

Chapter

The Nazi State

Source 1



Source 1: Hitler and Speer, 1942. Speer was the Minister of Armaments and War Production.

Source 2

He knows nothing other than the work that he does as the trusty servant of the Reich.

Goebbels describing Hitler in 1935

Source 3

When, I would often ask myself, did he really work? In the eyes of the people Hitler was the Leader who watched over the nation day and night. This was hardly so.

Albert Speer, Hitler's architect and later his Armaments Minister, describes Hitler's attitude to work. From Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 1970

Introduction

People often assume that the government of the Third Reich was efficient and well organized. The mere sight of a Nuremberg rally on film or photograph creates the impression of order. Of course, this was part of the purpose of such rallies. The Nazis were extremely good at creating false impressions and this was certainly one of them. The reality was, however, very different. The government of Nazi Germany was in fact chaotic and unsystematic. This contrast between propaganda and reality is demonstrated in the sources opposite. Whilst Goebbels was busy creating a public image of Hitler as a hardworking, dedicated 'servant of the Reich', the Führer was in fact spending much of his time sleeping, eating, watching films and running endlessly to his circle of admirers.

Key questions

- Why was there chaos in the Nazi state?
- How did the Nazi state manage to function in these circumstances?
- Could this state of chaos help to explain the increasingly barbaric policies of the Nazis, culminating in the murder of 6 million Jews?
- How effectively did the Nazis use propaganda to create a positive image of Hitler and the Nazi state?
- To what extent did the Nazis rely on the use of terror and fear to subdue the German people?

How did the Nazis govern Germany?

Working towards the Führer

If we are to understand the way in which Hitler and the Nazis governed Germany, we must first understand the nature of Hitler's own power. Hitler's power came to be regarded as something above and beyond that of a normal head of state. No matter who you were within the party or the state, you were answerable to Hitler. He was seen to be above party politics and beyond the law. He exercised what we might term a *charismatic leadership* where the source of power does not lie in the law but rather in a single individual.

Source 4

The office of Führer has developed out of the National Socialist movement. In its origins it is not a State office. This fact must never be forgotten if one wishes to understand the current political and legal position of the Führer... The position of the Führer combines in itself all sovereign power of the Reich; all public power in the State as in the movement is derived from the Führer power... we must not speak of 'State power' but of 'Führer power'... Führer power is comprehensive and total... it embraces all spheres of national life... Führer power is not restricted by safeguards and controls, by autonomous [independent] protected spheres, and by vested individual rigours, but rather it is free and independent, exclusive and unlimited.

Ernst Huber, a leading constitutional theorist of the Third Reich

In his government, Hitler tended to appoint several people to practically the same job. This created chaos in the Nazi state. The only guaranteed way of achieving power and influence was to gain the ear of Hitler and find a way of pleasing him. This was most likely to happen if you were able to present Hitler with a policy which could help to achieve one of his overall aims, especially territorial expansion and the creation of a pure master race. The result was a

Source 5

How widely do you think Source 1 was distributed during the Third Reich?

Source 6

The classic texts on the Nazi state include:

Becher, *The German Dictatorship*, 1973

Kozak, *The Hitler State*, 1981

See also Kershaw, *Hitler*, 1991

Source 7

What do we mean by the terms 'party' and 'state'?

What is the difference? (This is discussed more fully on pages 172-173.)

Source 8

Where, according to Huber, does Hitler's power come from?

How did Huber believe 'Führer power' was different from 'State power'?

rather ungainly struggle between ambitious Nazis to gain the approval of their Führer. This struggle has been termed 'working towards the Führer'.

The danger of this struggle between ambitious Nazis was that Hitler's fantasies were taken seriously and policies drawn up to make them a reality. This is the context in which policies of mass extermination were conceived. All it took was a speech by Hitler, which outlined his grand visions, and a group of ambitious Nazis and civil servants who then tried to please Hitler by turning those visions into policies. The most successful Nazi saw his policy put into practice and then enjoyed the power and influence of having pleased the Führer by furthering his most extreme goals. An example of this was the euthanasia programme which began in 1939 and led to the deaths of thousands of Germans, including the mentally and physically handicapped. Hitler had made no secret of his desire for a master race but, as ever, he left the specific policy for others to work out. In fact, the euthanasia programme was partly the result of a letter written by the father of a deformed child, requesting that he be allowed to kill his son and end his misery. Philip Bouhler, an ambitious Nazi, had a senior post in Hitler's personal office and could select which letters to show the Führer. He showed this letter to Hitler and was subsequently given control of the euthanasia project, thereby earning greater power and prestige. That this increased status was at the cost of thousands of lives was all too typical in the period after 1938.

The Hitler myth

A Hitler myth was cultivated which built on people's desire for strong leadership and presented Hitler as an almost God-like figure. Goebbels later claimed that this had been one of his biggest propaganda achievements. Hitler's image was laboured over in a manner not dissimilar to that of pop stars today. What he wore, what he said, what postures he adopted during speeches: all were worked out carefully. Any hint of human failing was covered up and photographs of Hitler wearing glasses were censored. People bought postcards of Hitler and carried them around in their purses. One book, entitled *The Hitler No One Knows* and written in 1932, contained 100 photographs of the Führer and by 1940, had sold 420,000 copies. Later editions, after the Night of the Long Knives, were edited to remove pictures of Hitler and Röhm posing as good friends.

Many people began to separate Hitler from the Nazi Party, enabling Hitler's popularity to remain high whilst the popularity of the Nazi Party fell. This was particularly the case during the Second World War. By 1936, according to the historian Ian Kershaw, the Hitler cult was fully formed.

But this cult or myth was not entirely divorced from reality. It did depend to some extent on successful policies: a sense that life was improving during 1933 was important in the early development of the myth after Hitler's appointment as Chancellor. The Hitler myth was crucial to the success of the regime. Many of those who did not vote for Hitler in March 1933 were later won over.

But crucially, Hitler began to believe in the myth himself after 1936 and this marks the point at which he seriously began to confuse fantasy and reality, mainly in the realm of his foreign ambitions. In the words of Kershaw, 'Hitler himself was a convert to the Führer myth', himself a 'victim' of Nazi propaganda.

The term 'Working towards the Führer' was first used by a Nazi in 1934. The historian Ian Kershaw has made particular use of it more recently.

See page 202 for more information on the euthanasia programme.



A souvenir postcard of Hitler.

There were reports in 1934 of people taking away bits of Hitler's garden fence at his house on the Obersalzberg as mementoes of the Führer.

I go the way that Providence dictates, with the assurance of a sleepwalker.

Hitler, in a speech made in March 1936

Document exercise: The Hitler myth

Celebrations of Hitler's birthday April 1933

In a union of hearts scarcely imaginable a few weeks ago, the people declared its allegiance to Adolf Hitler as Leader of the new Germany... In short: the enthusiastic participation on the personal day of honour of the Chancellor has provided the proof that Adolf Hitler is recognized as Führer in the consciousness of the entire people, and that the heart of Germany belongs to him.

From the middle-class newspaper, *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*

Reaction to the reintroduction of military service, 1935

Enthusiasm on 17 March enormous. The whole of Munich was on its feet. People can be forced to sing, but they can't be forced to sing with such enthusiasm. I experienced the days of 1914 and can only say that the declaration of war did not make the same impact on me as the reception of Hitler on 17 March... Trust in Hitler's political talent and honest intentions is getting ever greater, just as generally Hitler has again won extraordinary popularity. He is loved by many...

From a SOPADE (SPD in exile) report

Goebbels claims the credit

Towards the end of 1941, at the height of Nazi power and domination in Europe, Goebbels claimed the creation of the Führer myth as his greatest propaganda achievement.

Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*, 1989

Source D

Alan Bullock on the Hitler Myth

...the baffling problem about this strange figure is to determine the degree to which he was swept along by a genuine belief in his own inspiration and the degree to which he deliberately exploited the irrational side of human nature, both in himself and others, with a shrewd calculation. For it is salutary to recall, before accepting the Hitler myth at anything like its face value, that it was Hitler who invented the myth... it was when he began to believe in his own magic, and accept the myth of himself as true, that his flair faltered.

Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, 1952

Examination-style questions

- 1 Comprehension in context**
Study Source B. Using this source and your own knowledge, explain how, and for what reasons, people reacted to the reintroduction of military service.
- 2 Comparing the sources**
Study Sources C and D. How do they differ in their assessment of how the myth developed?
- 3 Assessing the sources**
Study Sources A and B. Which source do you think is more reliable about popular reactions to Hitler?
- 4 Making judgements**
Using these sources and your own knowledge, explain why the Hitler myth was so important to the Nazi regime.

Hitler's personal life

Introduction

As we have seen, Hitler was the ultimate source of authority in the Reich. However, there were two problems. Firstly, the job of governing a population of 70 million could hardly be carried out by one man. And secondly, Hitler made things worse by his intense dislike for routine work, as this spotlight demonstrates.

Sources: 5



Sources: 6

Fritz Wiedemann, one of Hitler's adjutants, wrote his memoirs after the war. At one point he writes:

In 1935 Hitler kept to a reasonably ordered daily routine... Gradually, this fairly orderly work routine broke down. Later Hitler normally appeared shortly before lunch, quickly read through Reich Press Chief Dietrich's press cuttings, and then went into lunch. So it became more and more difficult to get him to make decisions which he alone could make as Head of State... He disliked the study of documents, I sometimes secured decisions from him, even ones about important matters, without his ever asking to see the relevant files. He took the view that many things sorted themselves out on their own if one did not interfere...

The Berghof

Hitler spent more and more time at his mountain retreat in Obersalzberg in the Alps, known as the Berghof. A typical day's schedule, according to Albert Speer, consisted of:

11am – Hitler got up and went through reports brought by Bornmann

Lunch – three courses of simple food, served to around 20 guests

Walk to the tea-house – where Hitler and his guests would consume cakes and hot drinks for 2 hours or so

Supper
After supper – Hitler and his guests would move into the salon to watch one or two films (during the war, they listened to music instead, 'out of sympathy for the privations of the soldiers')

Adapted from Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 1970

Sources:

Albert Speer, Hitler's favoured architect and, from 1942, his Armaments Minister, spent 20 years in Spandau prison after pleading guilty at the Nuremberg Trial. His autobiography *Inside the Third Reich* published in 1970, from which this extract is taken, is considered a classic of its kind, providing a unique insight into the workings of the Nazi government.

I myself threw all my strength into my work and was baffled at first by the way Hitler squandered his working time... When I would ask myself, did he really work? Little was left of the day, he rose late in the morning and conducted one or two official conferences; but from the subsequent dinner on he more or less wasted time until the early hours of the evening... The adjutants often asked me: 'Please don't show any plans today.' Then the drawings I had brought with me would be left by the telephone switchboard at the entrance, and I would reply evasively to Hitler's inquiries. Sometimes he saw through this game and would go to look in the anteroom or the cloakroom for my roll of plans.

Eva Braun

Born in 1912, Braun was Hitler's mistress from 1932 although he went to great lengths to conceal this. She moved into the Berghof where she was often at Hitler's side unless Hitler visited to exclude her from important company – such as Goering – when she had to wait in her rooms. Hitler met her when she was working as an assistant to his favourite photographer, Heinrich Hoffman. She was, according to Hitler's chauffeur, 'the unhappiest woman in Germany'. In April 1945, Hitler married her in his bunker in Berlin as the Allies approached. The following day both Eva and Hitler committed suicide.

Every year

Every year, Goebbels made a radio broadcast in honour of Hitler's birthday. Study the following extracts from his 1935 speech:

'There is probably no one left on the planet who does not know him as a statesman and as a remarkable popular leader. Only a few... have the pleasure of seeing him as a man each day from close up... One cannot imagine him putting on a front... His daily meals are the simplest, most modest, imaginable... he avoids medals and decorations... His industry and determination in reaching his goal far exceed normal human strength... His Cabinet approves no law that

Hitler's Personal Life

- Hitler was a vegetarian and teetotaler
- He ate simple meals and forbade his cook to give him expensive food
- He was a chronic insomniac and as a result was never an early riser
- It appears to have been a hypochondriac, convinced on several occasions that his death was imminent
- He had a number of affairs with women and rumours about his sexual habits were circulated but not confirmed, often put about by his enemies
- He was in love with his niece, Geli Raubal, who committed suicide in 1931 after an argument with Hitler. There were rumours about the circumstances of her death, but no proof, and certainly Hitler appeared devastated by her death, weeping publicly at her graveside

Sources: 4



he has not studied... He has sacrificed his personal happiness and private life. He knows nothing other than the work that he does as the truest servant of the Reich.

Which of Goebbels' claims appear from the evidence here to have been true?

Why do you think other leading Nazis tolerated Hitler's behaviour?

How chaotic was Nazi government?

Central government

In January 1933 this was the system of government that Hitler inherited:

- Federal government. Individual states could decide their own policies in areas such as education, leaving the central government in Berlin to deal with issues such as the economy and foreign policy.
- Collective government. This meant that policies were discussed amongst Cabinet members and a vote taken to decide on a policy.
- Laws were passed by the Reichstag or sanctioned by the President in times of emergency.

Hitler wasted no time in transforming this system. The power of individual states was removed, collective government ended (the Cabinet rarely met) and laws could be issued on the authority of the Cabinet alone, which in practice meant Hitler himself. Not everything changed, however. Much of the old bureaucracy (civil servants – people who actually put laws into practice) remained the same, largely out of necessity because there were not enough talented Nazis to take their place.

Why was there chaos in government?

Activity

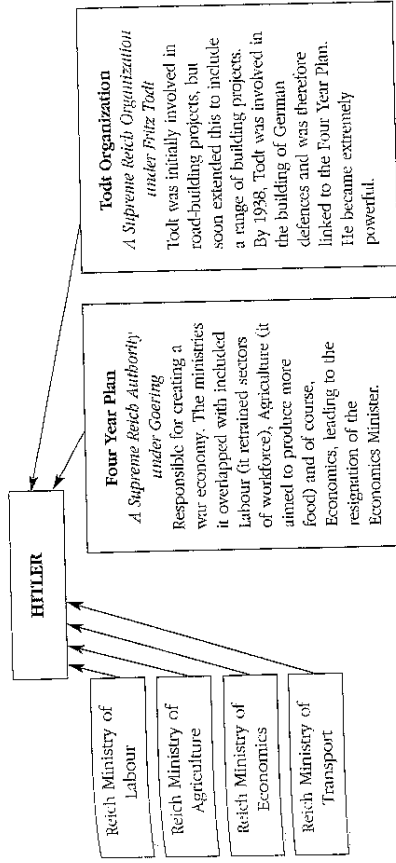
In the table below is a list of some of the reasons why Nazi government was chaotic. Copy out the table, summarizing the content in the first column, and in the second column, explain what the consequences of each 'problem' might have been:

Problem	Possible consequences
Cabinet meetings became more infrequent. It met 72 times in 1933, 19 times in 1934, 12 times in 1935 and 4 times in 1936. After 1936 it didn't meet at all.	
Hitler's style of government was to give power to those he trusted and who presented him with good ideas. One consequence was the creation of Supreme Reich Authorities – specialist agencies whose functions often overlapped with existing ministries (see diagram opposite).	
Hitler was the single source of authority for everyone, no matter if you worked in a ministry or an agency. He was therefore in the best position to co-ordinate policy. But he was not interested in the day-to-day affairs of government and neither did he show much interest in directing the specifics of domestic policy.	

