4 Domestic policies and their impact

Key questions

- What factors influenced Nazi economic policy?
- How successful were the Nazis in bringing about economic recovery in the years 1933–39?
- How ready was Germany for war in 1939?
- How effectively did Speer manage the wartime German economy?
- What was the position of women in the Nazi state?
- How did the Nazis try to ensure the support of youth?
- How extensive was the persecution of minorities within the Nazi state?
- What was the relationship between the Nazis and the Churches within Germany?
- How did Nazism affect the arts and cultural life?

Overview

- Nazi economic policy was incoherent and, despite having an ideological basis, was moulded by circumstances.
- Hjalmar Schacht helped the German economic recovery from 1933 but clashed with Hitler over rearmament and was dismissed.
- From 1936, Hermann Goering led the Four-Year Plan, aiming at self-sufficiency (autarky) but never fully succeeded.
- Germany was not ready for war in 1939 and the economy was near collapse in 1942, when Speer took command of reorganising the labour supply and the distribution of raw materials.
- The economy collapsed entirely in 1945 in the wake of Allied bombing.
- Nazi policy towards women was conservative, aiming to keep women 'in the home', but was inconsistent since women were encouraged back into the workplace in the war years.
- Young people were the focus of intense indoctrination through the Hitler Youth and the education system.
- There was an attempt to control the Churches through the Catholic Concordat and a separate Reich Protestant Church. However, neither was ever fully brought into line and attempts to spread an alternative pagan faith met with limited success.
- Minorities were persecuted for their political, social and racial non-conformity, with policies becoming ever more radical as the regime grew more secure. Attempts to create a 'Jew-free' society ultimately led to the Holocaust and the deaths of 6 million Jews. The experimental, modernist Weimar culture was rejected in favour of a controlled and conservative approach to the arts, which demanded that the arts should glorify Nazi values.

Timeline

1933 Apr: one-day boycott of Jewish shops and businesses; Civil Service Law
- May: public burning of ‘un-German’ books; Law for the Protection of Retail Trade
- Jul: Concordat with Catholic Church
- Sep: the German Chamber of Culture, Reich Food Estate and Reich Economic Chamber are created; Reich Entailed Farm Law

1934 Aug: Schacht becomes minister of economics
- Sep: New Plan comes into effect

1935 Sep: Nuremberg Laws – Jews are deprived of rights

1936 Apr: Lebensborn (Spring of Life) programme is launched
- Oct: Four-Year Plan is drawn up with Goering in charge
- Dec: membership of Hitler Youth becomes compulsory

1937 Mar: Pope issues Mit Brennender Sorge (With Burning Anxiety) criticising racism
- Nov: Schacht resigns as minister of economics and is replaced by Goering

1938 Nov: Reichskristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass) – anti-Jewish pogrom

1939 Aug: euthanasia programme is launched

1941 Aug: Bishop Galen protests against euthanasia
- Dec: gassing of Jews in mobile vans in Chelmno begins

1942 Jan: Wannsee Conference to co-ordinate 'final solution' of Jewish question; Speer takes control of the economy
What factors influenced Nazi economic policy?

Despite promises to make Germany prosperous again, Hitler had no clear economic programme when he became chancellor in 1933. In the 25-point programme of 1920 (see Unit 2), the Nazis had claimed to want to respond to the needs of small farmers (29% of the working population) and smaller urban traders. However, as with much of what Hitler said in his quest for power, he displayed little depth of commitment once he reached the top. Indeed, as the likelihood of power had grown nearer, he had increasingly looked to reassure big business, which could fund his campaigns and make his dreams a reality.

There was some token acknowledgement of the ‘socialist’ aspects of National Socialism in the policies of early 1933. All peasant debts – a total of 12 billion Reichsmarks – were suspended between March and October 1933 and high tariffs put on many imported foodstuffs. The setting up of the Reich Food Estate under Richard Darré, the minister of food and agriculture, gave peasant farmers guaranteed prices for their produce. The Reich Entailed Farm Law (September 1933) provided small farmers with security of tenure by forbidding the sale,
confiscation, division or mortgaging of any farm between 7.5 and 10 hectares (18.5 and 25 acres) that was owned by Aryan farmers. Similarly, there was a gesture towards helping urban traders in the Law for the Protection of Retail Trade (May 1933). Among other measures, the law forbade the setting up of new department stores.

