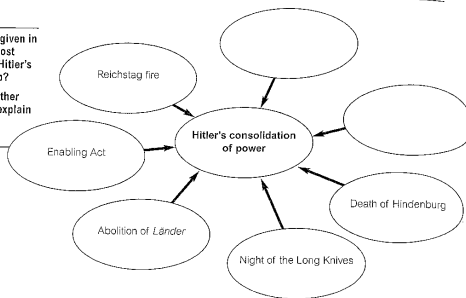


6.9 How was Nazi power consolidated after 1933?

1. Which of the reasons given in the mind map was the most important in explaining Hitler's creation of a dictatorship?
2. Can you identify any other possible reasons which explain Hitler's creation of a dictatorship?



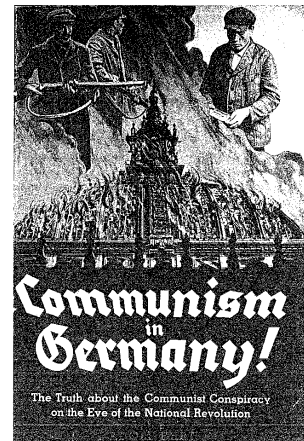
The Reichstag fire and the Enabling Act

Hermann Goering (1893–1946)
 Joined the Nazi Party (1922) after distinguished war service as a pilot. President of the Reichstag (1932–43). Minister President of Prussia and Minister for Aviation (1933–45). Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe (1934–43). Responsible for the Four-Year Plan (1938–45). Convicted and condemned at Nuremberg, he committed suicide before execution.

Despite their popular pose as a revolutionary party, the Nazis had come to power by constitutional means. Nevertheless, the years after 1933 witnessed a Nazi takeover of the machinery of the German state that was little short of revolutionary. Like Mussolini in 1923, Hitler was never likely to be satisfied with power limited by a constitution and by the presence in the state of parties and interests potentially hostile to his own. At first, his tactics for strengthening his position centred upon the Reichstag election to be held in March. He prepared for this with a massive propaganda campaign that stressed the continuity between Nazism and other forms of German conservatism, and by practical measures such as Hermann Goering's rapid extension of Nazi control over the police and civil service in Prussia. The result still left the Nazis with the direct support of only 43.9% of the population, but by then a whole new range of possibilities had opened up for Hitler.

The fire that destroyed the Reichstag building (27 February 1933) provided such a convenient crisis for the Nazis that it was supposed for many years that their agents had started it. It now seems that van der Lubbe, the Dutch Communist who was accused of the crime, really did commit it. The government may merely have exploited the happy coincidence. This powerful illustration of the 'Communist threat', upon which Nazi propaganda had long insisted, went a long way to ensuring public acceptance in the arrest of Communist deputies and in the passage of two measures central to the collapse of German democracy. The arrests themselves strengthened Hitler's position in the Reichstag. The Decree for the Protection of People and State (28 February) suspended the essential freedoms of the individual, giving the state unprecedented rights of search, arrest and censorship. The Enabling Law (23 March), which only the SPD opposed, transferred full legislative and executive power to the Chancellor (Hitler) for a period of four years. Undoubtedly, German democracy was destroyed by Hitler, but he was abetted in the crime by so-called democrats who lacked the determination to keep liberty alive.

Title page of a pamphlet placing blame for the Reichstag fire on communists, 1933.



Gleichschaltung

Long before the expiry of that four-year period, Hitler had destroyed or neutralised all those groups and institutions in a position to impose limits upon his power. This policy was referred to by the term *Gleichschaltung* (co-ordination). In some cases, the weapon used was the naked exercise of state or party power. By the Law against the New Formation of Parties, the KPD and the SPD were formally outlawed and their property seized, and all other political parties, except the Nazis, were declared illegal. By accepting this law such well-established organisations as the Catholic Centre Party effectively dissolved themselves and accepted Nazi dictatorship. In January 1934, Hitler abolished the provincial assemblies of the *Länder*. In their places he put Nazi governors (*Reichstatthalter*), and made Germany a centralised, unitary state for the first time.

Other institutions weakened their positions by attempts to compromise with the new government. The socialist trade unions had already guaranteed their non-intervention in political questions. They had also accepted the supervision of a Nazi *Reichskommissar* when, on 2 May 1933, stormtroopers occupied their offices throughout Germany, dissolved them, and began the enrolment of all labour into a German Labour Front. Other institutions lost their independence by a process of subtle infiltration. The Prussian civil service was brought under firmer control by the dismissal of nearly 30% of its officers on racial grounds or on grounds of 'incompetence'. The legal and academic professions became subject to Nazi 'fronts'

or 'academies' outside which there was little hope of practice or of professional advancement.

Winning over other conservative elements in German politics

Three major elements in German society were too powerful to be directly coerced, and perhaps bear more guilt for the accommodations that they reached with Hitler. The support of German industry for Hitler had got seriously underway in 1928–29. His disciplining of the Strasser 'wing' of the party, and his subsequent alliance with the conservative Nationalist Party had convinced its leaders that the Nazis were not, as the contemporary joke had it, 'like a beefsteak, brown on the outside but red in the middle'. At this early stage, substantial financial contributions to the party were made by a variety of banking and mining interests, headed by the steel magnate Fritz Thyssen. Hitler's consistent policies of anti-socialist legislation and subsequent rearmament earned much wider support in these areas in the years immediately after his seizure of power.

The Catholic Church, too, was quick to seek an arrangement with the new regime, which now found it convenient to play down its essentially anti-Christian nature. A Concordat (July 1933) was concluded with the Nazi state in an attempt to preserve the Church's educational influence and similar privileges. In this agreement the Church authorities undertook to dissuade Catholic priests from political activity, and did much to hasten the collapse of the Centre Party. Unlike the Lateran Accords concluded with Mussolini, the Concordat represented almost complete surrender to the new political leadership. Certain elements in the Lutheran Church, by agreeing to the formation of a Reich Church (*Reichskirche*), surrendered in similarly abject fashion. In this case, however, a breakaway Confessional Church managed to survive as a symbol of Christian opposition to Nazism.

Like the major industrialists, the German army (*Reichswehr*) shared a community of interest with the Nazi *Führer*. Its commanders had little objection to his declared nationalist aims, while the realisation of those aims seemed unlikely without heavy industry to produce weapons and without soldiers to use them. Although elements of suspicion remained, the army accepted the promises that had been made to it in February and March 1933 as to its future role. While this gave Hitler the support of the army, he had to wait longer for any substantial element of direct control. The death of President Hindenburg (August 1934) not only made possible the combination of the offices of President and Chancellor in the new office of *Führer* and Chancellor, but also gave Hitler the chance to revise his relationship with the army. By imposing a new oath of allegiance upon all ranks (August 1934), he ensured their commitment directly to 'the *Führer* of the German Reich and People, Adolf Hitler'. The later dismissal of the War Minister, General von Blomberg (January 1938), over the scandal of his marriage to a former prostitute, and of the Army Commander-in-Chief, General von Fritsch (February 1938), over trumped-up charges of homosexuality, reinforced Hitler's control over the army at a time of increasing foreign commitment.