Without a Cabinet, there was nowhere for ministers to discuss their policies and keep each other informed. This led to a lack of co-ordination. A lot of time and energy was wasted as people with similar jobs competed with one another to win Hitler's approval for their ideas. Some used the system to their advantage

and became extremely powerful, such as Fritz Todt (see diagram). Ambitious Nazis took careful note of Hitler's overall aims, most notably those concerning rearmament, expansion and racial superiority. They then devised specific policies designed to meet Hitler's approval. Much of the legislation of the Third Reich resulted from chance conversations between ministers and the Führer.

An example of how government functions and responsibilities overlapped.



Was this chaos intended?

Historical debate

There is a debate amongst historians over whether this state of chaos was intended by Hitler or not. The *Intentionalists* argue that it was intended whilst *Structuralists* or *Functionalists* argue that Hitler was constrained by the 'structure' of the state. The significance of this debate centres on the question of how much power Hitler had. If, as the intentionalists argue, Hitler deliberately pursued a policy of 'divide and rule' to enhance his own power, then this is evidence of the extent to which Hitler was 'master' in the Third Reich. On the other hand, if the state of chaos was the result of 'structural' or outside factors which prevented Hitler from acting differently, then this is evidence of 'weak' dictatorship. This debate is largely over now, and historians generally accept that Hitler was not prevented from pursuing his main goals of territorial expansion and the creation of a pure master race and cannot be regarded as a weak dictator. They also accept, however, that Hitler was not involved in the drawing up of actual policy and they accept that certain outside factors, such as the international situation, had a definite impact on Nazi policy. Thus, recent interpretations have tried to *synthesize* or *combine* the intentionalist and the functionalist viewpoints.

Think about

- ▶ Why might a policy of 'divide and rule' have increased Hitler's power?

This debate is discussed more fully in Chapter 14.

The Nazi Party

What was the purpose of the Nazi Party after 1933?

The Nazi Party lived an uneasy life alongside the State after 1933. For one thing, its function was now rather unclear. Before 1933, the struggle to win elections and attain power was the Party's prime objective. Once in power, and with the end of party politics, the role of the Nazi Party needed re-defining. Many Nazis wanted to see the Party take over State institutions at all levels to ensure a continued involvement in political affairs and to a certain extent this did occur. But the Party and the State never completely merged. The Party's main role after 1933 was to educate the people in Nazi principles. Many Nazi associations were established or existing ones extended covering youth, women, teachers, workers and many more. One historian talks of the way in which German society became 'honeycombed' with Nazi ideas and practices. And, of course, Nazi organizations such as the SS were essential in enforcing the regime's racial policy and stamping out opposition.

Party membership

During 1933 an additional 1.6 million Germans joined the existing Party membership of 849,000. Although there was a ban on further membership, those who joined the SA or other Nazi groups could still become members. By 1939, membership had grown to 5.3 million and by the end of the war stood at around 8 million (only around 10% of the population). Of course, these figures hardly demonstrate in themselves the level of support for the Nazi Party. Many had been forced to join in order to keep their jobs.

Relations between Party and State

As mentioned above, some Nazis wanted to join State and Party together. Hitler ultimately rejected this, although his feelings were not entirely clear. The Law to Ensure the Unity of Party and State, December 1933, described the Nazi Party as being 'inseparably linked with the State'. But in February 1934, at a conference of Gauleiters, Hitler seemed to suggest something rather different, identifying the main tasks of the Party as:

Source 9

...to make the people receptive for the measures intended by the government; to help to carry out the measures which have been ordered by the Government in the nation at large; to support the Government in every way.

In the end, Hitler seemed reluctant to see the Party simply as an instrument of propaganda and his appointment of Hess to the position of Führer's Deputy for Party Affairs suggested that he did in fact want some overlap between Party and State. Hess was also Reich minister without portfolio, thus combining a Party and a State position, and was soon given the right to supervise new legislation and vet the selection of all senior Nazi officials. Hess attempted to establish supremacy within the Party and his successor, Martin Bormann, succeeded in enhancing the role of the Party within the government and the State.

State institutions

State institutions include groups such as the civil service and the police which, in theory, are run by the same people no matter which party is in power.

See page 180 for information about the SS.

The Reich cabinet

Why do you think that a ban was placed on further membership of the Nazi Party?

Distict leaders

Distict leaders of the Nazi Party appointed directly by Hitler

The Party's tasks

Why would some members of the Party have been dissatisfied with these tasks?

Ways in which the Nazi Party took over State institutions:

State	Party
Civil Service	The Civil Service was purged of many Jews and opponents of the regime in 1933. But it was not until 1939 that it was compulsory for civil servants to be Party members.
Reich governors	Many were also Party Gauleiters
Police	By 1934, Himmler and Heydrich had control of the German police. In 1936 Himmler was appointed head of both the political and criminal police.
Reich ministers	By 1937, the majority of Reich ministers were still non-Nazi. Between 1937 and 1938, however, most conservative ministers were replaced by Nazis.
Army	The army escaped Nazi 'co-ordination' although it agreed to take an oath of loyalty to Hitler in 1934. Its influence fell towards the end of the 1930s but it never lost its original identity.

The army

The army escaped the first phase of *Gleichschaltung* in 1934 and it supported the Nazi policy of rearmament. However, as Hitler's strength grew, and his foreign ambitions became more urgent, a clash of interests became inevitable. In 1937 Hitler outlined his foreign policy ambitions at the Hossbach meeting. The two most senior figures in the German army, Field Marshal von Blomberg (War Minister) and General von Fritsch (Commander-in-Chief) both expressed concerns about the extent of Hitler's plans, believing Germany to be militarily unprepared. A few months later, both men were forced out of office and Hitler himself became Commander-in-Chief of Germany's armed forces. The outbreak of war aroused the army's patriotism and loyalty and it supported Hitler fully. However, as the war turned sour after 1943, opposition grew, culminating in a failed assassination attempt on the Führer.

Persuasion and force in the Nazi state

Propaganda

Terror and fear played a vital role in the Nazi state as we shall shortly see, but it was not seen as desirable in the long term. Ultimately, the aim was to achieve a racially pure state completely in tune with Nazi principles in which concentration camps and spy networks became redundant. Goebbels was particularly of the view that this could be achieved through a concentrated propaganda campaign. Of course, propaganda was not new to the Nazi Party - we have already examined their views and methods in Chapter 6. But in 1933 the Nazis had, for the first time, all the apparatus of the State at their disposal. On 12 March 1933, the Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda

The army was the only institution that stood a realistic chance of overpowering Hitler and its support of the Nazi regime has been condemned by historians. The Nazis appealed to the army's desire for authoritarian rule and military superiority. It was only when the war turned against Germany that certain members of the army mounted any serious opposition.

was set up with Goebbels at its head, providing him with a seat in the Cabinet. In addition to this post, Goebbels was also President of the Reich Chamber of Commerce and Director of the Central Office of the NSDAP. He wasted no time in making his intentions clear, as the following extracts demonstrate.

Sources 10

The Press

This Government is, in the truest sense of the word, a People's Government. It derives from the people and it will always execute the people's will...

...The task of the Press cannot be merely to inform; rather, the Press has above and beyond that the much greater task of instructing. It naturally has the task of making clear to the people what the Government is doing, but it must also explain why the Government is doing it, why the Government is forced to act in a certain way and no other... You too will consider ideal a situation in which the Press is so finely tuned that it is, as it were, like a piano in the hands of the Government on which the Government can play...

...You find fault with the Government, you must express yourself in a manner and tone that do not provide the enemy of this Government either at home or abroad with the opportunity of quoting you and thus saying something that he could not otherwise say without risking being banished... You may of course criticise the Government, but in the process you should not lose sight of the Government's interest...

...The word 'propaganda' always has a bitter after-taste. But, if you examine propaganda's most secret causes, you will come to different conclusions... For propaganda is not an end in itself but a means to an end... if we achieve our end through this means, then the means is good...

...we are not going to go away and we shall gradually win the people over in this way completely to our side... We do want to do that not by banning newspapers but by gradually influencing the people while we shape and form public opinion...

...I promise you that I shall stand up for the rights of the Press everywhere and at all times but on one condition: that the Press stands up not just for the rights of the Government but also for the rights of the German people.

The Radio

We make no bones about the fact that the radio belongs to us and to no one else... The radio must subordinate itself to the goals which the Government of the National Revolution has set itself...

...I hold radio to be the most modern and the most important instrument of mass influence that exists anywhere. I am also of the opinion – and one shouldn't say this out loud – I am of the opinion that in the long term radio will replace newspapers... First principle: At all costs avoid being boring... The correct attitudes must be conveyed, but that does not mean that they must be boring.

Extracts from Goebbels's speeches to representatives of the press and radio in March 1933

Activity

Think about and discuss the questions below as you read through the extracts. Then answer the questions at the bottom of the page more fully.

- a How valid was the phrase 'People's Government'? Why do you think Goebbels used it?
- b What does Goebbels see as the role of the Press? How would we feel about this view today?
- c How far did Goebbels mean what he says about criticizing the government, in your opinion?
- d Why do you think Goebbels saw propaganda to be so important for the long-term success of the Nazis?
- e Why do you think Goebbels believed radio to be so important? Why was it important for it not to be boring?

Questions

- 1 How open was Goebbels about the role of propaganda in the Third Reich?
- 2 How does he try to overcome any potential opposition to his policies?
- 3 Why, according to these speeches, was propaganda so important to the Nazis?

Different Nazi speakers had different theme tunes which preceded their radio broadcasts. Hitler's speeches were generally preceded by his favourite march, the *Badenweiler*, although his speeches on Heroes Day were accompanied by Beethoven's 'Paris' symphony.



Examples of the weekly quotation during the war

'Only composure and a heart of iron bring victory'

'No one can get past the German soldier'

Radio

- Radio was regarded as the most important medium for propaganda, reflecting the Nazi preference for the spoken over the written word
- The Reich Radio Company brought all German broadcasting under Nazi control
- A cheap radio, the *Volksempfänger* ('people's receiver'), was produced and people were able to pay for them in instalments. It had a limited range making it difficult to pick up foreign broadcasts.
- In 1932, less than 25 per cent of German households owned a radio compared to over 70 per cent by 1939.
- Loudspeakers were set up in towns and factories to broadcast important speeches.

Newspapers

- In 1933 there were some 4700 daily newspapers in Germany. By 1944 there were only 1000.
- *Ärger Verlag*, the Nazi publishing house, controlled two-thirds of the Press by 1939
- The only news agency allowed was run by the Nazis, who therefore controlled information even before it got into the hands of the journalists.
- Goebbels held a daily press conference for editors who, by the Editors' Law, were solely responsible for the content of their newspapers and liable to punishment if anything unacceptable was printed.
- Although the Nazis preferred the spoken word to the written one, newspapers played an important role in advertising special appeals or anti-Semitic campaigns. The Nazi's own paper, the *Volksischer Beobachter* was at the forefront of the latter campaign.
- Both the number and the quality of newspapers deteriorated. In the five years following 1933, the number of periodicals and learned journals fell by half.

Film

- All films had to undergo a thorough censorship process and 'degenerate' (immoral) artists were not allowed. About half of the best-known film stars emigrated.
- Only about one-sixth of all films could be described as outright Nazi propaganda. Half were simply love stories or comedies and about a quarter were more dramatic, such as thrillers or musicals.
- However, even love stories and the like had to be acceptable to Nazi ideology. Feature films were used to convey ideas such as the master race, the need for more living space and anti-Semitism.

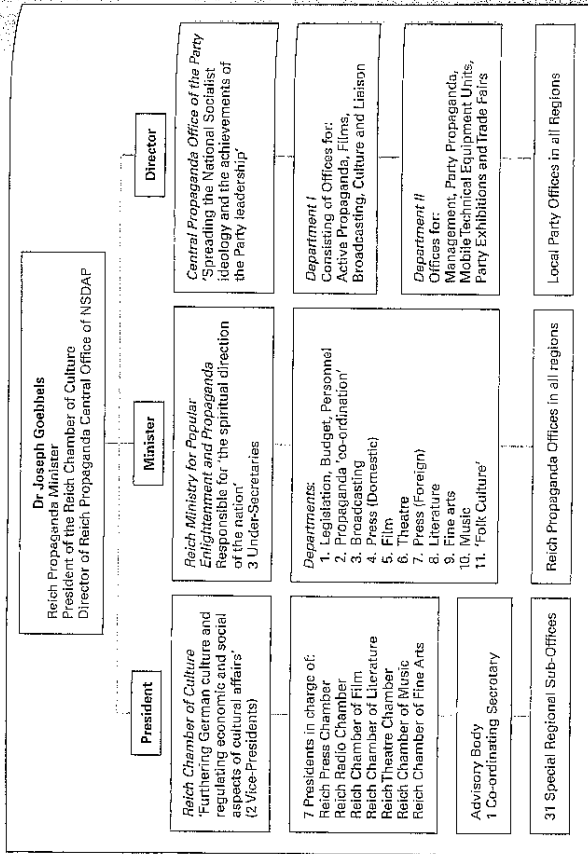
Other forms of propaganda

In addition to radio, newspapers and film, there were many other ways in which the Nazis sought to influence people. Stamps bearing a Nazi message were produced; a weekly poster with a quotation was circulated to offices and public buildings and of course, new rituals were created to celebrate the Nazi state. These rituals included the Nazi salute, the *Heil Hitler* greeting, the Nuremberg rallies and days when, for example, the Munich *Haus* and Hitler's birthday were celebrated. The use made of German art is more fully described in Chapter 10.



How successful was Nazi propaganda?

Source: 11



Source: 11

- Study Source 11. What forms of propaganda were the Nazis planning to use?
 - Were there any gaps in the Nazis' control over the media and the arts?
- Compare Sources 12 and 13. How do they differ in their accounts of the impact of Nazi propaganda on the German people? Can you suggest any reasons for these differences?

Source: 12

Goebbels the advertising minister is no psychologist. He is boring, people make fun of the boring radio etc... Goebbels does not captivate... The progression of feelings here runs from a denuded indifference to aversion and revolt.

Klemperer, I Shall Bear Witness: The Diaries of Viktor Klemperer, 1959

Source: 13

'We are strong and will get stronger', Hitler shouted at them through the microphone, his words echoing across the hushed field from the loudspeakers. And there, in the flood-lit night, jammed together like sardines, the little men of Germany who have made Nazism possible achieved the highest state of being the German man knows: the shedding of their individual souls and mind until under the mystic lights and at the sound of the magic words of the Austrian they were merged completely in the Germanic herd.