Although such measures fulfilled one aspect of the Nazis’ professed concerns, they always took second place to the Nazis’ predominant desire, which was to strengthen Germany to fight a future war. It was the ‘national’ aspect of the party’s name that was the real driving force behind Nazi economic policy. This produced the concept of Wehrwirtschaft – a defence economy that would provide for Germany’s needs in a future war.

**Source A**

In February 1933, a week after coming to power, Hitler announced:

For the next four to five years the main principle must be everything for the armed forces. Germany’s position in the world depends decisively upon the position of the German armed forces. The position of the German economy in the world is also dependent on that.


This principle became even more important after 1936, and necessitated a ‘managed economy’, whereby the state regulated economic life. Wehrwirtschaft included the pursuit of self-sufficiency, or autarky, which drove out ‘socialist’ ideas by demanding the development of modern large-scale farms. It also encompassed the acceleration of rearmament, which required the support of big business. Hence, between July 1933 and December 1936, over 1600 new cartel arrangements were put in place.

The historian Richard Grunberger has estimated that, while only 40% of German production was in the hands of such monopolies in 1933, it was 70% by 1937. Many industrialists and companies became closely associated with the regime – for example, Krupp, the arms and steel manufacturer, and I. G. Farben, which produced chemicals.

However, as Hitler said to building workers in May 1937, ‘the decisive factor is not the theory but the performance of the economy’. Bracher has echoed this point, arguing that ‘at no time did National Socialism develop a consistent economic or social theory’. Ideological ideas could be contradictory and there was a conflict between the continuance of private ownership and increased state direction.

Furthermore, the practical need to provide the German people with a reasonable standard of living was difficult to reconcile with a commitment to rearmament. Hitler never fully resolved this conflict between ‘guns and butter’.

**Cartel** A cartel is an agreement between companies to work together to reduce production costs and improve efficiency.

**Fact**

Krupp factories supported Hitler with weapons and armaments while I. G. Farben built chemical plants. During the war, Krupp ran factories using slave labour in occupied countries and in 1943 Alfred Krupp was made minister of the war economy. I. G. Farben built a plant producing synthetic oil and rubber at Auschwitz, where 83,000 slave labourers worked. I. G. Farben also held the patent for the Zyklon B gas, which was used in the gas chambers. At the Nuremberg Trials, Krupp was sentenced to 12 years in prison and 13 directors of I. G. Farben were sentenced to one to eight years.

**Guns and butter** This phrase had been used by historians writing about the Nazis’ preparations for war. The Nazis could not invest heavily in rearmament (guns) while maintaining standards of living (butter). There was also literally a shortage of fats in Germany – both for consumption (butter, margarine and lard) and for industrial purposes (grease).
How successful were the Nazis in bringing about economic recovery in the years 1933–39?

Unemployment had peaked at 6 million (a sixth of the working population) in July 1932 and, when Hitler became chancellor in 1933, Germany’s exports were just 39% of the 1928 level. Reducing unemployment, stimulating the economy and addressing the balance of payments problem, which resulted from the collapse of the export market, were issues the Nazis had to address if they were to retain credibility and support. To help with this, in March 1933, Hitler appointed Dr Hjalmar Schacht as president of the Reichsbank. Schacht was a non-Nazi who was well respected by the business community.

In June 1933, a law to reduce unemployment was passed. This included:
- government spending on public works schemes – Arbeitsdienst
- subsidies for private construction/renovation
- income tax rebates/loans to encourage industrial activity.

Other measures that helped to combat unemployment included:
- emergency relief schemes
- recruitment into the Reich Labour Service (RAD) formed in 1934 – through which the unemployed were sent to work on various civil, military and agricultural projects
- a law for the construction of 7000 km (4350 miles) of motorway – the Autobahnen
- specific regulations – for example, that no machinery could be used for roadbuilding when surplus labour was available
- an expansion of the party and national bureaucracy
- discouragement of female labour (see pages 99–101), including marriage allowances to remove women from the labour market
- in March 1935, conscription and an increase in rearmament.

In order to stimulate the economy, tax concessions were offered to businesses, and Schacht also raised money for investment through ‘mefo bills’. These were credit notes, issued by the Reichsbank and guaranteed by the government. The bills were a means of ‘deficit financing’. They were paid back with interest after five years from the increased government tax revenue they helped to generate. Repayments on mefo bills accounted for 50% of government expenditure in 1934–35.

Mefo bills permitted subsidies and agreements, such as that to match private investment in the car industry. This helped to stimulate housing, road construction and a variety of industries. Among these was the rearmament industry, although it was not the main growth area before 1936.