The Night of the Long Knives

For all these successes in 'co-ordinating' influential elements in the state into the Nazi system, Hitler could not feel wholly secure by the beginning of 1934. Ironically, the greatest surviving threat to him and to his policies came from within the Nazis' own ranks. The paramilitary SA had been formed in the early days of the movement to provide physical protection for Nazi meetings and to disrupt those of their opponents. Its attraction for

Ernst Röhm (1887–1934)

Röhm was an early member of the NSDAP, a close friend of Hitler, and a participant in the unsuccessful 1923 Beer Hall Putsch (which ended his career in the Army). Röhm built up the NSDAP's paramilitary wing, the SA (*Sturmabteilung* or Stormtroopers). The SA under his leadership became an ever larger and more radical force in German politics, greatly contributing to the political violence of the late Weimar years. By 1933–4, an increasingly powerful and independent SA posed a threat to the Army and to Hitler's strategies of 'legality' once in power. Röhm was thus the prime target of the 'Night of the Long Knives' in 1934. Röhm himself was arrested and shot in a prison cell after he refused to commit suicide.

former soldiers, as well as for hooligans, was enormous, and by late 1933 its numbers had swollen to some 2.5 million men. To its leader, Ernst Röhm, it represented the central weapon of the Nazi Revolution, the German equivalent of Trotsky's Red Army. It would guarantee the radical transformation of German society and, by taking over the functions of the *Reichswehr*, would guarantee the Nazification of the state. To Hitler, the SA was an embarrassing legacy of the years of struggle. It had fulfilled its street-fighting purpose and served now only to scare industrialists and conservative army officers by its radical posturing. Besides, with the SA under his command, Röhm stood as the only man in the Nazi Party realistically able to challenge the power of Hitler.

There has been much dispute among historians over the process by which Hitler reached the decision to eliminate the threat of the SA. Joachim Fest (*Hitler*, 1973), and Martin Broszat (*The Hitler State*, 1981) picture Hitler upon a deliberate collision course with Röhm: since the beginning of 1934, Alan Bullock argued that Hitler would have been willing to delay, had it not been for mounting pressure from the *Reichswehr*. Another important factor was the ill-health of President Hindenburg, which made it imperative for Hitler to enjoy full *Reichswehr* support when the opportunity arose for him to take over the dead President's functions. In any case, the decision had been taken by late June when Hitler unleashed the purge known since as the 'Night of the Long Knives' (29–30 June 1934). A pretext was provided by a series of bogus SA 'revolts' in Berlin and Munich, staged by Himmler, Goering and their agents.

The estimates of the numbers murdered by SS (*Schutzstaffel*) squads, with material support from the *Reichswehr*, range from a low of 77 to a high of 401. The bulk of these were SA men, including Röhm himself, shot in prison without trial. The opportunity to settle diverse scores with old rivals was too good to miss. The dead also included General von Kahr, who had deserted Hitler in the 1923 Putsch, Gregor Strasser, who had long opposed him within the party, and a number of other non-Nazi political figures.

The 'Night of the Long Knives' was Hitler's most spectacular, and probably his most successful, piece of Realpolitik. For all the initial shock that it caused, it had eliminated the threat from the left of the party and removed important conservative interests outside the party. Less than three weeks after the event, 38,000,000 Germans gave their tacit support by accepting in a plebiscite vote Hitler's assumption of the office of *Führer* and Chancellor.

Schutzstaffel (SS) – 'protection squad'. Paramilitary force, originally recruited as Hitler's protection squad. Subsequently entrusted with many of the main policy tasks of the Nazi regime including responsibility for the operation of the concentration camps. Headed by Heinrich Himmler.

1. What obstacles were there to Hitler's overall political control of Germany when he came to power in 1933?

2. How true is the claim that Hitler had complete control over German domestic politics by the end of 1934?

Source-based questions: The political role of the SA

SOURCE 1

Ernst Röhm, writing in June 1933, outlines his views of the role of the SA.

A tremendous victory has been won. But not absolute victory! The new state did not have to disown the bearers of the will to revolution as the November men had to do. In the new Germany the disciplined brown storm battalions stand side by side with the armed forces. But not as part of them. The *Reichswehr* has its own undisputed task: it is committed to defend the borders of the Reich. The police have to keep down the lawbreakers. Beside these stand the SA and the SS as the third power factor of the new state with special tasks, for they are the foundation pillars of the coming National Socialist State. They will not tolerate the German revolution going to sleep or being betrayed at the halfway stage by non-combatants.

If the bourgeois simpletons think that the 'national' revolution has already lasted too long, whether they like it or not, we will continue our struggle with them; if they are unwilling, without them; and if necessary, against them.

(a) Study Source 1.

What do we learn from Source 1 about the role that Röhm believed the SA should play within the Nazi state? [5 marks]

(b) How did Hitler deal with the threat that Röhm and the SA posed to his own vision of Nazi policy? [7 marks]

(c) What reasons did some elements in German politics and society have for rejecting the message put forward by Röhm, and yet still supporting the Nazi Party? [18 marks]

6.10 How did the Nazi state impose its authority?

Centralised authority, or a confusion of administrations?

In theory, the power structure of the Nazi state was extremely simple. The far-reaching process of *Gleichschaltung* had transformed Germany into a state dominated by its single political party. The party, declared Hitler in mid-1933, 'has now become the state', and that principle was legally enshrined in the Law to Ensure the Unity of Party and State (December 1933). Behind the authority of the party lay, in principle, the authority of one man. Thus, in 1939, the Nazi theorist Ernst Huber could define the basis of the Nazi constitution as follows: 'we must speak, not of state power, but of Führer power, if we want to describe political power in the national Reich correctly. The Führer power is not hemmed in by conditions and controls, and jealously guarded individual rights, but is free and independent, exclusive and without restriction.'