William Shirer's account of a rally, Shirer, Berlin Diary the Journal of a Foreign Correspondent, 1941

Source: 14

- Compare Sources 14 and 15. To what extent do they support the accounts given in Sources 12 and 13?

2. Why do you think the workers described in Source 14 were so reluctant to see the film and support the collection?

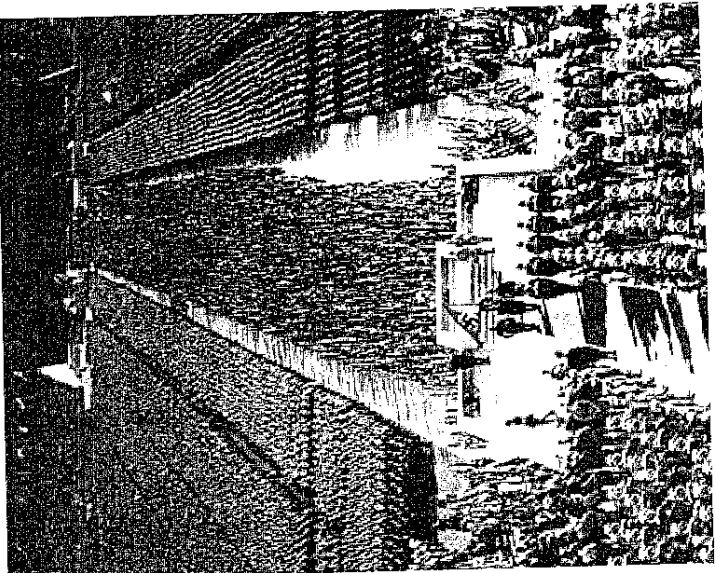
3. Source 15 is itself a piece of propaganda. How does this affect its value as evidence about the impact of propaganda on the people?

Source: 15

The lack of interest in (or rejection of) Nazi propaganda was also reflected in the behaviour of the 400 strong staff of a wood-ware factory in Lauf near Nuremberg, which ignored the command of the leader of the Council of Trust to march solidly behind the swastika flag for a communal viewing of a film about the Nazi cult-figure Horst Wessel in the local cinema. Only four workers turned up at the factory gate after work ready to accompany him. The rest disappeared and went home. The proposed visit to the cinema was abandoned and the attempt was not repeated. At another factory in the same town a collection for a wedding present for the young go-ahead Nazi managing director, who had replaced the popular Jewish former head of the firm at the 'seizure of power', totalled only twelve marks from a staff of around 700 persons.

Kerstlaw, Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich, 1984

Source: 15



Source: 15

- Prepare a presentation on Nazi propaganda using a range of examples, including images downloaded from the internet. Your presentation should focus on:
 - The messages of the propaganda
 - The techniques used to get the messages across
 - What the examples can tell historians studying the period
 - You may wish to use PowerPoint for the presentation. A useful website to get you started is: www.calvin.edu/academic/asia/gwp/index.html

You have been asked to write a report for SOPADE (SPD in exile) about the effectiveness of Nazi propaganda. The year is 1938. Use the information from your presentation and make sure that you include appropriate images. You may also wish to look at pages 246-7.

The police state

The Nazi state has been described as 'totalitarian'. This is a term that is also used to describe Stalin's Russia and other one-party dictatorships. More recently, however, historians have questioned the value of such a generalized term, arguing that it glosses over the many differences between the states which it is used to describe. However, it is useful to describe the way in which states such as Hitler's Germany laid a total claim over the behaviour of the people. Almost everything they did was in theory subject to political control and the mildest action could become a punishable offence.

The Nazis created a regime in which many people lived under the constant shadow of fear. Through a network of spies and informers, the mildest of criticisms could lead to arrest, prosecution and a spell (ranging from a few weeks up to a life sentence depending on your 'crime') in a prison or concentration camp. If you were lucky enough to have a trial, you would find yourself faced with lawyers and judges who were themselves part of the Nazi regime and required to enforce a kind of improvised Nazi law.

At the root of all this was a new interpretation of the law. Hitler's view of the law in 1928 (see margin) was a sign of things to come. Again and again, legal experts sympathetic to the Nazi cause defined the law as the will of the Führer, which represented, they argued, the best interests of the German community or *volk*.

Source 16

The law itself is nothing other than the expression of the communal order in which the people live and which derives from the Führer and the individual can be judged by the law only from the point of view of his value for the volkisch community'

Ernst Huber, Professor of Jurisprudence at Kiel

Steps were taken to control all those in a position to interpret and enforce the law. The training of lawyers had to include a serious study of National Socialism'. Judges also found their independence under attack. After 1933 it was possible for judges to lose their position as a result of their political beliefs and, in 1937, they could be forced to retire if they could not be relied upon to support the National Socialist State'. Special courts were set up for the prosecution of political crimes. Thus, although the law of the land was not rewritten, those in a position to interpret it did so according to the 'will of the Führer'.

Another crucial factor in the attack on civil rights was the Decree for the Protection of People and State, issued in the aftermath of the Reichstag fire in February 1933. Supposedly intended as a means of stamping out a communist conspiracy, the decree allowed anyone, communist or otherwise, to be taken into 'protective custody' to protect the interests of the State. That person could be held for an indefinite period without the right to a trial. Soon afterwards, in March, a new decree was issued against malicious gossip. No wonder Viktor Klemperer wrote in his diary in August 1933: 'No letter, no telephone conversation, no word on the street is safe any more.'

Such a level of intrusion into people's lives required a police network capable of monitoring behaviour on a wide scale. Heinrich Himmler was appointed *Reichsführer SS* in 1936, which enabled him to bring all the different elements

Source 17



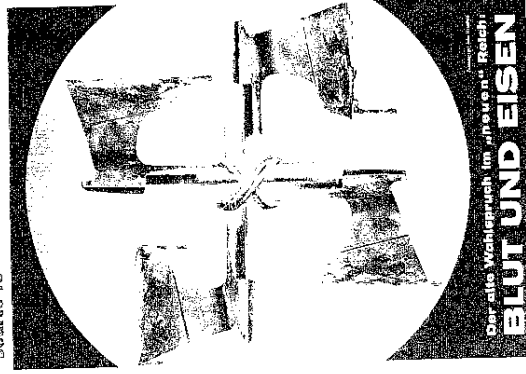
Think about

- ▶ How far do you think the men on the right in Source 17 were dangerous enemies of the state?

political opponents of the Nazis in Oranienburg concentration camp in August 1933.

of the police state under his control. The agents of terror in the Third Reich were now firmly placed under the control of the Party. Even so, recent research has revealed the extent to which the system of spying and denunciations depended on the contribution of ordinary Germans. There simply were not enough Gestapo officers to monitor everyone's behaviour and the number of cases recorded far exceeded what would have been possible without the public's involvement.

Source 18



Think about

Source 18 reads: 'The old slogan in the new Empire: Blood and Iron.' Bisnack was credited with uniting Germany using blood (i.e. war) and iron (i.e. industrialisation).

- ▶ What point do you think Heartfield is making about 'Blood and Iron' in the Third Reich?

A John Heartfield poster from 1934.

There is only one kind of law in this world, and that lies in one's own strength.

Hitler, 1928

Comments which could lead to punishment:

'The Hitler Youth is ruining children.'

'Hitler should get married if he can.'

'In Dachau concentration camp people get beaten.'

The Gestapo

- The secret state police
- Set up by Goering in Prussia, 1933
- Soon replaced all the existing political police in Germany
- Himmler in charge after 1933
- By 1936, established as part of Himmler's SS empire
- Main duty was to enforce political conformity
- Made frequent use of 'protective custody'
- Relied on

denunciations by ordinary German people	25%
In Würzburg, 54% of all race-related changes were initiated by private citizens.	4.5%
The percentage breakdown of types of cases dealt with by the Gestapo in Düsseldorf, 1933-1945:	2.3%
	0.3%
	1.2%
	21.3%
	Others (unspecified)

35% Continuation of outlawed organizations such as political parties, youth groups, religious sects

25% Non-conforming behaviour such as malicious gossip

4.5% Acquiring or spreading forbidden printed matter

2.3% Listening to foreign radio

0.3% Political passivity

1.2% Conventional criminality

Himmler's empire

To understand the SS, it is also necessary to understand its leader. Himmler was fanatical in his belief that the Aryan race was superior to all others, particularly the Jews. He firmly believed in the need to expand Germany in order to make the world power it deserved to be and saw the achievement of racial purity as the necessary first step. His own SS was to be at the vanguard of this crusade.

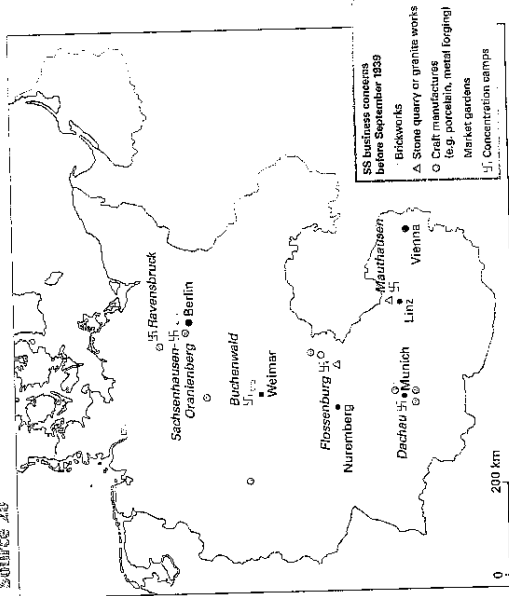
SOURCE 19

In politics there are only two possibilities; for Germany or not. Anyone who is not basically for Germany but against Germany does not belong to us and will be eliminated. If he does not emigrate on his own initiative, then he will have to be locked up. If that does not help then we will have to make him a head shorter.

From an article in the SS newspaper, 1938

Those 'against Germany' included non-Aryans (especially Jews), political enemies (such as communists) and those not conforming to the Nazi 'norm' such as homosexuals, gypsies and alcoholics. All such victims found themselves trapped in the brutal regime of the concentration camps which sprang up almost immediately after January 1933. Initially the location of the camps was improvised - the top floor of a bar, the backyard of a building - but by March 1933 camps such as Dachau were in place. They were originally termed 're-education centres' but the term concentration camp was soon borrowed from the British who had set up camps to 'concentrate' Boer families during the Boer War. There were never fewer than 10,000 Germans in the camps and, according to Nazi statistics, around 225,000 Germans were imprisoned for political crimes between 1933 and 1939. The map below shows the location of these camps:

SOURCE 20



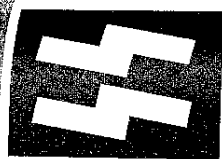
See page 116 for a biography of Himmler.

The knowledge of the enormities that the SS perpetrated daily, the knowledge that the camps were always waiting for new inmates, the knowledge that many who entered them were never heard of again was never absent from the minds of the German citizens...

Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, 1987

Think aloud

To what extent does this map support the view that the SS was a state within a state?



The SS

- Full title was *Schutzstaffel* meaning Defence Unit
- Set up in 1925 as Hitler's personal guards
- Himmler appointed leader in 1929. He was responsible for the black uniform and special swastika armband to distinguish SS from the SA. All senior Nazis adopted the uniform themselves.
- Played a key role in carrying out The Night of the Long Knives and thereafter replaced the SA as the main military unit of the Party
- Intended to represent the German elite
- Members carefully screened to ensure racial and biological purity
- By 1935, membership stood at 200,000
- Main duties were to enforce the party's racial policy and run the concentration camps
- Two units were to become particularly notorious; the Death's Head Units who ran the camps and the armed Waffen SS set up in 1940 and intended eventually to replace the army. It had a reputation for brutality and ruthlessness



Himmler's Empire

The SD (Sicherheitsdienst)

- Set up in 1931 by Himmler as the internal security service for the SS
- Increasingly given the job of intelligence. The reports of the SD, covering issues such as the popularity of the Party, or the situation of the Church, provide us with a valuable source of evidence about the Third Reich

Think aloud

Do you think Himmler was the most powerful figure in the Nazi state after Hitler himself?

The police

- All German police under Himmler's control after 1936
- Police divided into the ORPO (municipal police and rural/urban consabularies) and the SPO (Gestapo and criminal police) which became part of the SD in 1939

Source 20 demonstrates the breadth of the SS organization. Many historians have termed it a 'state within a state' which reflects its independence from other state organizations. The camps provided a rich source of cheap labour and a number of SS enterprises were established, including road building, metal forging, market gardening and the like. By 1945 the SS was estimated to have a turnover of over 50 million Reichsmarks. Only an organization so dedicated to carrying out the Führer's racial policy was allowed to grow so powerful.

Document exercise: living in a police state

The speed of Gestapo arrests

In a café a 64-year-old woman remarked to her companion at the table: 'Mussolini has more political sense in one of his boots than Hitler has in his brain.' The remark was overheard by other patrons and five minutes later the woman was arrested by the Gestapo who had been alerted by telephone.

Extract from an SPD report, 1938

Source 6

An unusual trial

My client...denied the crime of which he was accused. The appeal judge said 'in that case we can begin with the hearing of the evidence.' At that moment I intervened and asked permission to question my client before the hearing of the evidence about the circumstances in which he had signed the statement quoted above, [confessing his guilt after Gestapo officers of the Secret State Police...The appeal judge rose from his chair, leant on his hands on the court table and said to me: 'Council for the defence...a question such as you have asked can lead to your being arrested in the courtroom and taken into custody. Do you wish to sustain the question or not? ...Suddenly, into the dead of silence which followed came the words of the assistant judge "The defence need not sustain this question, I will take it over on behalf of the court." I do not know if I would personally have had the courage to stick to my question under the pressure of the situation and the assistant judge saved me this decision. I wholeheartedly admitted such courage from a German judge. I also got the impression that only a judge who had been badly wounded in the 1914-18 war could get away with such courage.

Source 7

The duty of the judge

His role is to safeguard the concrete order of the racial community, to eliminate dangerous elements, to prosecute all acts harmful to the community....The National Socialist ideology...is the basis for interpreting the law.

Statement issued by a Nazi legal expert

Activity

Who was more important to the success of the Nazi state: Goebbels or Himmler?

Divide into two groups. One group is to argue that Goebbels was more important to the success of the Nazi state whilst the other group will argue that Himmler contributed more.

After the debate, answer the following question:

'Would Hitler have survived for as long as he did without Goebbels and Himmler?'

Source D

The role of ordinary Germans

The Düsseldorf Gestapo pursued many persons suspected of 'non-conforming everyday behaviour' - 29 per cent of all its cases...Much energy was used to control the spoken word, and the majority of cases of this kind of nonconformity brought to the Gestapo's attention were about airing opinions in public. Many of these kinds of investigations must have been dependent on the observations of people beyond the ranks of the Gestapo, since it simply had too few members to keep watch or to listen in on its own.

Extract from an essay written by Robert Gellately, 1990

Exam-style questions

1 Comprehension in context

Study Sources A and D. Using the sources and your own knowledge, explain why the woman in Source A was arrested.

