabouts can be monitored
- many homeless are sterilized and placed in camps

## Homosexuals

- persecution coordinated by Reich Central Office for the Combat of Homosexuality and Abortion
- illegality of "indecent activity" between males predates Weimar era, but Nazis punished harsher
- identified, registered and imprisoned; forced to wear black dot, later replaced by pink triangle
- SS guards regard them as lowest level in concentration camp hierarchy

## Jehovah's Witnesses

- targets because they object to military service and refuse Hitler greeting
- Gestapo accuses them of using religion for political purposes
- forced to wear violet triangles; other colors were for homosexuals (pink), political (red), criminals (green), asocials (black)
- numerically not a threat but outspoken rejection of Nazi views makes them not tolerable

## "Biological outsiders"

- gypsies are regarded with suspicion even before Nazi rule
- 30'000 gypsies in Germany (1933) reduced to 5'000 in 1945
- nomadic lifestyle classifies them as "workshy" and they are of an inferior racial status
- regarded as racial pollution; categorized into pure gypsy and part gypsy
- many gypsies transferred to camps become victims of Nazi medical experimentation

## The mentally and physically handicapped

- belief in improving racial stock through selective breeding (eugenics) is pursued with enthusiasm under Hitler, but is not unique to Hitler's Germany
- policy that those unable to contribute to such an aim are considered without value: consumers of state resources that can be used better
- sterilization and euthanasia eliminate "hereditary defects"
- with some defects it is questionable whether they are hereditary

- considering them a “burden of the community” they are killed; program of killing is halted after protests from the public and the Church; killing continued in concentration camps

## The Jewish population

- Jewish population attracts most attention from historians in respect of impact on minorities
- Jews are seen as actual dangers to the “Volksgemeinschaft”
- many see supposed “cultural decay” and “moral decadence” of 19th century as product of Jewish conspiracy in Weimar era
- illogical links are made such as Jews attempting to promote Bolshevism
- anti-Semitic views act as a scapegoat for Germany’s post-war ills
- eliminationist anti-Semitism (aim of physical extermination) characterizes Nazi state
- increasing restrictions are used to coerce Jews into leaving the Reich which is a difficult task at the time of the Great Depression as other countries raise immigration barriers

### Anti-Jewish measures, 1933-1945

- April 1933: boycott of Jewish business, doctors and legal professionals
- July 1934: not permitted to take legal examinations
- Dec. 1935: forbidden to take pharmaceutical examinations
- Sept. 1935: “The Nuremberg Laws”; deprivation of German citizenship
- July 1938: ban on doctors
- Aug. 1938: male Jews must add “Israel” and females “Sarah” to non-Jewish first names
- Sept. 1938: cancellation of qualifications of doctors, lawyers banned from practicing
- Nov. 1938: attacks on synagogues after young Jew murders a German diplomat; many arrested and released if they promise to leave country; students forbidden to attend German schools; compulsory sale of business for “Aryanization” of German business
- Feb. 1939: forced to surrender all items of gold, silver and jewelry
- Oct. 1939: Heinrich Himmler and SS given responsibility for Jewish affairs; Jews relocated to German-occupied Poland
- Aug. 1940: idea to transport millions of Jews to Madagascar is abandoned
- July 1941: beginning plans for “Final Solution to the Jewish Question”
- Sept. 1941: requirement to wear yellow “Star of David”; relocation to concentration camps and start of experiments on methods to murder Jews en masse
- Jan. 1942: detailed plans for extermination at Wannsee Conference
- Feb. 1942: start of mass executions in Poland
- Sept. 1942: Jews, gypsies, Soviet prisoners and “asocials” given over to Himmler for “destruction through labour”; other camps are tasked with annihilation of humans

## The Holocaust, 1941-1945

- institutionalized anti-Semitism is basis for attempted genocide of European Jewry
- systematic elimination of Jews from social and economic life
- Nazis see predatory capitalism and Marxism as “twin offspring” of “international Jewry”
- only after establishment of the regime does Germany witness the onslaught of Jews
- scapegoating Jews as an attempt to rally Germans through “negative cohesion”
- emphasis how Hitler relentlessly follows a constant aim of exterminating Jewish population
- “structuralists” see that local officials attempt to solve problem by liquidating them
- “cumulative radicalization” says that officials tried to interpret Hitler’s desire
- measures from 1933 to 1935 aim to pressure Jews to leave
- outbreak of war alters tactics for worse as victories in eastern Europe bring many Jews
- emigration is no longer possible solution to regime’s “Jewish problem”
- idea to relocate Jews to Madagascar but failure to destroy British sea power makes them abandon the plan by 1941
- a new solution is found with horrible consequences for 6 million Jews by 1945

## **The extent of authoritarian control**

- National Socialism's destruction is result of external forces
- 12 year-rule is ended by outcome of WWII rather than internal opposition
- authoritarian control effective for limiting domestic opposition
- people submitted for variety of reasons: belief in Nazi aims, fear of consequences of disobedience, possible rise of left, gratitude for material benefits, pride in foreign policy
- these not victimized have little reason to risk persecution
- 28. April 1939: Hitler's speech on achievements of National Socialism: appeals to many
- those doubting system seldom react due to terroristic nature of state; "internal exile"