In reality, the smoothly functioning Nazi state was never much more than a myth, for government consisted largely of a jostling for influence between the old ministerial hierarchies and a variety of party bodies that sought to supervise or to control them. In several cases, ministers who were Nazis only in the sense of collaboration, such as Schwerin von Krosigk at the Ministry of Finance and Hjalmar Schacht at the Ministry of Economics, were highly successful in preserving the traditions of their departments. On the other hand, the Minister of the Interior, Wilhelm Frick, a Nazi himself, ultimately failed to prevent the infiltration of his

<p>Martin Bormann (1900–1945?) Joined the Nazi Party in 1925. Deputy to Rudolf Hess (1933–41). Personal secretary to Hitler (1941–45). Assumed to have died during the last days of the war although his body was never identified.</p>	<p>Beobachter (1921). Head of the party's office for foreign affairs. Minister for the occupied territories (1941–45). Condemned at the Nuremberg Trials and executed.</p>	<p>Heinrich Himmler (1900–45) Himmler participated in the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch and was appointed head of the SS (<i>Schutzstaffel</i>) in January 1929. Himmler organised the purge of the SA and built up the SS, which became the key instrument of terror in the Nazi state. In 1936 Himmler became <i>Reichsführer SS</i> and Chief of the German Police in the Ministry of the Interior, thus controlling both the regular police force and the security police. During the war, he</p>	<p>controlled a veritable empire of power through the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA), the criminal police and the Gestapo, as well as the various sections of the SS and Waffen-SS. He also oversaw and masterminded the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question'. On being arrested by the British at the end of the war, Himmler committed suicide with a poison pill.</p>
<p>Alfred Rosenberg (1893–1946) Joined the Nazis in 1919, and became one of their leading theoreticians. Editor of the Nazi newspaper <i>Völkische</i></p>	<p>Joachim von Ribbentrop (1893–1946) A late convert to membership of the Nazi Party (1932). Adviser to Hitler on foreign affairs. Ambassador to London (1936–38), Foreign Minister (1938–45). Condemned to death at Nuremberg and executed.</p>		

Gauführer: Nazi Party officials at regional and district level, who could build up considerable local power bases.

department by the Party Chancellery under Martin Bormann. The Foreign Office found itself in competition with the Nazi Bureau for Foreign Affairs, headed by Alfred Rosenberg, and with the specialist agencies headed by Joachim von Ribbentrop, before he himself became Foreign Minister in 1938. The pattern of 'dualism, struggles over competence, and duplication of function' was repeated at local government level between local administrators and Nazi provincial chiefs (*Gauführer*). In all cases, a high price was paid in terms of administrative efficiency.

Some have claimed that this confusion arose from Hitler's great failings, his boredom with administrative detail, and his preference for wider questions, especially in foreign affairs. It is also quite possible that Hitler saw the departmental in-fighting as a deliberate means of maintaining his personal power, being the great arbiter in any such dispute. He was satisfied with a system that enabled him to block any initiative or individual unacceptable to him.

The roles of propaganda and terror

The Nazi state had two great cohesive agents, both directly responsible to the Führer. One of these was the Ministry of Propaganda under the guidance of Joseph Goebbels. This reached new heights of sophistication through more complex and powerful media than had been available a generation earlier. The second body was the SS, with its secret police offshoot, the 'Gestapo' (*Geheime Staatspolizei*: Secret State Police).

Founded in 1925, but transformed four years later with the appointment of Himmler as its commander, the SS differed from the SA in several important respects. Whereas the SA was a mass organisation, relying upon force of numbers for its effect, the SS was an elite force, under Hitler's direct control. As such, its role extended rapidly once the Nazis were in power. From 1932 it dominated the party's intelligence work, from 1934 it had effective control of the nation's police system, and under the emergency laws of 1933, the SS controlled the concentration camps which sprang up to receive political opponents of the Nazi regime.

If there ever was such a thing as a Nazi state, it was primarily an organism for ensuring the maintenance of power, and the SS was at its centre. Surveying the general incoherence of Nazi administration, historian Gordon Craig concludes that 'the force that prevented the regime from

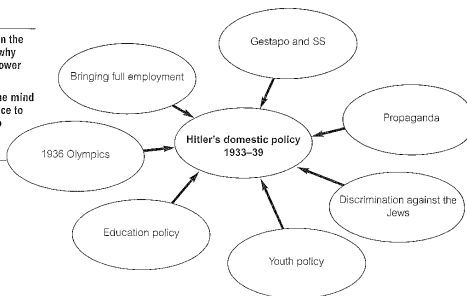
1. By what means did Hitler and the Nazi Party maintain their authority over Germany between 1933 and 1939?
2. How important was the element of terror and intimidation in the maintenance of Nazi authority in Germany in the 1930s?
3. What evidence is there to support the claim that the administration of the Nazi state was confused and incoherent?

dissolving into chaos was terror, and its instrument was the SS. The activities of the SS therefore expanded further as war increased the need for cohesion in Nazi policy after 1939. Its members dominated the administration of the occupied territories. Its military wing, the 'Waffen SS', sought to exert more and more influence over military affairs, resurrecting the threat that the army appeared to have conquered in the 'Night of the Long Knives'.

There is no doubt that this power was hugely effective in the negative sense of destroying opposition. What it succeeded in creating now remains to be seen.

6.11 How radical were the economic changes that the Nazis brought about in Germany?

1. Which of the policies in the mind map best explains why Hitler was able to keep power from 1933?
2. Place the policies in the mind map in order of importance to explain why Hitler was so popular in Germany from 1933 to 1939.



Cartel: Economic arrangement whereby major manufacturers agree to share markets, rather than to compete for them. The aim is usually to fix prices for the benefit of the manufacturers and to guarantee levels of sales and profits.

Whatever the effects of terror and propaganda, the Nazi regime depended for its survival upon the solution of the economic problems that had caused so many voters to turn to the party in 1932–33. Yet at no time, as Karl Bracher writes in *The German Dictatorship* (1978), 'did National Socialism develop a consistent economic or social theory'. In place of such a theory, Nazism had a set of fixed and sometimes contradictory commitments. Within the context of those commitments its economic achievements were considerable.

- **The drive for full employment.** Firstly to maintain popular sympathy and industrial support, an expansion of industrial activity and a dramatic reduction of unemployment were necessary. Without departing from the essential principles followed by Papen and Schleicher, the government poured money into public works. The most spectacular example of this was the construction of 7,000 kilometres of motorway (*Autobahn*). Aided by the recruitment of many of the unemployed into

the Reich Labour Service, the unemployment figures fell from nearly 6 million to 2.5 million within 18 months of the Nazis' advent to power. With the subsequent expansion of heavy industry to meet the needs of rearmament, and the reintroduction of military conscription (1935), the Nazis could claim almost complete success by 1939, when unemployment figures stood at less than 200,000.

- **Nazism and the 'little man'** The second range of commitments was met with less consistency and with less obvious success. A complex programme of legislation was introduced to preserve the German peasantry from the twin curses of rising industrial prices and falling prices for their agricultural produce. All peasant debts, totalling 12 billion Reichsmarks, were suspended between March and October 1933, and many imported foodstuffs were subjected to higher tariffs. The Hereditary Farm Law (October 1933) gave the small-scale farmer security of tenure by forbidding the sale, confiscation, division or mortgaging of any farm of between 7.5 and 10 hectares, owned by farmers of Aryan blood. While this ensured the permanence of the peasant food producer – the very foundation of the German race in the view of many Nazi theorists – the law militated against the development of larger farming units and new farming methods. Ultimately, it worked against the self-sufficiency that was a major economic aim of the Nazi state. By 1936 the price of many basic foodstuffs had increased by up to 50% since the Nazis came to power.