2 Comparing the sources

Study Sources B and C. Why is the behaviour of the assistant judge in Source B surprising in the light of Source C?

3 Assessing the sources

Of what use is Source B to an historian studying the legal system in Nazi Germany?

4 Making judgements

'people had little choice but to conform'. Using these sources and your own knowledge, explain whether this is an accurate view of life in the Third Reich.

Conclusions

The Nazis relied on three sources of power:

- That large numbers of the German people would accept Nazi policies because they stood to gain from them
- That the German people would be persuaded to support the Nazis' policies through propaganda
- That the German people would be forced to accept the Nazis' policies out of fear

The Nazi state was totalitarian in so far as all aspects of peoples' lives were under surveillance and subject to political 'control'. Spies, the Gestapo, the SS, concentration camps: the terror these words conjure up is familiar and their meaning is understood beyond the history books. Of course, it is ultimately impossible to control all aspects of life and pockets of rebellion did exist (see Chapter 13) but generally, the fear of punishment discouraged opposition which was, of course, its very purpose.

In charge of this powerful police state was a government characterized by chaos and a Führer who disliked hard work. Although Goebbels' well-oiled publicity machine created a rather different impression, the Nazi state was in fact governed in a haphazard and ultimately dangerous way. The endless infighting between Nazis unsure of their role and ready to exploit the chaos for their own purposes had terrible consequences. Hitler wanted to create a master race in Germany and beyond but did not have the patience to work through specific policies. There were, however, plenty of people waiting in the wings and struggling between themselves to win Hitler's approval. They had plenty of time to develop policies that could deliver Hitler's ambitious and terrible aims.

Chapter

Social and racial policy in the Third Reich



SOURCE 1
Struggle is always a means for improving a species' health and power of resistance and, therefore, a cause of its higher development.
Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 1925

SOURCE 2
A young recruit, right, in a German military band, 1935.



SOURCE 3

Think about it
What is the message of Source 2, do you think?

There are no more private citizens. The time when anybody could do or not do what he pleased is past.
Robert Ley, 1938

Wörterbuch
Hitler used the term *Volkgemeinschaft* to describe a 'people's community'.

Think about it
What do you think is happening in Source 4?

Introduction

So far we have mainly concentrated on how the Nazis came to power and how they set up a dictatorship in Germany. Now it is time to consider what everyday life was like for those living in Hitler's Germany.

Key questions

- How did everyday life change as a result of Nazi policies?
- To what extent did the Nazis transform society?
- Was there a gap between what the Nazis said and did?

Nazi ideology: what kind of society did the Nazis want?

Hitler wanted to create a society in which every individual saw the purpose of his or her life as contributing towards the greater good of the German *Volk* or community. He attacked the idea of individuals having rights, arguing that this would simply damage the national or 'people's' community. For Hitler, all life meant struggle – a struggle to survive and overthrow enemies. How, he argued, could Germany survive against the threats of Bolshevism, the Jews and other states if its population acted as a group of individuals rather than as a united whole? What Germany needed was a society in which everyone shared the same aims and worked together to achieve them. But of course Hitler did not intend that this united society – the 'people's community' – should include everyone. This is where Hitler's ideal of a 'master race' came into play, with devastating effects. His 'people's community' or *Volkgemeinschaft* would be superior to all other communities because it would be made up of pure Germans. There would be no room for the disabled in Hitler's vision, no room for the social outcast and of course, no room for non-Aryans. If you were Aryan and basically fit in mind and body then you were part of Hitler's *Volkgemeinschaft*. If you were not, then you waited with fear to see what would happen after 1933.

SOURCE 4



SOURCE 5

Women and the family

As the figures in the margin indicate, the birth rate in Germany fell during the 1920s. Although this was a Europe-wide phenomenon, the decline in births was more acute in Germany than elsewhere. The possible impact of this on Nazi expansionist ambitions was immense. How could Germany acquire *Lebensraum* more living space (*Lebensraum*) if it did not have enough people? Even more worrying in the short term was a population diminishing so fast that Germany would not even be able to maintain its *current* position of strength, let alone extend it. The need to raise the birth rate, therefore, became a key domestic policy during the 1930s. This fitted in neatly with Nazi attacks on the supposed emancipation (freedom) of women during the Weimar Republic. The Nazis rejected moves towards greater female independence and emphasized that a woman's place was in the home. Of course, it is difficult to be sure whether the Nazis really believed this ideology or whether it simply provided the basis for policies that encouraged more reproduction and reduced unemployment figures by removing women from the workplace. Certainly, as time went on and the need for workers increased, the Nazis were prepared to modify their policies about women in the workplace to suit their own needs. As ever, therefore, Nazi ideology was shaped by circumstances.

Source 5

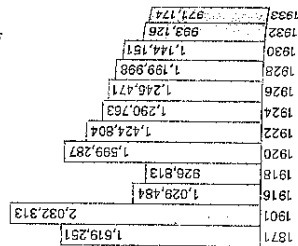
If one says that man's world is the state, that his world is his struggle, his readiness to devote himself to the community, then one might be able to say that the world of women is a smaller one. For her world is her husband, her family, her children, and her house. (Applause.) But where would the larger world be if no one wanted to care for the smaller world? How could the larger world exist if there were no one to make the cares of the smaller world the essence of their lives? No, the larger world is built on this smaller world... What man offers in heroism on the field of battle, woman equals with unending pain and suffering. Every child she brings into the world is a battle, a battle she wages for the existence of her people...

Hitler speaking at the Nuremberg Rally in 1934



Source 5

Birth rates, 1871-1933 (live births)



Can you suggest any reasons for the particularly low figures in 1918 and 1932-1933? Why do you think there was a general decrease in the number of births?

Think aloud

What is Hitler's view on women? In 1935, Hitler stressed that there was equality of rights for women in Germany. Although men and women had different tasks to perform, both sets of tasks were equal in dignity and value. Do you agree that men and women were equal in the Third Reich?

Think about

What point is this painting trying to make? How successfully do you think the painting gets across its message? Think back to the experiences of women during the Weimar Republic. Why might some women have welcomed Nazi policies?

A Nazi painting entitled 'The Family', by Wilhelm Haller.

How did the Nazis try to achieve their aims?

Employment

The Nazis took Weimar policies to reduce female employment much further. Married women were often excluded from the civil service and other professions. Employers were encouraged to employ men in favour of women. Numbers of women allowed to enter university were restricted. Many women found themselves forced into part-time work.

Loans and benefits

From 1933, women who left work and married an Aryan man were eligible to receive an interest free marriage loan. The amount to be repaid fell by a quarter with each child born. By having four children, therefore, the repayment would be cancelled altogether. Women with children were also offered generous welfare payments.

Kinder, Kirche und Küche

This became the Nazi slogan which defined the ideal spheres of female activity. It translates as 'children, church and cooking'. This view was spread by Nazi organizations such as the 'Women's Enterprise' (DFW) which organized training for women in domestic and motherhood skills. By 1939, around 3.5 million women had attended such courses.

Medals

The Nazis tried to raise the status of motherhood. Women were encouraged to play their role in the state by 'donating a baby to the Führer'. As a sign of their appreciation, the Nazis awarded medals to prolific mothers on Mothering Sundays. Those with four or five children received a bronze medal, those with six or seven received silver and those with eight or more received a gold medal from the Führer himself.

Divorce, abortion and contraception

Abortion was restricted and the use of birth control, except for Jews and other 'undesirables', was condemned. Divorce was made easier for those in childless marriages and, indeed, the decision not to have children was regarded as grounds for divorce. Men who were married to non-Aryans were encouraged to divorce them.

A healthy life

Women were encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Dieting, smoking and late nights were frowned upon and exercise was encouraged. Women were also discouraged from wearing make-up or from dressing in a decadent, 'foreign' way. These ideas were introduced to women at an early age.

As you can see, the Nazis used a combination of tactics in their attempts to raise the birth rate and reduce female employment. But there was another, more sinister, strand to their policies regarding childbirth. It was not simply a question of wanting *more* births, it was also a question of the right *kind* of births. Advice was issued about choosing a partner who was Aryan and healthy and, from 1933, a Sterilization Law forced all those suffering from a hereditary disease to be sterilized. The conditions classed as 'hereditary' included 'chronic alcoholism' and even 'feeble-mindedness'. Between 1934 and 1945, around 320,000 men and women were sterilized, of whom nearly 100 died as a result. The desire for perfection was taken to bizarre extremes. For example, an organisation called the 'Spring of Life' was set up supposedly to provide support for unmarried mothers but in fact it provided opportunities for SS men to father more children.

Source 7

- Remember that you are a German.
- If you are genetically healthy you should not remain unmarried.
- Keep your body pure.
- You should keep your mind and spirit pure.
- As a German choose only a spouse of the same or Nordic blood.
- In choosing a spouse, ask about his ancestors.
- Health is also a precondition for physical beauty.
- Many only for love.
- Don't look for a playmate but for a companion for marriage.
- You should want to have as many children as possible.

Ten Commandments for the Choice of a Spouse, 1934

How successful were Nazi policies towards women?

Source 12

Year	Population (000s)	Number of marriages	Numbers of births
1918	66,811	352,543	926,813
1920	61,797	884,978	1,589,287
1928	64,023	594,631	1,199,988
1932	65,716	516,793	993,126
1933	66,027	638,573	971,174
1934	66,409	740,165	1,198,350
1935	66,871	651,435	1,263,976
1936	67,349	609,770	1,278,583
1937	67,831	626,265	1,277,046
1938	75,996	645,062	1,348,534
1939	86,910	774,163	1,413,230
1940	98,173	612,946	1,402,640

Note: Figures from 1938 onwards include new territory taken by Germany

Source 13

It is generally agreed that from its beginning, the Third Reich treated women in a callous and politically expedient (useful) way. Frau Fischer, however, sees things differently... Women's emancipation (freedom) in the wide, wide public began fundamentally with National Socialism. Her reasoning included the extensive membership of German girls in the BDM and German women in the Frauenschaft. Both groups 'row for the first time' were led by their female peers. That all really happened in spite of Hitler's wanting the woman to stay with her saucepan.

An interview with Frau Margarete Fischer in Owings, Frauen, 1995

Source 14

Industry	1925	1933	1939
Agric. & forestry	1,542	2,287.4	4,680.0
Industry & crafts	1,218.8	3,760.3	4,680.0
Trade & transport	1,218.8	2,083.0	4,680.0
Non-domestic services	850.0	1,003.8	1,571.0
Domestic service	1,000.0	1,285.8	1,348.8
Total	11,475.0	11,475.0	12,700.2

Source 11

The evidence suggests that women approved of the regime's glorification of domesticity, since for most women employment in the circumstances of the 1930s was not a particularly attractive proposition. Moreover, men too seem to have approved of this emphasis, which reaffirmed traditional distinctions discriminating between men and women and flattered their male pride.

A historian on the reactions to Nazi policies. From Noakes and Pridham, Nazism 1919-1945 Vol. 1, 1984

Source 12

When one had five children, one got an Honourable Mother's Cross, nice? From the Nazis. Sort of a mark of distinction. And I sent it back to them... I said I won't allow myself to be rewarded. I didn't bear my children for Hitler. But that was bad to say.

An interview with Frau Doktor Margaret Blesch in Owings, Frauen, 1995

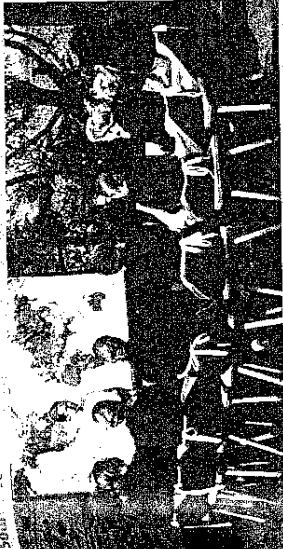
Source 13

Year	Population	Marriages	Births
1933	66,023	516,793	993,126
1937	67,831	626,265	1,277,046

...we can no longer do without the woman doctor, lawyer, economist, and teacher in our professional life.

Extract from the Volkischer Beobachter (Nazi newspaper) in 1938

Source 15



Source 16

The conditions which must be filled before the grant of a marriage loan are as follows... That the future wife pledges herself not to take up employment so long as her future husband receives an income...

One of the conditions of receiving marriage loans (1933)

Source 17

I permit wives who have received a marriage loan to take up employment, provided their husbands have been called up for the Labour Service or for training by the armed forces.

The conditions of receiving marriage loans are revised (1937)

The depression... gave the National Socialists the excuse to try to put theory into practice by circumscribing (restricting) the activities of professional women, and employed women as a whole. But, again similar to the employment market generally, this soon proved impractical, and the policies which had priority in the Nazi state necessitated warm encouragement to women to enter professional occupations.

Stephenson, Women in Nazi Society, 1975

Source 17

...Hitler reluctantly agreed to Sauckel (the man responsible for the allocation of labour during the war) issuing a decree on 27 January 1943 'Concerning the Registration of Men and Women for Reich Defence Tasks'. According to the decree, with certain exceptions, all women between the ages of 17 and 45 were obliged to register for work.

Noakes and Pridham, Nazism 1919-1945 Vol. III, 1998

Source 18

Year	Population	Marriages	Births
1933	66,023	516,793	993,126
1937	67,831	626,265	1,277,046

- Using a table like the one below, note down any evidence which suggests that the Nazis did/did not achieve their aims
- Is there any evidence to suggest that the Nazi policies towards women made them unpopular? Can you suggest some reasons why/why not?
- Can you see any evidence of Nazi policies changing during the 1930s and early 1940s?
- In the end, the only thing that mattered to the Nazis was rearmament and expansion. Their views on women came second. How far do you agree with this view?

Historical debate

In 1987, Claudia Koonz, in her book *Mothers in the Fatherland*, suggested a new and controversial interpretation of the role of women in the Third Reich. Essentially, she argued that, by providing a loving, stable home environment, women enabled their husbands to carry out the atrocities demanded by the Nazi state. Far from remaining untouched by Nazi evil, women operated at its very centre... When the SS man returned home, he entered a doll's house of ersatz goodness in which he could escape from his own evil actions. Other historians have accepted that there was a degree of willingness amongst women to go along with many aspects of Nazi Party policy, including its policies towards women and the family, but few share Koonz's ultimate conclusion that women share the guilt of Nazi atrocities by simply being wives and mothers. **Adelheid von Saldern** argued in 1994 that women's role in supporting the Nazi regime consisted of *passivity and toleration in the face of an action, but not the action itself*. She suggested that women's traditional roles had not necessarily changed – a warm, loving home environment had long been regarded by many as one of their important duties – but the impact of that role had changed. The fact that women helped to make life seem normal and bearable for those committing daily atrocities was perhaps true. But did that make it women's fault?