Schacht also took action to erode Germany’s debt and improve the balance of payments position. In 1933 controls were introduced to limit the drain of Germany’s foreign exchange by paying foreign debts in Reichsmarks.

In July 1934, debt repayment was stopped altogether and creditors were given bonds instead. Although creditor countries opposed this move, they failed to co-operate to put pressure on Germany. Consequently, the Nazis were able to push ahead with the New Plan of September 1934, devised by Schacht, who was promoted to minister of economics that year. The New Plan supported:
increased government regulation of imports
- the development of trade with less developed countries
- the development of German trade with central and southeast Europe.

The New Plan led to a series of trade agreements, particularly with the Balkan and South American states, which provided for the import of vital raw materials. Since these were paid for in Reichsmarks, they encouraged such countries to buy German goods in return. According to William Shirer, 'Schacht’s creation of credit, in a country that had little liquid capital and almost no financial reserves, was the work of a genius.'

Other influences that helped the revival of the economy included the avoidance of labour troubles with the dissolution of the trade unions, the banning of strikes and the creation of the DAF in May 1933, and the Nazis’ continued use of propaganda to increase the illusion of success and prosperity and maintain confidence. There were also other 'windfalls', such as the seizure of Jewish property and Austrian assets, following the Anschluss of 1938.

**Did the Nazis perform an ‘economic miracle’?**

Unemployment fell from 6 million to 2.5 million within 18 months of Hitler’s coming to power. By 1936 it stood at 1.6 million and, with subsequent expansion, by 1939 it had fallen below 200,000. Economic investment increased and public expenditure reached 23.6 billion Reichsmarks in 1939 – a considerable advance on 17.1 billion Reichsmarks in 1932 and 18.4 billion in 1933.

**Fact**

Following the Austrian Anschluss with Germany in 1938 (see page 65), Austrian Jews were forced to declare their land, personal possessions, bank and savings accounts, securities, insurance policies and pension payments. These assets, totalling over $800 million, were gradually expropriated as Jews were deprived of their possessions and given jobs as forced labourers or removed to the Austrian concentration camp Mauthausen. By February 1939, 77.6% of Austrian Jewish shops and businesses had been seized.

**Fact**

Between 1932 and 1939 unemployment in Germany fell from around 6 million to less than 200,000. However, around 4 million had been absorbed into the Wehrmacht (armed forces). This meant that, in reality, only about 2 million extra jobs had been created over six years. These were mostly in the manufacture of armaments, which was necessary to equip the 4 million members of the Wehrmacht.

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**SOURCE B**

What we have achieved in two and a half years in the way of a planned provision of labour, a planned regulation of the market, a planned control of prices and wages, was considered a few years ago to be absolutely impossible. We only succeeded because behind these apparently dead economic measures we had the living energies of the whole nation.


However, despite Hitler’s talk of a new ‘determination’, the economic situation when he took office was not as bad as he liked to suggest. Thanks to Brüning, reparations had ended and unemployment had begun to fall after July 1932. Work creation schemes had been established and the world economic recovery from late 1932 had laid the basis for the so-called ‘Nazi economic miracle’. Furthermore, despite considerable economic achievements, the Nazis’ economic policies were not a total success. Reserves of foreign currency remained low and the balance of payments continued to be in deficit – and grew worse after 1936, when Schacht’s influence declined. Rearmament put a strain on the economy and, although real wages increased overall, the price of food rose to the detriment of the poorer peasants and urban workers.
Historians who question the strong dictator theory (e.g. Kershaw and Overy) would argue that there was no coherent Nazi economic policy, so it is wrong to ascribe the term 'Nazi economic miracle' to what happened after 1933. Despite Nazi claims, most economic policies were not carefully thought through and evolved according to political whims.

**How ready was Germany for war in 1939?**

By 1936, Hitler had grown impatient with Schacht's commitment to financial orthodoxy. This commitment made Schacht anxious to curb public expenditure, encourage more exports and slow down the pace of rearmament as it was
straining the balance of payments. Consequently, in August 1936, the Four-Year Plan was announced, with Hermann Goering as its director.

- Emphasis was to be placed on self-sufficiency, or autarky; plants were to be built for the production of ersatz (substitute) synthetic materials, such as artificial rubber (known as Buna), which could be made from acetylene.
- Special encouragement was to be given to the chemical industry and the development of synthetic fuel (such as using coal to produce oil).
- Steelworks were to be developed, using the lower grade ores that were available within Germany (the Hermann Goering steelworks was erected in compliance with this).
- Emphasis was to be placed on the production of heavy machinery.
- The office of the Four-Year Plan was to issue regulations controlling foreign exchange, labour, raw materials distribution and prices.
- Targets for private industry were to be established through six sub-offices with special responsibilities for production and distribution. (These were: raw materials; labour force; agriculture; price control; foreign exchange; and the Reichswerke Hermann Goering, the steel plant that co-ordinated rearmament.)