The urban equivalent of the peasant, the small-scale trader or business man, gained still less from the regime that he had helped to bring to power. A number of laws – such as the Law for the Protection of the Retail Trade (May 1933) which was designed to protect the trader against the influence of the larger concerns – were far outweighed by the continued advance of 'big business'. This can be shown by the 1,500 new cartel arrangements between mid-1933 and the end of 1936. Whereas only 40% of German production was in the hands of monopolists in 1933, the proportion had grown to 70% by 1937.

Nazism and 'big business'

Ultimately the regime would support the larger enterprises, given that its long-term priorities were rearmament and self-sufficiency in all strategic products. This was perhaps the only economic goal towards which Nazi Germany moved with any consistency in the 1930s. The first phase of the policy was supervised by Hjalmar Schacht as President of the Reichsbank (from May 1933) and Minister of Economics (from June 1934). His major achievement was to limit the drain of Germany's foreign exchange by paying foreign debts in Reichsmarks. He also concluded a series of trade agreements, notably with Balkan and South American states, whereby Germany paid for its purchases in Reichsmarks, which thus encouraged its trade partners to purchase German goods in return. Schacht's great weakness, from the Nazi point of view, was his financial orthodoxy. His reluctance to spend more than Germany was earning threatened to put the brake on the process of rearmament. It became necessary to devise machinery for this task, which was directly under the control of the Führer. Thus, in August 1936, the Four-Year Plan was announced, and its direction was entrusted to Hermann Goering, a man of no economic talent, but with impeccable Nazi credentials. The primary aim of the Four-Year Plan was to achieve self-sufficiency in strategic industrial and agricultural products, either by increasing production or by developing synthetic substitutes. The plan had its important 'showpiece' successes, such as the Hermann Goering Steelworks erected at Watenstedt-

Salzgitter. It established a complicated system of controls over prices, and the distribution of raw materials, but in some important respects – in fuel, rubber and light metals – Germany remained well short of self-sufficiency in 1939.

Conclusions

By most orthodox economic criteria, the economy of Nazi Germany was chaotic. Its reserves of foreign currency remained low, and its balance of payments remained dramatically in deficit. Karl Bracher and other historians have painted a picture of the ruination of the economy by Nazi exploitation. On the other hand, B.H. Klein (*Germany's Economic Preparations for War*, 1959) denies that preparation for war totally dominated German economic activity, stressing that production of consumer goods rose steadily right up to the eve of war in 1939. Certainly, by a mixture of Schacht's clever financing and 'windfalls' such as the confiscation of Jewish property and the seizure of Austrian assets after the Anschluss, the economy produced impressive results.

	Unemployed (million)	Coal (million tons)	Iron ore (million tons)	Pig iron (million tons)	Steel (million tons)	Arms budget (billion RM)
1932	6.042 (January) 5.392 (July)	118.6	2.6	6.1	8.2	1.9
1935	2.974 (January) 1.754 (July)	143.0	6.0	12.8	16.2	6.0
1938	1.052 (January) 0.218 (July)	186.4	12.4	18.1	21.9	17.2

From the 1930s, Marxist historians were eager to portray the Nazi regime as a political 'front' working in effect for Germany's capitalists, and essentially serving their economic interests. According to this interpretation, the suppression of trade unions and the expansion of heavy industrial output were among the 'tasks' allotted by finance capital to its 'Fascism' (D. Eichholtz, 1969). More recent writers on the political left, however, have been forced to accept that it was Nazi ideology, rather than capitalist interests, that held the upper hand in this relationship. T.W. Mason, for instance (*Nazism and the Third Reich*, 1972), has shown convincingly that, although there was a degree of co-operation between industry and Nazism up to 1936, thereafter all major decisions were taken with the regime's political objectives in view. Often these decisions involved consequences of which the business community heartily disapproved, as in the case of attacks upon Jewish financial and industrial institutions. The decline of Hjalmar Schacht's influence, culminating in his resignation from the Reichsbank (January 1939), typifies the dominance of Nazism in its grim alliance with capitalism. Historian Karl Bracher has supported these views in his conclusion that 'the basic principle of National Socialist economic policy was to use the traditional capitalist structure with its competent economic bureaucracy to move towards its prime objective: acceleration of rearmament'.

1. Which sections of the German population benefited from Nazi economic policies in the 1930s?

2. Is there any justification for the claim that the Nazis brought about an economic revolution in Germany in the 1930s?

6.12 Did the Nazis bring about social and cultural revolutions in Germany?

Promise of radical social change probably ranked only a little lower than the prospect of economic recovery and national resurgence as a vote winner for the Nazis in 1929–32. In the event, hopes of a 'social revolution'

were frustrated. The dominant classes continued in most cases to exercise their social and economic functions, and the Nazi advocates of radical change were eliminated. What change there was served not as a revolutionary end in itself, but as a means towards the broader Nazi aims of the consolidation of power and the preparation of the nation for war.

The living standards of the German worker

The emptiness of Nazi promises of a 'social revolution' should not lead one to suppose that German workers gained nothing from their industrial co-operation with Nazi strategy. Many contemporary commentators, such as R.A. Brady (1937) and E. Neumann (1942), stressed the class nature of the Third Reich and saw it primarily as a middle-class mechanism for the exploitation of the working class. More recent authorities, such as D. Schönbaum, in *Hitler's Social Revolution* (1967), have indicated instead the solid benefits that many German workers received during this period. Although they lost important rights, such as that of union representation, it may be that they were awarded prosperity as a consolation prize for the loss of political freedom. Their greatest gain was, of course, employment. Arguments about the wage levels of the Third Reich are theoretical in view of the fact that 6 million workers were not receiving a salary of any sort in 1932. In any case, there is evidence that although average wages remained around the 1932 levels, skilled workers and workers in strategic industries such as metallurgy, engineering and building benefited markedly from Nazi industrial expansion with wage increases of up to 30%. Production and sales figures for consumer goods in the immediate pre-war years suggest a distinct rise in the standard of living.

Nor should the activities of the 'Strength through Joy' (*Kraft durch Freude*) programme, for all their propaganda content, be dismissed solely as 'window dressing'. In 1938 alone, 180,000 Germans enjoyed holiday cruises under its auspices, while 10 million took holidays of one kind or another. Its activities also extended to evening classes, and a large variety of cultural and sporting activities.