Conclusions

- The Nazis' emphasis on the 'traditional' role of women found some support amongst the German people, including those for whom the Depression years had removed other opportunities. Many women, especially those from the lower classes, rejected the 'New Woman' image of the Weimar years.
- Despite Nazi policies, female employment remained high, with the overall numbers increasing. In addition, many female professionals, other than those employed in politics or the law, were able to continue their careers. However, many women were forced into badly paid agricultural or part-time work.
- There were several contradictions in Nazi policy. Whilst promoting a stable family life, young men were sent away from home to carry out labour or military service. Similarly, the Nazis were forced, from 1936 onwards, to employ more women to deal with the labour shortage. By 1943, women were being conscripted into war work.
- There were examples of continuity between the Weimar and Nazi years. Attempts were made to reduce the number of working women from as early as 1930.
- Germany was hardly unique in its policies towards women. A falling birth rate was of concern across Europe, and during the 1920s medals were awarded to mothers in France who had several children.

Youth and Education

Source 20 is a summary, written by the Nazis, of a Nazi propaganda film made in 1933. The film, *Hitlerjunge Quex*, contained many clues about the direction which Nazi youth policy would take. The hero of the film, Heini, naturally wishes to belong to the Hitler Youth, not because he agrees with Nazi ideology

(of which he doubtless knows very little), but because of the discipline and comradeship, it offers. He has to defy his parents in order to go, but of course he has to follow his heart' and in doing so, gives up his life when attacked by communists whilst running an errand for the Nazis. It was this kind of unquestioning, blind loyalty to the Party that the Nazis were aiming for.

Why was German youth so important?

The youth of Germany was the future. Adults could be persuaded or forced into accepting that the Nazis were preferable to other parties but their minds were not as pliable and easily influenced as their children's. The Nazis wanted to raise a generation of Germans who unquestioningly obeyed them and were willing to sacrifice their lives on the battlefield in the name of the Fatherland. In 1938, Hitler made no bones about his aims for the youth of Germany:

Source 21

These young people learn nothing else but to think as Germans and to act as Germans; these boys join our organization at the age of ten and get a breath of fresh air for the first time, then, four years later, they move from the Jungvolk to the Hitler Youth and there we keep them another four years. And then we are even less prepared to give them back into the hands of those who create our class and status barriers, rather we take them immediately into the Party, into the Labour Front, into the SA or into the SS... And if they are there for eighteen months or two years and have still not become real National Socialists, then they go into the Labour Service and are polished there for six or seven months... and if there are still traces of class consciousness, then the army will take over the further treatment for two years...

Extract from a speech made by Hitler in 1938

As you can see, the Nazis did not want anyone to escape their clutches.

The Hitler Youth

The first stage was to establish an organization which could help to transform children into obedient Nazis. Fortunately for the Nazis, there was already one in place – the *Hitler Jugend* (HJ) or Hitler Youth – which was created in 1925 and by 1933 had 55,000 members. However, as you may remember from Chapter 5, youth groups were very popular in the Weimar Republic and total membership of youth groups was 5 to 6 million. The Hitler Youth therefore represented only 1 per cent of all organized youth. During 1933, most non-Nazi youth groups were forced to join the Hitler Youth as part of the policy of *Gleichschaltung*. The only groups to escape were the Catholic youth groups, temporarily protected by the Concordat signed by Hitler and the Pope. But even they were forced to give up their independence when a law of 1936 incorporated all youth groups into the Hitler Youth.

Both boys and girls joined the Hitler Youth. Attendance was, in theory, voluntary until 1939, although membership figures continued to increase during the 1930s and by the beginning of 1939, around 82 per cent of all 11–18 year olds were members.

The film was based on the life of Heiner Meißner, who was a hero and martyr of the Hitler Youth.

Those who have the youth on their side control the future.

The leader of the Nazi Teachers' League

In 1935, Hitler famously declared that he wanted his youth to be swift as the greyhound, tough as leather and hard as Krupp steel!

Think about

► By what means did Hitler propose to influence the youth of Germany?

Think about

► Compare Koonz's theory with Hitler's speech in Source 5. Are there any similarities?

Source 20

Heini Volker is a fresh, diligent boy of around 15, an apprentice in a small printers' shop in Beusselkitz. His father, forced into the clutches of the Commune by years of unemployment, enrols his son in the Communist Youth... But Heini's heart belongs to the Nazis, particularly since he went on a weekend camp and had the opportunity to see the contrasting conduct of two youth groups: the clean disciplined, happy comradeship of the Hitler Youth, compared with the atmosphere of the Communists' camp, poisoned by big city life. Heini follows his heart and takes to the Nazi movement, first secretly then openly. He yields to no danger and makes the greatest sacrifice of all, his life.

Why did so many young people join the Hitler Youth?

Children joined for both positive and negative reasons. Many enjoyed the variety of activities offered to them in the Hitler Youth and the chance to mix with people of their own age. For girls in particular, the Hitler Youth offered them a chance to escape from the narrow opportunities that were offered at home. The opportunity for girls to perform sport in public, for example, was quite rare outside of the Hitler Youth. But others joined through peer pressure or sheer intimidation. The following extracts provide us with additional insights into why people joined:

Source 22

There must be many answers to the question – what caused people to become National Socialists at that time...I wanted to follow a different road from the conservative one prescribed for me by family tradition...Whenever I probe the reasons which drew me to join the Hitler Youth, I always come up against this one: I wanted to escape from my childish, narrow life and I wanted to attach myself to something that was great and fundamental...and as my parents would not allow me to become a member of the Hitler Youth I joined secretly.

Melita Meschmann, *Account Rendéret: A Dossier on My Former Self*

Source 23

What I liked about the IJ was the comradeship. I was full of enthusiasm when I joined at the age of ten. What boy isn't fired by being presented with high ideals such as comradeship, loyalty and honour... And then the trips! Is there anything nicer than enjoying the splendours of the homeland in the company of one's comrades. We often went off into the countryside round K—to spend Sunday there. What joy we felt when we gathered at some blue lake, collected wood, made a fire, and then cooked pea soup on it...And it always made a deep impression to sit at an evening round a fire outside in a circle and to have a sing-song and tell stories.

The memories of a Hitler Youth leader

Source 24

Teacher A exerts such pressure on the members of the (Catholic) Youth Club that it is almost unbearable for the boys. For example: last Saturday he set those boys concerned the essay: 'Why am I not in the Hitler Youth?', while all the other children in the class had no homework...Another case: a member of the HJ had rejoined the Catholic Youth Club. When Mr A heard of this he threatened he would set him forty sums every time he stayed away from the HJ parade. This was made even worse by his threat of a beating as well. After this, the boy...stayed in the Hitler Youth.

A letter written to the Party district leader by a Catholic priest

The organization of the HJ

Boys	
Age 10-14	German Young People (DJ)
Age 14-18	Hitler Youth (HJ)
Girls	
Age 10-14	Young Maidens (JM)
Age 15-21	League of German Maidens (BDM)

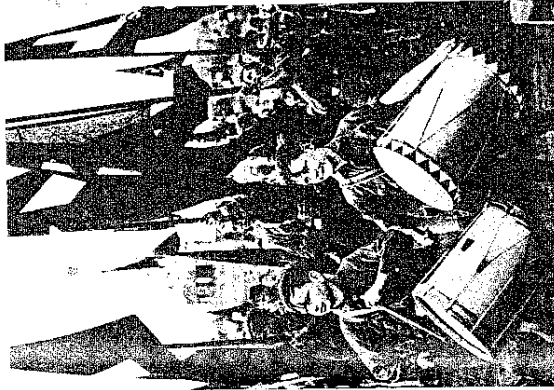
Jokes based on the initials BDM (League of German Maidens):
Büßi Druck Milch (Squeeze me ladies)
Bauch Deutsche Madel (Make use of German girls)
Bund Deutscher Milchbube (League of German milk cows)

What reason does each source give for joining the Hitler Youth?

- ▶ What are the similarities and differences between the sources?
- ▶ Why do you think views about the Hitler Youth differed?

What was it like in the Hitler Youth?

As you can see from the photographs below, the emphasis was on preparing each sex for its respective duties in the Third Reich. Boys were trained to be strong and ready for war. Girls, on the other hand, were prepared for their lives as mothers – hence the emphasis on physical fitness – and wives although, ironically, they were also given a taste of freedom and opportunity. However, the Hitler Youth became less popular towards the later 1930s as the activities became increasingly war-oriented and the discipline more strict. Those who had managed to avoid membership were brought in and there was a growing resentment at the way Hitler Youth leaders lorded it over members who were barely younger than they were. Some youths began to kick against the restrictions of both the Hitler Youth and the Nazi state in general. For example, laws were issued in 1940 forbidding under 18-year-olds to walk the streets or attend clubs, cinema and cabarets after 9pm. As a result, alternative youth groups, illegal after the law of 1936, attracted increasing numbers of young people.



Approved activities for boys and girls under the Nazis.

Do the photographs below help us to understand the attraction of the Hitler Youth?

- ▶ Do they also help us to understand why some children and their parents did not like it?

Alternative youth groups

Alternative youth groups were essentially a reaction against the restrictions of the Nazi state. Their intention was not to destroy the Third Reich. However, their attempts to resist the control of the Nazis was seen as a threat and, in the words of a Gestapo report, 'a danger to other young people.' Presumably, the Nazis were worried that the opposition would spread.

The most popular group, the Edelweiss Pirates, included a number of regional groups such as the Kittelbach Pirates from Oberhausen and the Navajos from Cologne. Members were between 14 and 18 years old, were drawn from working-class families and included both girls and boys. All the groups shared a common purpose and that was to make the most of their leisure time and not be forced into spending it in the manner dictated by the Nazis. Their independence was partly the result of leaving school at 14 and entering the world of work as apprentices or, in a time of labour shortage, well-paid unskilled workers. They had the self-confidence to reject the Hitler Youth, which after 1939 was compulsory up to the age of 18, and they were prepared to defend their actions where necessary.

Science 235

Every child knows who the KP [Kittelbach Pirates] are. They are everywhere; there are more of them than there are Hitler Youth. And they all know each other, they stick close together... They beat up the parols, because there are so many of them. They don't always agree with anything. They don't go to work either, they're always down by the canal, at the lock.

An Oberhausen mining instructor

The activities of these youths were curiously similar to the Hitler Youth in some respects. They looked forward to weekend hikes and would travel long distances to reach places like the Black Forest, Vienna and the Tyrol, despite restrictions on travel during the war. Once there, the Pirates would swap stories and sing songs, deliberately choosing those which would be frowned upon by the Nazis or rewording more traditional songs to register their protest. One member recalled:

Science 235

It all simply happened in the darkness, in the wasteland which was rather difficult for the authorities to supervise. If you wanted, you just joined a group and were accepted. Then we would do the following things: chatted, sang, smoked, had sex - the latter not very often.

The activities of the Pirates rarely became openly political, although a few joined resistance groups during the war. The Nazis found it difficult to suppress them because of the absence of a clear structure or leadership and they were reluctant to react too brutally against the precious youth of the Reich. This did not prevent them, however, from publicly hanging the so-called leaders of the Cologne Pirates in 1944.

A rather different youth group which, like the Edelweiss Pirates, rejected the lifestyle imposed on them by the Nazis, was the Swing Movement. This was a mainly upper-middle-class group which, rather than meeting on street corners and in parks, chose night clubs or parents' homes as their venues. Their passion was 'swing' music, especially American jazz denounced by the Nazis as 'Negro music', to which they would dance, dressed in their English-looking clothes. Although not obviously interested in politics, these youths aroused the anger of the Nazis by emulating the cultures and fashion of wartime enemies such as Britain and America, and by accepting Jews into their groups.

Source 27

The dance music was all English and American. Only swing dancing and jitterbugging took place. At the entrance to the hall stood a notice: on which the words 'Swing prohibited' had been altered to 'Swing requested'. Without exception the participants accompanied the dances and songs by singing the English lyrics. Indeed, throughout the evening they attempted to speak only English, and at some tables even French. The dancers made an appalling sight. None of the couples danced normally; there was only swing of the worst sort... When the band played a waltz, the dancers went into wild ecstasy... The band played wilder and wilder numbers; none of the players were sitting any longer, they all 'jitterbugged' on the stage like wild animals.

A Hitler Youth report about a swing festival in Hamburg in 1940

The Nazis came to see the members of the Swing Movement as enemies of the state and Himmler wanted to see the ringleaders put in concentration camps. Overall, the existence of these alternative groups suggested a limit to Nazi control. In the words of the historian, Paulkert, 'considerable sections of the younger generation held themselves aloof from National Socialism [which]... even after years in power, still did not have a complete grip on German society...'

Education

For the Nazis, the purpose of education was to make young people loyal and obedient members of the *Volkgemeinschaft*. There was no room for the development of individual ability. In fact, German children were discouraged from thinking too hard about anything. The basic structure of schooling remained largely unchanged and official guidelines and textbooks did not emerge until the later 1930s. However, the teaching profession was quickly brought into line, suffering its first purge in 1933 under the Law for the Restoration of a Professional Civil Service (see page 159). The National Socialist Teachers' League, created in 1929, represented 97 per cent of all teachers by 1937. Many teachers were supportive of the Nazis in 1933, partly because of their experiences during the economic depression. However, they gradually became more disillusioned as promises to improve their status were not kept and their position was undermined by both the Hitler Youth, which challenged the authority of schools, and the Nazi Party itself because of its constant interference.

Think about

- ▶ How can we tell that the writers of Source 27 disapproved of the festival?
- ▶ Does this source tell us more about the Swing Movement or the Nazi regime?

60 per cent of lecturers in colleges of education were dismissed, including Viktor Klemperer (see page 158) who lost his job at Dresden Technical University in 1935, on the grounds that he was Jewish.

The political task of the school is the education of youth in the service of the nation and state in the National Socialist spirit.

Minister of the Interior, Frick, in 1934

Education in the Third Reich

- 1. The timetable opposite will probably be familiar to you. But how might it have looked different in Nazi Germany? Here are some clues:
 - 2. More PE was introduced, especially for boys
 - 3. Foreign languages were not encouraged
 - 4. RE was not encouraged
 - 5. History and science were both encouraged
 - 6. Practical 'domestic' lessons, such as cooking, were encouraged for girls.
- 2. Draw up your own copy of the timetable as it might have looked in Nazi Germany.