The Four-Year Plan extended Nazi control by setting up a ‘managed economy’ in co-operation with big business. Private industry continued, but failure to conform and meet expectations could result in the business being taken over. The plan had some success and there was a growth in output in all the key areas. However, overall targets were not met (especially those for synthetic fuel, rubber, fats and light metals) and the production of synthetic substitutes proved costly. For example, to produce one tonne of oil, it took six tonnes of coal. By 1939, Germany still imported a third of all its raw materials, including iron ore, oil and rubber, and there remained a shortage of foreign exchange to buy necessary imports.

The development of the plan was also impeded by bureaucratic inefficiency and internal rivalry, while the need to maintain the production of consumer goods for the German people impeded the priorities of the plan.

Tim Mason, a Marxist historian, has argued that the German economy had reached a crisis point by 1938 and that this was so serious that it drove Germany to war. Mason claims that the economy had been put under strain by rearmament. He argues that the regime, which had consistently favoured capitalist big business over the workers, was unable to demand the ‘sacrifices’ necessary to pursue its ends, such as wage reductions. Consequently the conflict between ‘guns and butter’ threatened unrest among the working classes and led Hitler to divert attention by going to war before he was really ready to do so. However, according to Overy, the decision to go to war caused, rather than was caused by, an economic crisis. He argues that the outbreak of war was decided by the ending of appeasement, not an economic need.

Most historians agree that, whatever the reason, Germany was not fully prepared for war in 1939. Taylor, for example, has stressed that Hitler was unable to concentrate on rearmament because he needed to keep up consumer production. Burton Klein has put forward the view that Germany was ready for a short war of Blitzkrieg, but not for total war, which Hitler never intended. In support of this view, he has pointed to the ‘quite modest’ scale of economic mobilisation in 1939 and to the 30% rise in the production of consumer goods between 1936 and 1939.

**Blitzkrieg** This term refers to ‘lightning warfare’ – an attack conducted with such speed that the enemy is overwhelmed even before it can put all its forces into action.
Overy has also argued that, although Hitler was undoubtedly preparing for war, he was not yet ready in 1939. This theory is backed up by Hitler’s speech at the Hossbach Conference in November 1937. In this speech, Hitler argued that Britain and France would not fight for Czech independence and that Poland could be taken without a general war.

The Nazi–Soviet Pact of 1939 (Hitler’s ‘deal’ with Joseph Stalin to divide Poland between them) also fits the view that Hitler planned to absorb Poland peacefully and use Polish resources for economic build-up before launching into full-scale war, perhaps in 1942. When Hitler’s plans for peaceful expansion failed in September 1939, Hitler told Goering that he wanted ‘complete conversion of the economy to wartime requirements’. It is likely that it was at this stage that target dates had to be brought forward and a new acceleration applied.

**How effectively did Speer manage the wartime German economy?**

When war broke out, the Nazi rearmament programmes were only half completed. Consequently, the early German victories were more the result of their enemies’ weaknesses and their own military tactics, than that of superior German armaments. However, these victories gave a false sense of confidence. Resources within Germany were not used efficiently. For example, the army could call up any worker, regardless of his skills or employment, women remained in the home, and few prisoners of war were set to work. (The proportion of prisoners in work had still only reached 40% by 1942.) Furthermore, there was no central authority to direct labour.

Hitler’s failure to defeat Britain at the end of 1940 and the Soviet Union after the invasion of June 1941 created a situation that the German economy had never been prepared to deal with. Rather than a short war of Blitzkrieg, it had to sustain a long war. To achieve this, Fritz Todt was made minister of armaments and munitions in March 1940. He died in February 1942 and was replaced by Albert Speer.

Todt laid the foundations for Speer by setting up a series of committees with chairmen from industry to rationalise production. However, he had only limited success because of military interference. Erhard Milch (Goering’s deputy at the Air Ministry) also organised aircraft production through committees linking producers and contractors but suffered the same level of army bureaucracy.

Speer’s role in enabling Germany to continue the war to 1945 was to be of immense importance. Although he fought constant battles against other Nazi leaders, such as Goering, Himmler and Martin Bormann, as well as obstructive local Gauleiters, he managed to turn wartime production around.