Yet material rewards were often offset by declining conditions of employment. Above all, the German worker frequently put in far longer hours than any of his or her counterparts in western Europe or the USA. The industrial demands of the regime made 10% increases in hours commonplace, with rises of 25% in some specialised areas of employment. The national average working week lasted 49 hours in 1939, rising to 52 by 1943, with an increase of 150% in the number of industrial accidents in 1933–39, and a 200% increase in occupational diseases. Remarkably, such increases appear to have been broadly accepted by the majority of German workers, whether motivated by material gain or by patriotism. Whatever the motive, we have to accept the verdict of the historian Richard Grunberger: 'the working class that Karl Marx had seen as being in the van of the proletarian revolution significantly extended the lifespan of the Third Reich by exertions that came very close to giving it victory'.

The subsidiary role of women in Nazi society

A significant feature of Nazi society in the 1930s was its reactionary view of the place of women. The duties of women were defined by the party's propaganda in the slogan 'Children, Church, Kitchen' (*Kinder, Kirche, Küche*). Every effort was made to eliminate them from leading roles in political and economic life. To an extent this was an ideological aim, based upon the mystical Nazi regard for the breeding and rearing of a pure race. As Richard Grunberger also observes, 'women basked in Nazi esteem

1. In what ways were German workers affected by Nazi economic and social policies in the 1930s?

2. Is it justifiable to claim that the Nazi policies improved the living standards of many Germans in the 1930s?

between marriage and menopause'. The policy also had a practical purpose, in that the removal of women from the competition for jobs made the full employment of the male population easier. Thus by 1936 only 37 of Germany's 7,000 university teachers were women, while married women were banned by law from the legal and medical professions, from the civil service, and from higher office in the Nazi party. Interest-free loans were made available to newlyweds who undertook that the wife would not seek employment outside the home.

The birth rate did indeed rise, from 1,200,000 births in 1934, to 1,410,000 in 1939. While the Nazis claimed this as a success for their methods, however, it remains quite likely that the increase may simply have arisen from the improving economic circumstances in contemporary Germany. In the Nazi attitude to women, as in other areas of Nazi policy, the necessities of politics came eventually to triumph over ideology. The industrial expansion of the Four-Year Plan once more made female employment unavoidable. Although professional posts remained closed to them, women once more constituted 33% of the total German workforce by 1939.

The rejection of Weimar culture

With the advent of the Nazis to power, one of the most exciting, experimental periods in Germany's cultural history gave way to one of the most stagnant. The 1920s had witnessed a period of unparalleled innovation and experiment in German art. In the aftermath of the collapse of the 'old' Germany, many of the cultural values of that 'old' society were challenged and re-interpreted. The dramatic work and production of Bertolt Brecht, the music of Kurt Weill, and the architecture of the Bauhaus movement are some examples of the inventiveness of 'Weimar' culture. It was immediately evident that artistic freedom played little part in Nazi philosophy and that cultural activity like all other social and economic functions, was to be 'co-ordinated' to the needs of the regime. This view was summarised by Goebbels (December 1934), with the judgement that art 'remains free within its own laws of development but it is bound to the moral, social and national principles of the state'.

As in all other areas of activity, the Nazis quickly devised complex machinery to implement this 'co-ordination'. The Reich Chamber of Culture (*Reichskulturkammer* – September 1933), under the presidency of Goebbels, was the central body outside which no 'maker of culture' could legally practise his or her craft. Political undesirables and non-Aryans were automatically excluded. Cruder tactics were necessary to deal with the works of art already executed. 'Exhibitions of Shameful Art' (*Schandausstellungen*) were held, notably in Karlsruhe (1933) and in Munich (1937), with the works of expressionists, cubists and other modern movements prominent. The destruction of rejected books and paintings by fire was widespread. In Berlin in 1939, over 1,000 paintings and 3,700 drawings by modern artists were destroyed. The result of this was to rip the heart out of German art, literature and music. The list of those who abandoned their country to work abroad includes novelists and playwrights such as Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Stefan Zweig and Bertolt Brecht, the painter Oskar Kokoschka, and masters of the new art of cinema, Josef Sternberg and Fritz Lang.

The characteristics of Nazi art

Official taste in the Third Reich had three main distinguishing features.

1. The first was the rejection of internationalism.

Expressionists: Artists who use a style known as 'expressionism', in which reality is distorted in order to express their own emotions or inner visions.

Cubists: Artists who use the first abstract style of the 20th century in which objects, landscapes and people are represented as many-sided solids.

Internationalism: The response to cultural stimuli from abroad that had characterised the art of the Weimar period.

Philistinism: The act of being a 'philistine', a person who has no feeling for art, or whose artistic taste is vulgar.

2. In its place, it demanded a stress upon, and a glorification of, those values that Nazism preached in other areas of policy.
3. It was frequently dominated by a conservatism, often a philistinism, that reflected the intellectual mediocrity of many of Germany's new leaders.

As historian Gordon Craig puts it, most of the products of this cultural 'revolution' were 'of a quality so inferior as to be embarrassing. What passed for Nazi art, when it was not a mere disguise for propaganda, was a reflection of the aesthetic ideals of a culturally retarded lower middle class, full of moral attitudes and mock heroics and sentimentality and emphasis upon the German soul and the sacredness of the soil.' In literature one might refer to the books of Werner Beumelburg, a specialist in glorifying the spiritual experience of war, or of Hans Blunck, with his emphasis upon Nordic legend. In sculpture, Arno Breker's gigantic evocations of Teutonic manhood found particular favour with the Führer himself. Musical taste was dominated by the German 'giants' of the classical past, Ludwig van Beethoven and Amadeus Mozart, and by the German epics of Richard Wagner.

Propaganda and the cinema

In one discipline alone the products of the Third Reich rose above mediocrity. Although the film industry constituted in Goebbels' view 'one of the most modern and scientific methods of influencing the masses', he used it sparingly and intelligently. The most famous films of the era, such as *Hitler Youth Quex* (1933), *Jud Süß* (1940), and *Ohm Krüger* (1941), an exposé of British atrocities during the Boer War, all had clear political points to make. Yet these were subtly conveyed, and the films did have artistic merit. The most famous of contemporary German directors, Leni Riefenstahl, showed in her major works, *The Triumph of the Will* (1935), portraying the 1934 Nazi party rally at Nuremberg, and *Olympia* (1937), on the Berlin Olympic Games, that an obvious propaganda message could be conveyed with flair and originality.

Nazism and education

The theme of mediocrity is evident once more in German education under Nazism. The creation of a centralised Reich Education Ministry (May 1934) involved no major change in the structure of the educational system, but led to a radical revision of syllabuses. Great stress was now laid upon history, biology and German as the media by which the philosophy of Nazism could best be put across, while the stress upon physical fitness and development raised the gym teacher to a higher level of prestige than he or she had ever previously enjoyed.