A typical timetable in a secondary British school

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Monday	Maths	English	Art	Drama	PE	French
Tuesday	Geography	Science	Science	Maths	RE	English
Wednesday	History	English	French	Science	Italian	PSHE
Thursday	Science	PE	Music	Geography	Maths	Drama
Friday	Maths	IT	English	History	Art	Italian

Source 28

A Nazi History Syllabus

Weeks	Subject	Relations to the Jews	Reading material
1-4	Pre-war Germany, the Class-war, Profits, Strikes.	The Jew at target	Hauptmann's The Weavers.
5-8	From Agrarian to Industrial State, Colonies, the peasant in the claws of the Jews!	The peasant in the claws of the Jews!	Descriptions of the colonies from Hermann Löns.
9-12	Conspiracy against Germany, enclavement, baroque around Germany.	The Jew reigned! War plots.	Beumelburg: Barrage... Life of Hindenburg, Wartime Letters.
13-16	German struggle - German want, Blockade! Starvation!	The Jew becomes Prosperous! Profit from German want.	Marke: Espionage War Reports.
17-20	The Stab in the Back. Collapse	Jews as Leaders of the November insurrection.	Pfero das Granges: On Secret Service in Enemy Country. Enrico Brünn: That was the End.
21-24	Germany's Golgotha. Erzberger's Crimes! Versailles.	Jews enter Germany from the East. Judah's triumph.	Volkmann: Revolution over Germany. Feder: The Jews. The Stürmer newspaper.
25-28	Adolf Hitler. National Socialism.	Judah's Foe!	Mein Kampf. Dietrich Eckart.
29-32	The bleeding frontiers. Enslavement of Germany. The Volunteer Corps. Schlegler.	The Jew profits by Germany's misfortunes. Loans (Clawes, Young).	Beumelburg: Germany in Chains. Wehner: Pilgrimage to Paris. Schlegeler: a German Hero.
33-36	National Socialism at grips with crime and the underworld.	Jewish instigators of murder. The Jewish press.	Horst Wessel.
37-40	Germany's Youth at the Helm! The Victory of Faith.	The last fight against Judah.	Herbert Norikus. The Reich Party Congress.

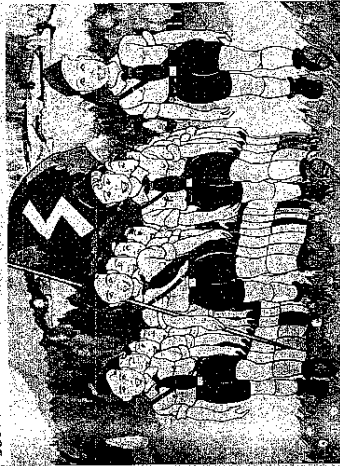
- 3. Think back to Source 28. Look carefully at the subject column in Source 28. What areas of German history are stressed? What view of German history would a student get from this syllabus?
- 4. Study the *Relations to the Jews* column. What are the Jews accused of doing? What do you notice about the suggested reading material?

Source 29

New textbooks were brought in in 1933. The existing school libraries were stripped of 'degenerate' literature and stocked with books glorifying nationalism and militarism. Teachers were given lectures laying down the general lines under which history and other sensitive subjects were to be taught. New courses were introduced in 'Racial Theory'. Teachers were careful to get the general line down exactly, since the word was quickly spread that the Hitler Youth would report to the NSDAP on what teachers were doing. In addition to the new subjects and the new approach to old subjects, the schools were required to emphasise sport and physical education, especially shooting and 'defence sport'. In science classes, for example, pupils were put to building model gliders. Nazi propaganda films were used extensively and radios were installed in the classrooms so that propaganda speeches could be heard.

The experience of one German town, from Allan, *The Nazi Seizure of Power*, 1966

Source 30



Source 31



Source 32

The construction of a lunatic asylum costs 6 million RM. How many houses at 15,000 RM each could have been built for that amount? To keep a mentally ill person costs approx. 4 RM per day, a cripple 5.50 RM, a criminal 3.50 RM. Many civil servants receive only 4 RM per day, white-collar employees barely 3.50 RM, unskilled workers not even 2 RM per head for their families. (a) Illustrate these figures with a diagram. According to conservative estimates, there are 300,000 mentally ill, epileptics etc. in care. (b) How much do these people cost to keep in total, at a cost of 4 RM per head? (c) How many marriage loans at 1,000 RM each... could be granted from this money?

Maths problems in Nazi textbooks

Activity

1. Study all the sources carefully and make a note of what each one tells you about Nazi education in the form of a chart. Think about what the Nazis were trying to achieve through education and what methods they used.
2. It is 1938. Your task is to write two very different letters about Nazi education. One is to the father from the mother of a 14-year-old boy. She is writing to congratulate Hitler on excellent improvements made to her son's education. The other letter is from a teacher who has just been dismissed from his job. The letter is a secret one, written to the British government and smuggled out of the country by the underground SPD movement. In it you explain why Hitler must be stopped immediately because of his education policy which could lead to a new generation of unquestioning Nazis.

Document exercise: The experiences of youth in Nazi Germany

Moments of Nazi education

No one in our class ever read *Mein Kampf*. I myself had only used the book for quotations. In general we didn't know much about National Socialist ideology. Even anti-Semitism was taught rather marginally at school, for instance through Richard Wagner's essay *The Jews in Music* ... Nevertheless, we were politically programmed: programmed to obey orders, to cultivate the soldierly 'virtue' of standing to attention and saying 'Yes, Sir', and to switch our minds off when the magic word 'Fatherland' was uttered and Germany's honour and greatness were invoked.

Paukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 1987

Opposition to the Hitler Youth

A Young people have reason for special disappointment. They were made particularly large promises which for the most part were incapable of fulfilment. The great mass of young people today can see that the well-paying posts in public administration and the Party have been filled by comrades who had the good fortune of being a few years older...In the long run young people too are feeling increasingly irritated by the lack of freedom and the mindless drilling that is customary in the National Socialist organisations.

B From a SOPADE (SPD in exile) report, 1938
The formation of cliques, i.e. groupings of young people outside the Hitler Youth, was on the increase a few years before the war, and has particularly increased during the war, to such a degree that a serious risk of the political, moral and criminal breakdown of youth must be said to exist.

Report from the Reich youth leadership, 1942

The attractions of the Hitler Youth

Youth is still in favour of the system: the novelty, the drill, the uniform, the camp life, the fact that school and the parental home take a back seat compared to the community of young people – all that is marvellous. A great time without any danger. Many believe that they will find job opportunities through the persecution of Jews and Marxists. The more enthusiastic they get, the easier are the exams and the sooner they will get a position, a job...The parents experience all this too. One cannot forbid the child to do what all children are doing, cannot refuse him the uniform which the others have. One cannot ban it, that would be too dangerous.

SOPADE (SPD in exile) report, 1934

Membership statistics for the Hitler Youth

	Total	Total population of 10-18 year-olds
End 1932	107,956	
End 1933	2,292,041	7,529,000
End 1934	3,677,565	7,682,000
End 1935	3,945,303	8,172,000
End 1936	5,437,801	8,656,000
End 1937	6,679,955	9,080,000
End 1938	7,031,226	9,109,000
Reg. 1933	7,287,470	8,870,000

Evaluation-style questions

1 Comprehension in context

Study Source A. Using the source and your own knowledge, describe the author's view on his education and explain how far his experience was typical.

2 Comparing the sources

Study Sources B and C. How and why do they differ in their view of the popularity of the Hitler Youth?

3 Evaluating the sources

How useful is Source D to a historian studying the Hitler Youth. *If used by itself?*

4 Making judgements

Using all the sources and your own knowledge, explain how successful the Nazis were at winning the support of the youth of Germany.

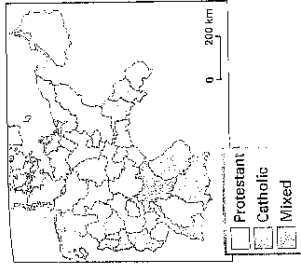
Christianity and the Nazis

Germany had a strong Christian tradition, represented largely by Catholicism in the south, west, and east, and Protestantism in the north and centre (see map). There was an obvious gap between Christian beliefs and Nazi ideology which was of course based on war, violence and a lack of compassion to other human beings. One might therefore have expected a united front by the Churches against the regime and open condemnation of its policies. In fact, what open opposition there was often came from individuals within the Churches rather than from the Churches as a whole. But why was this the case? Broadly speaking, the Churches favoured authoritarian rule and also showed some sympathy for anti-Semitism. In addition, the Protestant Church had for a long time identified itself with German nationalism, whilst the Catholic Church regarded Bolshevism, not Nazism, as its main enemy. When the Nazis came to power, the Churches hoped to gain from the apparent support offered by the new regime. In their turn, the Nazis were concerned not to alienate a considerable number of Christians in Germany by an outright attack on the Churches.

The Catholic Church

It was in the Catholic Church's interest to reach an agreement with the Nazis. The Concordat between the Nazis and the Pope, signed in June 1933, guaranteed independence for the Catholic Church in its own affairs in return for a promise that its clergy would not interfere in political matters. This involved the Catholic bishops taking an oath of loyalty to the Nazi state. For the Catholics, this agreement seemed to grant them protection from Nazi interference and a guarantee of their survival. For the Nazis, the advantages of keeping the Catholics happy had already been amply demonstrated when the Centre Party helped to provide the necessary two-thirds majority needed to pass the Enabling Act.

However, as so many were soon to discover, Hitler's promises were not worth the paper they were written on. By the end of 1933, Catholic priests were being harassed and members of Catholic youth groups were intimidated into joining the Hitler Youth. In 1936, the Catholic youth groups were finally forced to merge with the Hitler Youth and the closure of monasteries and convents began. The Pope responded in 1937 with an encyclical *With Burning Concern* which denounced the Nazi state, but this did little to stem the attacks on the Church which in fact increased during the war. In 1941, the Catholic Press was



The main distribution of Protestants and Catholics in Germany.

Extracts from the Concordat:

The German Reich guarantees freedom of belief and of public worship to the Catholic faith... [All bishops] to take an oath... I swear and promise... loyalty to the German Reich and to the...state.'

closed down, Church property was destroyed and the activities of the Church restricted. In 1945, the Catholic Church emerged severely weakened but still in existence with the traditional loyalties of the German people largely intact. This was partly due to its agreement with the Nazis in 1933, for which it has been subsequently criticized. Certainly, with the exception of the Pope's encyclical from the pulpit, there was no concerted programme of opposition against the Nazis Catholic Church.

The Protestant Church

The Nazis adopted a slightly different tactic with the Protestant Church. They tried to infiltrate it and control it from within. There was a nationalist movement within the Protestant Church before 1933 called the 'German Christians', and in 1933 it scored a triumph by winning three-quarters of the votes in the Church elections. A new, more nationalist, Church constitution was drawn up and Ludwig Müller, an ardent Nazi supporter, was made Reich Bishop. Müller was known for wearing 'the cross on his breast and the swastika in his heart'. Thus, it seemed as though the Nazis could count on the Protestant 'Reich' Church to support them. Not all Protestants agreed with the new direction their Church was taking, however. An alternative Church was set up in 1934 for opponents, known as the 'Confessing Church', led by Pastor Martin Niemöller. It attracted a majority of the total Protestant clergy (around 7,000) although many of the members, including Niemöller, were eventually arrested. However, the fact that it attracted so much support led to a dilution of Nazi policy. More orthodox bishops who opposed the policies of the 'German Christians' were allowed back in and they tried to steer a path between the Nazis and the Protestant Church. As in the case of the Catholic Church, the Protestant Church survived the Third Reich, but it was left weakened and deeply divided.

Conclusion

The Nazis never quite had the courage to destroy the established Churches of Germany and risk the level of opposition this might have aroused. Indeed, attendance at church services increased during the war years and, although the Churches were weakened by the Nazi attack, they were to recover their power and influence in the post-war period. In this respect, the relationship between the Churches and the Nazi state reveals the limits of Hitler's powers and provides evidence that the concept of 'totalitarianism' is perhaps a misleading one to apply to the Third Reich. The Nazis certainly, however, tried to undermine the influence and independence of the Churches, with mixed results. They were fortunate not to face more united resistance from both Churches, who opted for self-preservation and a defence of their religious freedoms as opposed to a strong defence of what we might term *Christian values*.

The creation of a Master Race

We have already seen in the introduction to this chapter how the Nazi idea of *Volksgeist* was exclusive rather than inclusive. The community was not open to all Germans. Indeed, the very concept of what 'being German' meant was redefined by the Nazis. In 1935, for example, Jews were denied German citizenship. Hence, the concept of a 'people's community' was closely connected with the concept of a 'master race' based on racial and genetic purity, to which a sizeable number did not belong.

Further reading

Part of this section are based on Jeremy Noakes' chapter in the excellent book *Life in the Third Reich* edited by Richard Tessel 1987. Also useful is *The Racial State, Germany 1933-1945* edited by Duteigh and Wippenmann 1991.

See page 202 for more information about Cardinal Galen's sermon.

Biography

Martin Niemöller
Niemöller was born in 1892 and served as a U-boat commander in the First World War. He was ordained in 1924 and became pastor of a church in Berlin in 1931. He initially supported the Nazis and joined the Party but became disillusioned, especially when they began to interfere with the Church. His sermons attacking the Nazis' religious policies and his leadership of the Confessing Church led to his imprisonment in a series of concentration camps after 1938. He was released by Allied troops in 1945.

Those religious groups unwilling to compromise with the regime fared less well. Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, were sent to concentration camps.

Think about

- ▶ How justified is the criticism that the Churches helped Hitler to hold on to power?
- ▶ What else could they have done?
- ▶ Do you think it would have made any difference?

Source 33

A Nazi cartoon from 1938 entitled 'Past Breeders'. It illustrates the menace of fast-breeding 'subhumans', such as criminals and the educationally backward, compared with the ideal German family.

Think about

- ▶ What message do you think this cartoon from 1938 is trying to put across about 'subhumans'?
- ▶ Is there a contradiction here between different Nazi aims?

THE OUTSIDERS:

Those who did not belong to the Nazi's *Volksgeist*

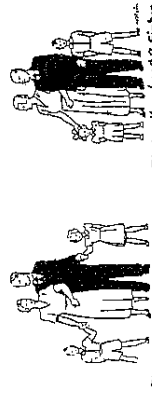
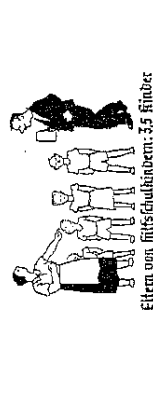
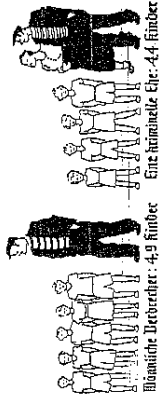
- 1 Political enemies e.g. communists, socialists
- 2 'Asocials' – people who didn't quite fit the 'norm' of society, e.g. gypsies, tramps, homosexuals, alcoholics
- 3 Biological enemies
 - ⊙ people of a different race (according to the Nazis), e.g. Jews,
 - ⊙ blacks, gypsies
 - ⊙ people with hereditary defects (according to the Nazis), such as disabilities, diseases and 'feeble-mindedness'

Dealing with the 'asocials'

Nazi policy towards 'asocials' changed during the course of the 1930s. In 1936 they set up an 'asocial colony', Haschade, for those whose crime it was to be not quite 'normal'. They included those who drank too much, neglected their children or refused to work. The aim of Haschade was to 're-educate' such people so that they could eventually be reintegrated into society. However, as war approached and policy became more brutal, many of the 'asocials' were sent to concentration camps and died there.

Die Drogen des Instrumentisten.

Ein reifes Gut.