In April 1942, Speer persuaded Hitler to establish a Central Planning Board to organise the allocation of raw materials and ensure that a larger proportion went into armaments. The Central Planning Board:

- set norms for the multiple use of separately manufactured parts to reduce unnecessary duplication
- provided for substitution in raw materials and ensured the development of new processes
- increased industrial capacity (sometimes by converting existing plant)
• placed bans or limits on the manufacture of unnecessary goods
• set schedules and issued output comparisons
• organised the distribution of labour, machinery and power supplies.

Speer worked extremely hard, overseeing everything himself. Hitler remained unrealistic and never fully understood Germany's economic position. He was reluctant to endorse rationing or to cut consumer production, which was kept at only 3% below peacetime levels in 1942.

In the organisation of labour, Speer had to counter the prejudice of both Hitler and Fritz Sauckel, who was officially responsible for the supply of labour. In January 1943, it was agreed that German women could be conscripted into the factories, but the order continued to be frequently ignored.

However, labour supplies were maintained with the use of 7 million foreign workers (both male and female) transferred to German factories. Although forced labour could be unreliable (particularly when workers were living on meagre rations), statistics would certainly support Speer's success in increasing wartime production.

In the first six months of Speer's control, overall armament production rose 50% - guns 27%, tanks 25% and ammunition 97%. Work continued despite military losses, defeats and allied bombing raids. There was a monthly average of 111,000 tonnes of bombs dropped on Germany in the second quarter of 1944 - many falling on fuel plants and refineries. Yet, from the production of 3744 aircraft in 1940, factories reached a peak production of 25,285 planes in 1944. By rebuilding works to protect them from enemy bombing raids, 5000 new planes were still built in the first four months of 1945.

However, not even Speer could overcome Germany's inherent disadvantages in the war. In the end, bombing and shrinking resources, as Germany's enemies advanced from east and west, caused the economy to crumble in 1945. By 1945, 400,000 civilians had been killed in bombing raids, and towns, cities and factories lay in ruins. Transport had completely broken down and oil was unobtainable.

According to Mommsen's view of Nazism's destructive capacity, economic destruction was the product of Hitler's personal obsession, as summed up in his order to Speer in 1945 to destroy transport and factories lest they fall into enemy hands. He claimed, 'The Germans have failed to prove worthy of their Führer. I must die and all Germany must die with me.' Fortunately, Speer countermanded the order, but there is no doubt that the Nazi economy had ultimately failed.

**What was the position of women in the Nazi state?**

Hitler had very clear views about the position that women should hold in the Nazi state.

Hitler looked back on female emancipation during the Weimar Republic with disfavour. According to Nazi propaganda, the duties of women were as mothers, housewives supporting their husbands, and community organisers.
According to Nazi ideology, a woman's primary role was as a mother, whose duty was to bear further Aryans.

To encourage motherhood, birth control centres were closed, abortion was made illegal unless necessary for the eradication of 'genetic defects', and maternity benefits were increased. Income tax allowances for dependent children were raised and large families enjoyed concessions on expenses such as school fees and railway fares. In 1935, the Lebensborn (Spring of Life) project encouraged unmarried women with good racial credentials to become pregnant, with selected SS men as the fathers. 'The Honour Cross of German Motherhood' or 'Mothers' Cross' was established in May 1939 to encourage all women to 'bear a child for the Führer'.

However, only the genetically pure were allowed to procreate. From 1935, couples needed a certificate of 'fitness to marry' before a marriage licence could be issued. From 1938, 'unproductive' marriages could be ended. After 1941, couples found cohabiting after their marriage had been banned were sent to concentration camps. Mothers who failed in their duty to support their children's education as 'national comrades', for example attending the Hitler Youth (see page 101), could also face having their children removed.

To facilitate their role as mothers and alleviate male unemployment, legislation and propaganda were used to remove women from the workplace. By the Law for the Reduction of Unemployment of June 1933, women were encouraged to leave work on marriage with the support of generous loans.

Fact
Marriage loans provided just over half an average year's earnings. They had a low interest rate of 1% per month over eight and a quarter years. They were reduced by a quarter and repayments delayed by a year on the birth of each healthy child, so after having four children a couple owed nothing. At first, loans were only granted if a wife gave up her job, but the regulations changed in 1937. By 1939, 42% of all marriages were loan assisted.

The slogan 'Emancipation of Women' was invented by Jewish intellectuals. If the man's world is said to be the state, his struggle, his readiness to devote his powers to the service of the community, then it may perhaps be said that the woman's is a smaller world. For her world is her husband, her family, her children and her home.