University teaching, too, was subject to adjustments, such as the dismissal of 'unreliable' teachers, and the banning of such 'Jewish' theories as Einstein's Theory of Relativity. Between 1933 and 1938 45% of all university posts changed hands. As Nazi agencies competed with established bodies in other spheres, so too in education. Youth organisations sought to ensure the indoctrination of the young, to the great detriment of academic standards. From December 1936 it was compulsory for boys to serve in the *Jungvolk* organisation, paralleled by the *Jungmädchen* organisation for girls, between the ages of 10–14. Thereafter, the boys graduated to the 'Hitler Youth' (*Hitlerjugend*) and the girls to the 'German Girls' League' (*Bund Deutscher Mädel*) until the age of 18.

1. What features were the Nazis most eager to introduce into German art and culture in the 1930s?

2. What purposes were art and education supposed to serve in Nazi society?

6.13 How did Nazi racial politics turn into genocide?

Nazi Germany was not the first or only racist state. Although Nazi racial policies were not rooted in a background of slavery, initially they bore some similarities to policies of apartheid in South Africa and segregation in the USA. Yet when Nazi policies developed into mass murder they were ultimately far more severe. Nazi policies of genocide have been compared with the mass killings perpetrated by Stalin in the USSR and Pol Pot in Cambodia, provoking considerable controversy over possible 'relativisation' of the Holocaust.

'Kristallnacht', Jewish shops damaged and plundered, November 1938



The word 'Holocaust' is something of a misnomer for the organised murder of millions of human beings by the Nazi regime. 'Holocaust', or the Jewish term *Shoah*, means literally a 'burnt sacrifice'. Yet despite being an ill-fitting term the word 'Holocaust' has come to stick. Genocide was linked to the wider attempt to create a racially pure 'folk community' (*Völksgemeinschaft*). The majority of victims of the Holocaust were murdered on grounds of race: most notably the Jews, and also almost the entire European population of Sinti and Roma (gypsies). But other groups were also targets, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, communists, socialists, individual Christians and any others who stood up to Hitler. It is estimated that perhaps six million people – women and men, young and old – lost their lives in this systematic, bureaucratically organised or 'industrial' genocide.

'Industrial' genocide: organised mass murder of large numbers of people by 'efficient', technologically advanced means in specially designed and constructed extermination centres or 'factories of death'

How important were Hitler's intentions within the context of the Nazi state structures?

Until the early 1960s, the Holocaust played little role in historiography. It came to prominence with the Adolf Eichmann trial in Jerusalem and the

Adolf Eichmann (1906–62)
Eichmann was in charge of Nazi emigration, evacuation and eventually extermination policies. He joined the Austrian Nazi party in 1932, and in 1934 he found a job in Himmler's SD, where by 1935 he was

in charge of 'Jewish questions'. Following the Anschluss in 1938, Eichmann returned to Austria and ran the 'Office for Jewish Emigration' in Vienna, organising the forced exit of 150 000 Jews within eighteen months. In 1939, Eichmann was

moved to the RSHA to deal with Jewish 'evacuations', and from 1941 the 'resettlement' policies that were ultimately to end in the extermination camps. Following the Wannsee Conference, Eichmann had the task of bureaucratic implementation of the 'Final

Solution'. After the war, he managed to escape to Argentina; he was only finally discovered in 1960 and removed to Israel, where he stood trial in Jerusalem in 1961. He was found guilty and executed in 1962.

Hans Globke (1898–1973)

A civil servant in the Reich Ministry of the Interior, Globke wrote, along with Wilhelm Stuckart, the official commentary on the Nuremberg Race Laws which excluded German Jews from full citizenship rights. He was also involved in further 'legal' aspects of the persecution of Jews and the 'Germanisation' of occupied territories. Globke retained his position as a civil servant in the new post-war Federal Republic of Germany, employed in the capacity of State Secretary of the Chancellery as the chief aide to Konrad Adenauer, the first West German Chancellor, until his retirement in 1963.

Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt, when the centrality of Hitler and his henchmen remained more or less taken for granted. But with the rise of wider debates over Hitler's role in the structures of power, new twists developed. In the 1970s and 1980s a debate arose between the so-called intentionalists and the structuralists (functionalists).

The intentionalists emphasise Hitler's 'programme' (as in the works of Hildebrand, Hillgruber and Jaekel): Hitler's murderous aims were translated into policies and practice as opportunities arose; there was a direct line from the anti-Semitism of *Mein Kampf* to the gas chambers of Auschwitz. In *The War against the Jews* (1975), Lucy Dawidowicz argues that the Holocaust resulted from Hitler's fundamental beliefs and ideological conviction; the link between idea and act has seldom been as evident in human history with such manifest consistency. Gerald Fleming claims that there was a 'single, unbroken and fatal continuum' between Hitler's early anti-Semitic outpourings and 'the liquidation orders that Hitler personally issued during the war' (*Hitler and the Final Solution*, 1985).

There is no doubt about Hitler's anti-Semitism. He shared the view, widespread among right-wing circles (and not only in Germany), that the Jews were not merely a religious group but also were racially distinct. Religious and cultural anti-Semitism had been prevalent for centuries. The racial version of anti-Semitism, a product of the new scientific theories of the nineteenth century, added a whole new dimension to the question. It meant that the Jewish Question could not be solved by conversion or assimilation: even if Jews renounced Judaism and converted to Christianity, they would still be irredeemably 'Jewish'. Hitler believed that this constituted a danger to the health of the *Völksgemeinschaft*, and compared Jews with a physical disease which had to be removed.

Hitler made numerous statements to this effect. Raging against Jewish Bolsheviks and 'International Jewry' had been part of his stock-in-trade with the party faithful from the early 1920s, and repeated frequently, most notably in the hideous 'prophecy' made in a speech to the Reichstag on 30 January 1939. In subsequent references to his Reichstag 'prophecy', Hitler himself wrongly dated it to the outbreak of war in September 1939. The connection between war and the 'Jewish question' was of great significance.

But do Hitler's anti-Semitic utterances constitute evidence of a clear 'programme' that intrinsically meant, and had to mean, mass murder? And are Hitler's views a sufficient explanation of the transition from racial policies into genocide?

The functionalists argue that there was not a direct connection between Hitler's intentions and murderous outcome, but rather that there was a 'twisted road' (Karl Schleunes' phrase) to Auschwitz. Only the curious structures of power in the polycratic state explain how the crazy ideas of one man became mass murder by many.

Far from being a streamlined totalitarian state, in which Hitler's orders were simply turned into realities, functionalists argue that there were multiple, overlapping centres of power. Hans Mommsen and Martin Broszat argue that, while Hitler set the broad agenda, the 'cumulative radicalisation' of racial policy can be explained in terms of competition among underlings in ever more difficult circumstances. Genocide was the result of improvisation, of a continued search for new solutions, as the self-made problem of the 'Jewish question' became ever more acute. While not downplaying the role of Hitler, greater emphasis is given here to decision-making at the local level. In the wider context of Hitler's aim of making German-occupied Europe 'free of Jews' (*Judenfrei*, or *Judenrein*), ever more radical local initiatives were taken to 'cleanse' particular areas of Jews. Mass murder was a relatively late solution to an ever-growing

'problem', rather than planned from the outset and instigated by an order from on high once conditions were right.