Part of the reason for this inconsistent policy was the debate about whether people were born social or whether they became social through their experiences. Those advancing the first of these views became more influential during the 1930s. In 1938 there was a round up of those labelled 'work-shy'. An estimated 10,000 tramps were sent to concentration camps and many died there. The gypsies, who suffered the double burden of being labelled 'work-shy', were sent to camps and many died there. The gypsies, who suffered the double burden of being labelled both 'asocial' and foreign, suffered greatly. Out of a total of 30,000 gypsies living in Germany in 1939, 25,000 died during the war, many of them at Auschwitz. In Europe as a whole, it is estimated that half a million gypsies were murdered.

Blühende Brüder: 4.9 Kinder

Ein reifes Gut

Fünf vom fünfshubbert: 3.5 Kinder

Blühende Brüder: 4.9 Kinder

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Dealing with 'hereditary' defects

The first method of eliminating hereditary defects practised by the Nazis was the sterilization of those men and women believed to be carrying some sort of defect in their genes. This was hardly a novel idea by 1933. Eugenics had become increasingly influential during the 1920s, both in Germany and elsewhere, including America. Indeed, in 1932, a draft sterilization law was put forward by the Prussian Health Council, proposing voluntary sterilization in certain cases of hereditary illness. Where the Sterilization Law, introduced by the Nazis in July 1933, differed was in its scale, the fact that it was compulsory and in its rather dubious definition of 'hereditary' (see page 187). The public reaction was not particularly hostile and, of course, Nazi propaganda played a role in this:

Source 34

It is one of the first duties of the community, to see to it, that the increase of those, inferior by heredity, is stopped...the law...gives the right to the national community, to exclude those men and women from propagation with whom it can be expected with certainty through knowledge of the heredity laws, that their offspring will to a great extent be physically, mentally and spiritually inferior. Only comparatively simple medical intervention is necessary for that, which will not affect the well being and ability to live of the person at all.

Extract from Dr Stech, *Textbook on Racial Science, Genetics and Racial Policy* 1937

The policy of sterilization led on to another, more sinister, policy – that of euthanasia. Although this was the term adopted by the Nazis, it was in fact misleading as people had no choice about their 'mercy killing'. In 1939, 5,200 mentally and physically handicapped children were 'murdered' and, in September, the programme was extended to adults. By 1941, the victims numbered 72,000. The Nazis intended to keep the programme secret, and relatives were issued with death certificates from institutions which falsified the cause of death. But the reality soon became public. This was partly the fault of the regime itself: mistakes were made such as claiming that appendicitis had killed people who had already had their appendix removed. Individual lawyers and clergy also protested, most famously Cardinal Count von Galen, Bishop of Munster, whose sermon, printed and circulated to thousands of Germans, publicly condemned the programme.

As a result, the Nazis officially halted the programme (their target figure had in any case been met) although it continued unofficially with the inmates of concentration camps. They also launched a propaganda campaign to overcome public hostility, including the film *Ich Klage An*. In the film, a young doctor and his wife are very happily married. At a party one evening, as she is giving a recital on the piano, her left hand suddenly fails her. Multiple Sclerosis is diagnosed and for weeks, the doctor tries to find a cure, to no avail. He has to watch his beloved wife slowly dying and suffering the greatest pain, knowing he can do nothing to help her. At last he makes a decision and prepares a sleeping draught which gives her release. He has done it at her own request and denounces him to the police and the doctor is brought to trial. During the trial, the friend pays a visit to a hospital where he sees a ward of small children, all incurably ill and suffering the greatest pain. After much deliberation, he begins to understand his friend and offers himself as main witness for the defence.

Eugenics

This is the attempt to control who has children in order to eliminate 'undesirables' from the population. Both men and women were sterilized in order to allow the rest to create a 'perfect' race.

Think about

How does Dr Stech try to persuade people that sterilization is acceptable and desirable in Source 34?

...none of our lives will be safe anymore. Some commission can put us on the list of the 'unproductive' who in their opinion have become worthless life.

Cardinal von Galen, 1941

For the full text of Galen's speech, visit www.historyplace.com/speeches/galen.htm

As many as 18 million Germans saw the film and the reaction was generally positive, although accompanied by demands for legal safeguards.

Source 35

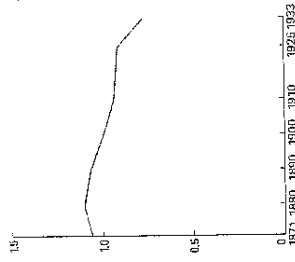


A still from the 1941 film *Ich Klage An*.

Think about

How did the film distort the reality of the Nazis' use of eugenics?

Jews as a percentage of the German population 1871-1933



Whites representing less than 1 per cent of the German population, German Jews in 1933 formed 17 per cent of all bankers, 10 per cent of all doctors and dentists and 16 per cent of all lawyers.

Dealing with the Jews

Anti-Semitism was not invented by the Nazis. The Jews had suffered prejudice for over a thousand years, especially from the Middle Ages when they were blamed for anything from food shortages to the plague. The Jews were scattered across Europe and were therefore always a minority group. This made them vulnerable to attack, made worse by certain cultural and religious differences and by the fact that their wealth was often resented. In 1290 they were expelled from England. Historians have commonly argued that anti-Semitism increased in Germany during the nineteenth century, as in many parts of Europe. In Germany, though, a new racial anti-Semitism emerged, based on ideas of national and racial superiority. In other words, Jews were no longer simply scapegoats, blamed for Germany's troubles. They were, instead, opposed on the grounds that they were a *different race*, and an inferior one at that.

One of the accusations made against Jews, especially during times of economic hardship, was that they monopolized the cultural and economic life of Germany. This was hardly a fair accusation, although it was true that their representation in certain professions was not in proportion to their overall numbers. Nevertheless, many Jews were also poor and the vast majority were fully integrated into German culture. Only the 'Eastern Jews' (around 20 per cent) who emigrated to Germany after the First World War continued to wear traditional dress and live in certain quarters of the cities. However, the Jew continued to provide a useful scapegoat – someone to blame for the defeat in the war, the failure of the economy and the threat of Bolshevism. The stereotype of Jews as depicted in Nazi propaganda bore no resemblance to the reality.

The Nazis took anti-Semitism way beyond anything that had gone on before. Hitler not only portrayed the Jew as the opposite of the Aryan German, but he also characterized an attack on the Jews as part of a wider cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil. He was utterly obsessive in his hatred of the Jews and there is no doubt that it coloured all his political aims. But it was not obvious in 1933 exactly what form this attack would take. Certainly he made it clear even before 1933 that the Jews would have no place in his Reich, but no one could have foreseen how far he would pursue it.

Anti-Semitic policy

It was the rank and file of the Nazi Party, rather than Hitler, who demanded immediate action against the Jews. Local outbursts, led mainly by the SA, had to be contained during the first delicate months of power in 1933 and the one-day boycott of Jewish shops and professions was intended to serve this very function. The Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service of 1933 excluded many Jews from public service, but until 1935 there were no further large-scale acts of hostility. In 1935, however, Hitler yielded to pressure from within the Party and approved the Nuremberg Laws.

EXTRACTS FROM THE NUREMBERG LAWS

The Reich Citizenship Law, September 1935

- A Citizen of the Reich is only that subject, who is of German or kindred blood and who, through his conduct, shows that he is both desirous and fit to serve faithfully the German people and Reich.

First Regulation to the Reich Citizenship Law, November 1935

- A Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich. He has no right to vote in political affairs, he cannot occupy a public office.

Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour, September 1935

- Marriages between Jews and nationals of German or kindred blood are forbidden.
- Relations outside marriage between Jews and nationals of German or kindred blood are forbidden.
- Jews will not be permitted to employ female nationals of German or kindred blood in their household.
- Jews are forbidden to hoist the Reich and national flag and to present the colours of the Reich.

As you can see, the Nuremberg Laws placed restrictions on who Jews could marry or have sexual relations with. They also made citizenship of Germany conditional on producing a certificate confirming Aryan descent, thereby removing citizenship from all Jews. Although these laws came as a blow to the Jews of Germany, they at least seemed to suggest that the Jews would be allowed to remain in Germany, albeit on unequal terms. One Jewish woman recollected that her parents had welcomed the laws because they saw them as a guarantee...which would make it possible for them to remain in their homeland. It is true that many Jews emigrated and were encouraged to do so by the Nazis; between 1933 and 1939, half of Germany's Jews emigrated, many to Palestine. But not all Jews wanted to leave their home, their family and their country, no matter what it was doing to them. Many clung to the belief that Hitler's days were numbered.

During 1936, outward manifestations of the anti-Semitic campaign were removed for the duration of the Berlin Olympics, but persecution continued, particularly at a local level, where Jews were often refused access to theatres or public swimming pools. The Nazis also tried to encourage an ongoing boycott of Jewish businesses and professionals, although success was mixed. One Gestapo report in 1935 claimed that 'The boycott measures have not had the intended effect. Segments of the population which condemn such measures on principle tend to pity the Jews...'. From 1937, there were signs that the anti-Semitic campaign was escalating. Jewish businesses found their contracts

- 1933 - one-day boycott of Jewish shops and businesses
- 1933 - Nuremberg Laws
- 1933 - Berlin Olympics
- 1933 - Crystal Night (9-10 November) followed by the closure of all Jewish businesses and the removal of Jewish children from schools.
- 1939 - war begins

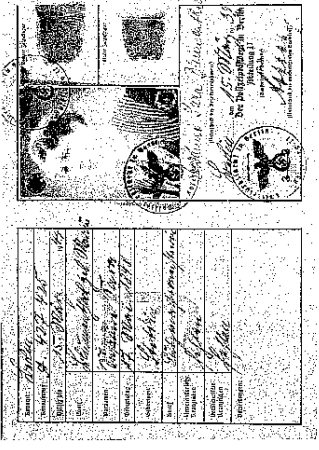
Think about

- ▶ Take each clause of the Laws (denoted by bullet points) in turn and discuss the reasoning behind it.
- ▶ What did the Nazis hope to gain from these Laws?

Where do I belong? To the 'Jewish nation' decrees Hitler. And I feel...I am nothing but a German...
Viktor Klemperer, October 1935

Yesterday, a characteristic scene...A young man, pale, rigid, mad in appearance, shouts without stopping at someone else whom I could not see: 'Whoever buys from the Jew, is a traitor to the nation!... Everyone is disturbed, embarrassed, no one interferes.'
Viktor Klemperer, September 1935

dying up, Jews were no longer allowed to be awarded degrees and in 1938, Jewish doctors, dentists and lawyers were forbidden to work for Aryans. All Jews had to carry an identification card and if their name did not obviously denote their Jewishness, they had to add 'Sara' or 'Israel' to it. By 1938, the Jews of Germany had effectively been squeezed out of public life. But worse was to come.

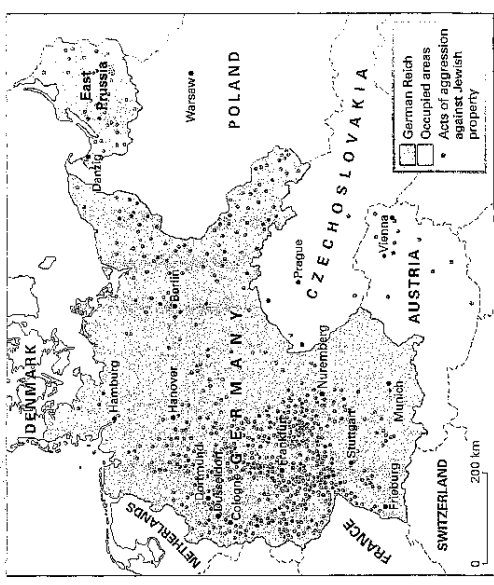


A 1939 identity card for a Jewish woman, Susanne 'Sara' Blumenthal.

Reich Kristallnacht (Crystal Night)

On 7 November 1938, a German diplomat was assassinated in Paris by a Jew, Herschel Grunspan. Goebbels seized the opportunity of 'working towards the Führer' by encouraging a group of Party members and SS leaders to lead a campaign of violence against the Jewish community. Hitler gave his consent and a night of terror followed.

Source 37



The location of the main anti-Jewish attacks during Crystal Night.

Ninety-one Jews were murdered that night, 20,000 were sent to concentration camps, over 7,000 Jewish businesses were ruined and 177 synagogues were destroyed. This night of violence took its name from the amount of shattered glass which littered the streets. Further discrimination followed, including the removal of Jewish children from schools, the banning of all Jewish publications and the closure of all Jewish businesses, Jewish cultural and economic life was being extinguished in Germany and the occupied areas. But it was the outbreak of war in 1939 that prompted the beginning of genocide.

Document exercise: German reactions to Crystal Night

THE REACTION OF THE PARTY LEADERS

On the evening of 9 November 1938, Reich Propaganda Director and Party Member Dr Goebbels told the Party leaders assembled at a social evening in the old town hall in Munich that in the districts of Kuehnsen and Magdeburg-Anhalt there had been anti-Jewish demonstrations, during which Jewish shops were demolished and synagogues were set on fire. The Fuhrer, at Goebbels' suggestion, had decided that such demonstrations were not to be prepared or organised by the Party, but neither were they to be discouraged if they happened spontaneously... The instructions of Goebbels were probably understood by all Party leaders present to mean that the Party should not appear outwardly as the cause of the demonstrations but that in reality it should organise them and carry them out.

THE REACTION OF THE YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Next morning - I had slept well and heard no disturbance - I went into Berlin very early to go to the Reich Youth Leadership office... in order to get to the Lohningerstrasse I had to go down a rather gloomy alley containing many small shops and inns. To my surprise almost all the shop windows were smashed in. The pavement was covered with pieces of glass and fragments of broken furniture. I asked a policeman what on earth had been going on there. He replied: 'In this street they're almost all Jews.' 'Well?' 'You don't read the papers. Last night the National Soul boiled over... I went on my way shaking my head. For the space of a second I was clearly aware that something terrible had happened there. Something frighteningly brutal. But almost at once I switched over to accepting what had happened as over and done with... I said to myself: 'The Jews are the enemies of the New Germany. Last night they had a taste of what that means.'

Wolfgang Wechsung

Wolfgang Wechsung, Account Rendered

REPORT BY THE REICH PROPAGANDA OFFICE ON 10 NOVEMBER 1938

All reports confirm that the steps taken against Jews have been heavily criticised by the majority of Germans. During the first few days of the pogrom there were arrests of hundreds of Aryans throughout the Reich because they had publicly expressed their indignation. One can often hear people asking: 'Who will be next after the Jews?' One thing is clear however, no matter how great the indignation may have been - the brutality of the pogrom has added to the intimidation of the public in general, and has strengthened the feeling that any resistance to the unrestricted National Socialists is useless.

Propaganda

An organized campaign of destruction and murder.