Theoretical interpretations have shifted somewhat in recent years. Moderate approaches have combined a focus on Hitler's intentions with an awareness of the importance of local initiatives and improvisation on the ground (examples, which disagree over detail, include the works of Philippe Barrin and Christopher Browning). Ian Kershaw has picked up on a phrase uttered by a contemporary, 'working towards the Führer', to combine recognition of the polycentric structures of the regime with the centrality of Hitler's role. New debates have opened up on questions such as the extent to which Nazi racial policies were the product of 'modernity', social engineering, and 'scientific' eugenic theories. The roles of the planning intelligentsia and other technocrats have been emphasised, as has the role of the Army alongside the SS.

How can we explain the 'cumulative radicalisation' of racial policies from 1933 to 1941?

While very few individuals (apart from extreme right-wing Holocaust deniers) dispute the established facts, controversies over interpretation continue to rage: revisiting the chronology is essential to explore these debates further.

Discrimination and stigmatisation in a 'racial state', 1933-7

In the early 1930s, German Jews were simply Germans who were Jewish. Many had married Christian or non-religious Germans, producing children whom Nazis categorised as 'Mischlinge' (those of mixed descent). As Victor Klemperer, a Jewish German married to a non-Jewish German, noted in his diary in January 1939: 'Until 1933 and for at least a good century before that, the German Jews were entirely German and nothing else. Proof: the thousands and thousands of half- and quarter-Jews etc.' The identification of German Jews as distinctively different required a phase of stigmatisation, in the context of the wider policies of a racial state.

A boycott of Jewish shops and businesses took place at the beginning of April 1933, largely as a result of pressures on the part of Nazi party radicals. Finding that this met with popular disapproval, Hitler rapidly called off the action. Yet within days came a more legalistic approach to discrimination, in the form of the 'Law for the Restitution of the Professional Civil Service'. This excluded Jews, communists, socialists, and other 'undesirables' from a broad range of professional jobs. The legalisation of discrimination appears to have been met with widespread acquiescence and a lack of protest. In the following months, further measures to redesign German society along racial lines were taken. Compulsory sterilisation of those considered unsuitable to reproduce on grounds of supposedly hereditary diseases, disabilities and other conditions (including chronic alcoholism and 'asocial' behaviour) were introduced. Racism began to enter all areas of everyday life: hideous images of Jews represented as extremely greedy, sexually menacing, hook-nosed and untrustworthy, or metaphorically akin to dangerous germs or vermin were present not only in obvious propaganda outlets, but also in encyclopaedias, medical dictionaries, books on art or literature, and children's schoolbooks.

The Nuremberg Race Laws of 1935 illustrate the relative significance of the various pressures from party radicals, popular opinion, civil servants, and Hitler's role within a particular structure of power. By the summer of 1935 Nazi party radicals were becoming restless, while law-abiding Germans disapproved of random acts of violence. Concerned both to maintain personal popularity and to appease party radicals, Hitler resorted

'Working towards the Führer': A phrase used by contemporaries copying out Hitler's assumed will without being given an explicit order.

Eugenic theories: theories about the genetic or hereditary characteristics of a population, often accompanied by policies designed to 'improve' the 'stock'.

Planning intelligentsia: a term used by some historians to denote the groups involved in technical planning in relation to matters such as population policy and 'living space'.

'Mischlinge': the Nazi racist term for people of 'mixed' parentage, for example children of mixed marriages where perhaps two of their four grandparents were Jewish.

Josef Mengele (1911-1979)
A committed Nazi and member of the Waffen-SS, Josef Mengele attained notoriety following his appointment in 1943 as chief doctor at Auschwitz. Mengele had the power to choose who was to go straight to the gas chambers; who might first still be useful as slave labour; and who might serve his own ghoulish purposes of experimentation. From 1934 he held a research post at the Institute of Hereditary Biology and Race Hygiene, specialising in the study of twins and race. After the defeat of the Third Reich, Mengele escaped to South America, where he evaded all attempts to track him down. A body found in 1985 is thought to have been that of Mengele, who may have drowned in 1979.

to further legalisation of discrimination. At the Nuremberg party rally in September 1935, he announced the so-called Nuremberg Laws, which were hastily drafted by civil servants flown in from Berlin. With the Reich Citizenship Law, Jewish Germans were reduced to second-class citizenship. Mixed marriages were forbidden under the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour, as was the employment of German women under the age of 45 in Jewish households. It then took several weeks for civil servants in Berlin to fight out among themselves the details of who precisely was to count as a Jew. Hitler typically sided with the emergent winner. The slightly more lenient definition of Jewishness won out, conforming neither to a strictly religious nor a strictly racial definition. Individuals with three or four Jewish grandparents were held to be Jews, while 'Mischlinge' with two Jewish grandparents were considered Jewish if they practised Judaism or married a Jew, and not Jewish if they did not. Under this definition, there were approximately 502,000 full Jews and around 200,000 Mischlinge in Germany at this time, making up slightly over one per cent of the population (although Nazi guesses put it at just over double this figure).

In 1936, with the eyes of the world on Berlin during the Olympics, anti-Semitic policies were toned down. Foreign opinion during peace-time was very important to Hitler at this time, a factor which disappeared from the equation during war-time. Many Jews felt that perhaps the worst was over and things might revert to normal.

Radicalisation and physical degradation, 1938-9

Anti-Semitic policies soon shifted into a far more radical phase, however, with the marginalisation of conservative elites from late 1937 and the Nazification of foreign policy. The *Anschluss* of Austria in spring 1938 added a further 190,000 Jews, who found themselves at the receiving end of far more brutal treatment than German Jews had experienced; and in the expanded Reich, all Jews were now subjected to new measures of discrimination.

Passports were called in. New identification papers were marked with the letter 'J' for 'Jude' (Jew), as well as new middle names - Israel for males, Sarah for females - to indicate Jewish identity. The Aryanisation of Jewish property - confiscation of Jewish possessions, shops and businesses - was dramatically accelerated, and Jews were reduced to an increasingly insecure existence. By the end of the year Jews were no longer able to practise law and medicine; Jewish children were excluded from German schools; Jews were banned from concert halls, museums, swimming pools, theatres, cinemas, walking in certain areas or sitting on park benches which had not been specially designated to them.