COMPARING

Two contrasting reactions to Crystal Night

I was coming home late that evening when I saw several things beating a man until he collapsed. They dragged him onto the streetcar tracks and left him there. A policeman who happened to come by helped me carry him to the Elizabeth Hospital. He was an old man with white hair - a lawyer I think. On the way back I saw a woman with two small children, with coats over their nightclothes. They were in a state of terror. 'Why are they beating us?' the woman screamed. 'We haven't done anything!' I offered to take them home with me, but she wanted to return to her apartment to look for her husband.

When I described these incidents, my cousin Klaus-Gunter said, 'What are you making such a fuss about? These things are trivial. You have to perceive the larger historical context and accept the idea of political necessity! We annexed Austria and the Sudetenland, we picked up almost half a million more Jews - and they're nothing but parasites! One decisive stroke is preferable to a hundred-year struggle...'

Extract from an interview carried out in 1981

CRITICISM

Decree issued by Goebbels on 17 November

All damage which was inflicted on Jewish businesses and dwellings on 9 and 10 November 1938 as a result of the national indignation about the rabble-rousing propaganda of international Jewry against National Socialist Germany must at once be repaired by the Jewish proprietors or Jewish traders.

Examining the sources

1 Comprehension in context

Study Source A. Using the source and your own knowledge, explain the following extract.

'The Fuhrer, at Goebbels' suggestion had decided that such demonstrations were not to be prepared or organised by the Party, but neither were they to be discouraged if they happened spontaneously.'

2 Comparing the sources

Study Sources B and C. To what extent do they offer us different accounts of the reactions to Crystal Night? Can you suggest any reasons why they do/ do not differ?

3 Evaluating the sources

Source D provides us with two completely opposite reactions to Crystal Night. What is its value to historians studying the reaction of the German people to Crystal Night?

4 Making judgements

Using all the sources and your own knowledge, explain how accurate Goebbels was in describing the events of Crystal Night as a result of 'national indignation' (Source E).

Art in the Third Reich

Background

Despite his failure to train as an artist in Vienna, Hitler considered himself an expert on art and architecture and attempted to impose his views on the German people. He loathed modern art and instead favoured traditional, realistic art, which contrasted sharply with the creative experiments of the Weimar Republic. Hitler also saw art as a form of propaganda and with Goebbels' help, set out to promote art which contained acceptable images of the Nazi state. These included expressions of anti-Semitism, racialism, promotion of war, the cult of Hitler, motherhood, the supremacy of the Aryan race, 'Blood and Soil', the power and legitimacy of the Nazi Party, the glorification of the Greek and Roman Empires and a rejection of Christian values. Artists who did not reproduce such images in their paintings were banned and several emigrated as a consequence. Their art was labelled 'degenerate' (immoral). One historian has recently argued, however, that despite the number of artists banned from working, including all Jews, there were many German artists who accepted their loss of independence because they benefited in other ways, for example with guaranteed prices fixed for their work.

Source 38

The artist does not create for the artist. He creates for the people, and we will see to it that the people in future will be called in to judge his art... Before the critics did justice to the genius of a Richard Wagner, he had the people on his side, whereas the people has had nothing to do with so-called 'modern art'... these achievements... might have been produced by untalented children of eight to ten years old (and) could never be considered an expression of our own times or of the German future.

Extract from Hitler's speech in 1937 at the opening of the House of German Art

Source 40

NEW YORK. An accord reached between the North Carolina Museum of Art and the family of an Austrian Jew whose possessions were looted during the Nazi era enables the museum to retain "Madonna and Child in a Landscape" by Lucas Cranach the Elder, which the museum had returned to the family earlier this year. The agreement between the museum and the Hainisch family in Vienna means that the painting now returns to Raleigh as a partial purchase by the museum and, according to the museum, a partial gift of the family. The museum will pay the family \$669,000 for the work that has been estimated at \$800,000 to \$1.2 million.

[The picture] will now be part of a travelling exhibition on Nazi art pillaging.

The Art Newspaper, 9 June 2000

Source 39

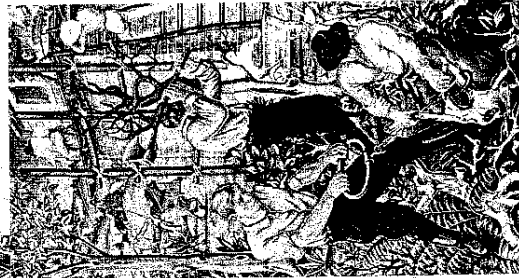
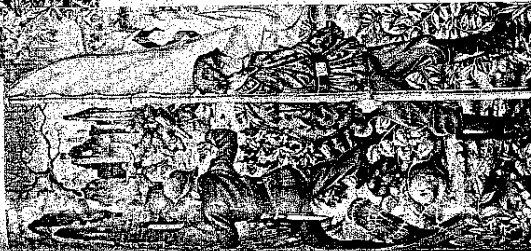
In early 1936 Hitler appointed a purge tribunal of four Nazi artists... to tour all the major galleries and museums of Germany for the purpose of removing all 'degenerate' art... On March 31, 1936, these sequestered (confiscated) art works were exhibited in a special display of degenerate art in Munich. Huge crowds came to see the works rejected by Hitler. A concurrent exhibition nearby, the Greater Germany Art Exhibition, at which some 900 works approved by Hitler were shown, drew considerably less enthusiastic crowds.

Snyder, *Encyclopedia of the Third Reich*, 1988

Think about

- What is Hitler arguing in Source 38?
- Look back at pages 108–109. Do you think Hitler's opinions would have found any support in Germany?
- What does Source 39 tell us about the artists' views of the German people?
- Read Source 40. What is meant by Nazi loot?
- Why is this family selling their painting back to the museum at half price?

Source 41



Activity

- Source 41 was painted in 1942 and demonstrates the kind of art approved by the Nazis.
- Read the introduction again. How many of the images that the Nazis wanted art to contain are in Source 41?
- How and why is this painting so different from the painting by Otto Dix on page 92?
- Of what use is this picture to the historian of the Third Reich?

The 'atomization' of society

Society certainly changed between 1933 and 1945. The experiences of women, children, workers, Christians, Jews, 'socials' and many others were profoundly influenced by the Nazi regime. But what was the *collective* experience? How was society as a whole altered as a result of Nazi policies? The term *Volkgemeinschaft*, which should now be familiar to you, symbolized Hitler's aim to create a society based around common, nationalist goals. Society would no longer, in Hitler's vision, be composed of individuals or groups of individuals, each pursuing their own particular interests. Instead, people belonged to a much bigger group – the National or People's Community. This was a vision that was not without support; it appealed to those who wished to see the old order based on class differences replaced with a society that was based simply around 'German' values and in which opportunities were equal. This certainly helps to explain the attraction of Nazism to young people.

In reality, the vision of a 'community' working together for a common aim was restricted to Nazi propaganda. People in fact lived in much greater isolation than before. This was partly through fear and partly because the opportunities to take part in collective activities which were not organized and controlled by the Nazis were stopped. In Northem, described in William Sheridan Allen's book *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town 1930-1935*, organizations were either taken over by the Nazis or banned. The chess club survived by adding the words 'National Socialist' to its name but clubs which existed for mainly social reasons were either closed down or taken over. In the words of Allen: 'This was partly because of the Nazi desire to keep people from coming together merely for social reasons where discussion prevailed... as one resident put it, 'There was no more social life; you couldn't even have a bowling club.' The result was a more isolated way of life based on the individual rather than on social groups which shared common interests. This was hardly the *Volkgemeinschaft* that Hitler had spoken about.

There were, of course, Nazi organizations to control leisure time, such as the KdF (Strength Through Joy), the purpose of which, according to a SOPADE report in 1935, was to make sure that they [the German people] are not left to their own devices and, as far as possible, to see that they do not come to their senses at all... the National Socialists are forever providing excesses of excitement with the express aim of preventing any real communal interests or any form of voluntary association from arising.' In other words, these organizations were to *prevent* the forming of more meaningful groups and did not prevent a more isolated day-to-day existence during the Third Reich. The KdF, for example, although welcomed by many workers as a diversion from everyday life, was not a substitute for the comradeship of the trade unions and other working-class groups which had existed before 1933.

How discontented were the German people, in that case? Although this is explored more fully in chapter 13, it is worth making one important point here. Although in many ways, this 'atomization' or disintegration of society had a negative impact on people's lives, there was still a strong feeling that at least they had jobs and therefore money in their pockets. According to a post war

survey in West Germany, memories of the positive aspects of the Third Reich included:

Source 42

The guaranteed pay packet, order, KdF and the smooth running of the political machinery... This 'National Socialism' makes them think merely of work, adequate nourishment, KdF and the absence of 'disarray' in political life.

Bessel (ed.), *Life in the Third Reich*, 1987

Of course, experiences differed widely, and this short extract is not intended to create the impression that *everyone* was happy living in the Nazi state. But it is a reminder that the experiences of the late Weimar years perhaps made some people more prepared to accept a life that we would now find intolerable. Here is one historian's conclusion about the impact of the Nazis on society:

Source 43

...the Nazis, with their terror apparatus, did succeed in breaking up the complex jigsaw of society into its smallest component parts, and changing much of its traditional coherence almost beyond recognition. By the end of the Third Reich, and of the world war the Reich had staged, the vision of a 'national community' had dissolved. Instead, there lay a society in ruins – ruined not only in a material sense but psychologically, morally and in respect of its social bonds. If the Third Reich could boast any achievement, it was the destruction of public contexts (community) and responsibilities and the dislocation of social forms of life, even in traditional environments which provided some measure of refuge and scope for resistance. Private spheres of behaviour were impoverished and isolated, relapsing into self-serving individualism devoid of all potentially dangerous social connections and meanings. The *Volkgemeinschaft* that had been so noisily trumpeted and so harshly enforced became, in the end, an atomised society.

Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 1987

A Social Revolution?

A debate began in the 1960s about whether or not the Nazis revolutionized society. Historians such as Ralf Dahrendorf and David Schoenbaum argued that the Nazis modernized society, albeit unintentionally, by breaking down traditional loyalties and creating a classless society in which there was increased social mobility. More recently, however, historians have focused increasingly on the continuities between society before, during, and after the Third Reich. They have concluded that although society certainly underwent some change, this can hardly be described as 'revolutionary'. Even people's attitudes, it is now argued, did not change as much as it might at first have appeared. People were still concerned first and foremost with the comfort and security of their daily lives and much of the Nazi ideology put about in Goebbels' propaganda passed them by.

It is up to you to decide whether you think society underwent a 'revolution' or not and the following activity will help you to reach a conclusion. It may help you to skim through the section on Weimar society in Chapter 5. This will help

Activity

ACTIVITIES

Your task is to research and present detailed information on an aspect of life during the Third Reich. You may, for example, wish to focus on women, youth, the master race or art. The outcome of your research will be a document which can be saved onto the school network (or Intranet) for others to consult. The audience of this document will be your peers and your teacher, who will assess it.

- Select the area you wish to research.
 - Ensure that you are familiar with the relevant material in this book.
 - Use further reading to expand your knowledge of the topic.
 - Plan how you are going to use IT.
 - Search for and select relevant information from the Internet/CD-ROMs.
 - Download any useful information, sources/images and use a range of techniques for displaying the information, such as graphs and charts.
 - Using a format agreed by the class, write up all your findings from both your further reading and your Internet searches.
 - Your final document must include text, images and numerical data.
 - Save your work onto the school network/intranet/website so that others can access it.
 - Present the key findings of your research to others in the class.
- www.nyu.ac.uk/GermanHistory/links.htm
www2.hertsmu.edu/~german/mlf/wwii/19thCentury
www.historyplace.com/

you to make judgements about whether changes during the Third Reich would have happened regardless of the Nazis. You may even wish to read some more general accounts of society in *Europe* during this period which will help you to analyse whether the changes happening to Nazi society were unique or whether they mirrored what was going on elsewhere.

WERE THE NAZIS RESPONSIBLE FOR A SOCIAL REVOLUTION IN GERMANY?

Yes: Arguments that suggest the Nazis were responsible for a social revolution	Evidence to support this view
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nazi society was 'classless' and there were equal opportunities for everyone ● The old elites were no longer in control ● The Nazis modernized society, even if unintentionally ● People's views on race and eugenics were altered ● Society underwent a fundamental change ● Traditional loyalties and authorities were broken down ● People were better off under the Nazis (see Chapter 11) 	

NO: Arguments that suggest that the Nazis did not bring about social revolution	Evidence to support this view
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Nazis were still dependent on elite groups ● The concept of <i>Volksgemeinschaft</i> was merely propaganda ● People still clung to their traditional loyalties ● People did not accept racial and eugenic policies ● Many of the changes followed on from the Weimar years and would probably have happened anyway ● Many of the changes were happening elsewhere in Europe and would probably have happened anyway ● Many of the changes were due to the war rather than Nazi policy (see Chapter 13) ● There were no more opportunities than before and most people were no better off than before (See Chapter 11) 	

If you did the activity on page 107, you have already done half the work for this

Activity

To help you reach your own conclusion to the question, consider each of the arguments listed on this page.

- 1 Draw two tables, each with two columns. In the first column list each argument, and in the second write down any examples or evidence you can find that would appear to support the claim. In most cases you can find the information in this chapter, but some points include specific references to other chapters.
- 2 When you have completed the tables as fully as you can, you need to weigh one against the other and think carefully about what is meant by 'revolution'.

Activity

This is a very difficult question and the following activity provides a possible approach to answering it.

- 1 Get into four groups or pairs. You will need two sheets of paper, laid out as below.

The Weimar Republic		The Third Reich	
How life changed	Was society united?	How life changed	Was society united?

- 2 Each group should choose one of the following topics:

- Youth
- Women
- Jews
- Culture

- 3 Using this chapter and Chapter 5 (see pages 106–110), complete the tables for your topic.
- 4 Share and discuss the information as a whole group and then reach your conclusion

Activity

Now try the following examination-style question:

Life in Nazi Germany underwent many changes, especially for the following groups of people:

- a. Women
- b. Youth
- c. Jews
- d. Workers

- (a) Choose any two of these groups and explain how their lives were changed by Nazi policies.
- (b) Would you agree that the Nazis totally transformed German society? You must refer to at least three of the groups above in your answer.

Conclusions

The Nazis certainly tried to transform society. They set out to change the way people behaved and thought. Their policies affected the most private spheres and denied many people basic freedoms such as the right to have children, the right to speak one's mind and even the right to live. However, the degree to which the Nazis were successful is difficult to assess. Certainly life changed, but in some areas at least, the Nazis were unable to assert as much control over the people as they would have liked. Some opposition remained, whether open or secretive, and in some areas such as religion, the Nazis were afraid to risk widespread opposition by closing down the Churches altogether. In other areas, such as their policies towards women, what they did and what they said did not always match up. In the end, Hitler's foreign aims came first and social policy was designed to serve these goals.

Despite all this, it would be wrong to deny that the Nazis changed society profoundly. To do so would be to trivialize the thousands who lost their lives because they did not 'fit in'. Hitler may have been building on what had gone before, but he took these ideas to unthinkable and terrible lengths.