On 9 November 1938 (coincidentally the anniversary of the Beer Hall Putsch) Ernst vom Rath, who worked in the German Embassy in Paris, died as a result of an attack by a young Polish Jew called Herschel Grynszpan two days earlier. This was used as a pretext to unleash an orgy of violence against Jews, which Hitler discussed with Goebbels. Goebbels then coordinated the operation while Hitler distanced himself in public from what was represented as the people's 'spontaneous' revenge. Arson attacks on synagogues and looting of Jewish-owned department stores accompanied physical attacks on Jews in the *Kristallnacht* ('night of crystal') named after the heaps of broken glass from smashed windows. Official figures suggested that 91 Jews were killed; many more died during arrest and incarceration and hundreds committed suicide; 267 synagogues were destroyed and 7500 businesses vandalised. Jews were ordered to pay for the wanton destruction, while the proceeds of their insurance claims were confiscated by the state.

Ordinary members of the public appear to have been shocked by the violence and destruction of property.

Despite Hitler's Reichstag 'prophecy' a few weeks later, there is little evidence that a coherent policy of mass murder was on the programme at this time. In a discussion at a meeting shortly after *Kristallnacht*, Goering, Goebbels and Heydrich squabbled and failed to agree on whether Jews should be forced to wear some form of identification, whether they should have to use separate compartments in trains, and whether they should be constrained to live in separate quarters – or encouraged to emigrate.

Emigration was in fact being actively encouraged, most energetically by Eichmann's office in Vienna. However, having been made destitute by Nazi policies, few Jews could find ways of meeting the financial costs and paying the 'emigration tax'. In the Evian conference convened by US President Roosevelt in July 1938, it also became clear that while other countries were willing to express their sympathy, few were willing to accept unlimited numbers of Jews. It was thus becoming impossible for Jews to continue to live within Germany; but it was also becoming increasingly impossible for them to leave.

The search for 'solutions', 1939–41

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the situation changed. With killing going on all around, and the country in a state of war, there was a brutalisation of mentalities and a lower threshold of inhibitions to be crossed. Public opinion also mattered far less, at a time when the 'problem' appeared far greater. With the absorption of parts of Czechoslovakia in 1938–9, another 118,000 Jews had come under German jurisdiction; but the number of Polish Jews was on an altogether larger scale – nearly two million (of the more than three million Polish Jews) lived in the area occupied by Germany. Many of the *Ostjuden* ('Eastern Jews') were not at all like the assimilated or integrated Jews of Germany, but were highly distinctive in customs, dress and habits.

While mass killings of Jews did take place following the invasion of Poland, organised murder was not directed primarily against Jews: the educated Polish and political elites were the major targets. In Germany itself, the principal targets of the racial state at this time were the mentally ill and 'hereditarily diseased', who became victims of the euthanasia programme. This was authorised explicitly by Hitler in a written order of October 1939 and backdated to the outbreak of the war at the start of September; notably, it officially came to a halt in August 1941 as a result of popular protest in Germany.

By contrast, there was at this time an active search for alternative 'solutions' to the Jewish Question. The main focus was on the possibility of 'resettlement', with detailed plans for a Jewish reservation around Lublin, in Poland. Following the defeat of France in May 1940, plans were also actively considered for a Jewish reservation on the island of Madagascar, off the coast of Africa, although this foundered with the German failure to defeat Britain rapidly.

Meanwhile, Polish Jews were being herded into ever more crowded ghettos. Starvation, illness and consequent high mortality rates served merely to exacerbate the Nazis' self-imposed 'problem', in which the Nazi metaphor of Jews as a germ or source of disease became an all-too ghastly reality. The search for 'solutions' was accompanied by rising frustration among those charged with dealing with the Jewish problem. This new climate brought about an even more radical shift.

The transition to mass extermination, 1941–2

The period following the invasion of the Soviet Union was crucial in the transition from a search for a variety of 'solutions' to the Final Solution in

the form of mass murder. With the decision to launch 'Operation Barbarossa' and invade the long-term ideological enemy, the war entered a qualitatively new phase. This was not merely to be a military campaign, but also a racial and political war against Jewish Bolsheviks' and so-called inferior peoples. The conventional rules of warfare were abandoned. Definitive evidence such as a written 'Hitler order' unleashing the Final Solution is unlikely ever to be found, if indeed such a directive ever existed – which seems unlikely, given Hitler's awareness of the sensitivity of the issue and his experience with the euthanasia programme. On the basis of current knowledge, a number of different interpretations can be constructed, all relying to some extent on speculation and surmise.

According to the Commissary Order of June 1941, anyone considered to be even a potential enemy was to be killed outright; thus civilians could be summarily shot as potential Bolsheviks and subversives. Close behind the invading army came the special killing squads, or *Einsatzgruppen*, who had already committed atrocities in late June in Kovno, Bialystok, Lvov, and elsewhere. Contrary to the long-held myth of the honourable German Army, it is now clear that the Army also provided invaluable logistical and practical support to the work of the killing squads, and in some cases actively assisted them in their murderous tasks. Within weeks, the target had broadened: Jewish women and children as well as potential military opponents of the Nazis were being killed. On 31 July, Heydrich received a directive from Goering ordering him to prepare a 'Final Solution for the Jewish question in Europe', although the character of this directive is ambiguous – it speaks explicitly of 'emigration or evacuation' as the 'solutions' to be considered – and hence its interpretation is the subject of considerable debate. Christopher Browning argues however that Hitler probably first mooted a decision in favour of mass murder in July 1941, which was then firmed up in the autumn of 1941.

In August 1941, there was a rapid escalation of the numbers involved in killing, and in the numbers murdered in mass shootings (for example, at Riga), and both Eichmann and Himmler came to witness killings. Ian Kershaw points out that the notable variations in the numbers killed by different *Einsatzgruppen* suggest a considerable degree of leeway for local initiatives to be taken by different killing squads. He also argues that the fact that reinforcements had to be sent in suggests that the scale of the killing had neither been anticipated nor planned for in advance.

Mass murder had now begun, and a crucial threshold had been crossed. The invasion of Russia had also again dramatically increased the numbers of Jews under German domination, and hence the scale of the 'problem'.

Experience soon showed that shooting people into mass graves was less than efficient. It was relatively public and witnesses reported back what they had seen. It was also difficult to gain the compliance of those having to shoot naked women and children in cold blood, unless they had first been plied with copious quantities of alcohol. Experts from the now terminated euthanasia or 'T4' programme were brought in to give their advice. On 3 September, Zyklon B gas was first tested on Soviet prisoners held at Auschwitz.

Phillippe Barrin dates the decision to engage in the systematic mass murder of European Jews to the early autumn. The decision that Jews should be deported from the German Reich and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia to the East was taken in mid-September, following the decision a month earlier that German Jews should be forced to wear the Jewish badge from September onwards. In October, emigration – which had in any event been very difficult – was completely prohibited. But it was not clear where Jews would be 'resettled', given problems with

Zyklon B gas: a highly poisonous gas used in the gas chambers of extermination camps such as Auschwitz. Other methods of killing, such as shooting people into mass graves, or gassing with carbon monoxide exhaust fumes in vans which had been specially designed for this purpose, were found to be less efficient.