In 1934, all married women were forced out of careers in medicine, the legal profession and the Civil Service. They were even declared ineligible for jury service, supposedly because they could not think logically. Similar beliefs placed
politics out of women's reach. In a striking contrast with the 1920s, women were banned from senior positions in the Nazi leadership and there were no female Nazi members of the Reichstag. Education also discriminated against women. Only 10% of university entrants were female until a shortage of professional and technical experts in the later 1930s led to a relaxation of policy.

Similarly, when a labour shortage began to affect rearmament plans in 1936, some women were once more drawn back into factories. Compulsory agricultural labour service was introduced for women under 25 in 1939 and, from January 1943, women aged 16-45 could be conscripted for the war effort.

Speer later wrote of his struggle to get Hitler to agree to the need for female mobilisation, but the Nazis got round the apparent contradiction in policies by arguing that in wartime the whole of Germany had become the 'home' where women were required to serve.

Nazi policies towards women were therefore contradictory. While they claimed to promote the importance of family values, they encouraged an independent youth that placed the party above the family. While they extolled conventional morality and the importance of marriage, they also permitted illegitimate births and easier divorce, and advanced compulsory sterilisation for those with genetic defects. While they told women to stay in the home, from 1936 women were encouraged to return to the factories. While female education was initially discouraged, by the war years women were encouraged to enter universities and train for professional roles.

**How did the Nazis try to ensure the support of youth?**

Young people were very important to the Nazis. According to Hans Schemm, leader of the Nazi Teachers' League, 'those who have youth on their side control the future'. Consequently, much effort was put into winning over this new generation through youth movements and the control of education.

In July 1933, Hitler appointed Baldur von Schirach as 'youth leader of the German Reich'. By the end of 1933, von Schirach had control over all youth organisations, except for those Catholic organisations exempted under the Concordat (see page 107).

Membership of the Hitler Youth (Hitlerjugend; HJ) became compulsory in 1936 and in March 1939 the Catholic youth groups were finally closed down. The Hitler Youth was divided into various sections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pimpfen (cubs)</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deutsches Jungvolk (DJ)</td>
<td>10-14 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitlerjugend (HJ)</td>
<td>14-18 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fact**

During the years of the Weimar Republic, women had been granted the vote and enjoyed greater equality with men than under the Nazis. They had been encouraged to pursue higher education, to take up professional posts and to participate in politics as members of the Reichstag.

**Fact**

Prolific mothers were awarded medals, with the inscription 'The child enobles the mother.' These were given annually on 12 August, the birthday of Hitler's own mother. The recipients had to be 'of German blood and hereditarily healthy'. There were three categories:
- **Bronze** — for those who had four or five children
- **Silver** — for those who had six or seven children
- **Gold** — for those who had eight or more children.

**Fact**

Tests for admission to the Pimpfen included:
- recitation of Nazi dogma and all the verses of the 'Horst Wessel Song' (the Nazi Party anthem)
- map reading
- participation in pseudo war games and charitable collections
- sporting standards — 60 metres (66 yards) in 12 seconds; long jump of 2.75 metres (3 yards)
- participation in a cross-country march.

**Fact**

Members of the Hitler Youth took an oath and vow to the Führer:
You, Father, are our commander! We stand in your name. The Reich is the object of our struggle, It is the beginning and the Amen.
Nazi youth organisations were governed by two basic aims: to train boys for war and girls for motherhood. At every level there were uniforms, competitions, expeditions, sports, musical activities, theatrical productions and artistic displays to take part in. There was incessant activity and competition, which penalised the weak or uncommitted. Values of honour, discipline and self-sacrifice were encouraged, with contempt for moderation, intellect and sensitivity. Youths were even encouraged to spy on their parents and report aberrant attitudes.

Generally, the Hitlerjugend was well received by young people. However, some young people disliked the regimentation and, by the later 1930s, alternative, illegal youth groups began to attract growing numbers. These included the working-class Edelweiss Pirates, and the middle/upper-class Swing Movement, whose members rejected Nazi values by dancing to American jazz (black) music and wearing American-style fashions.

The German education system was also used to inculcate Nazi values and, in May 1934, a centralised Reich Education Ministry was established under Bernhard Rust. No substantial change was made to the structure of the education system, apart from the establishment of a new series of elite schools including Napolis, Adolf Hitler Schools and the Ordensburgen (see Fact box, left). However, there was a radical revision of the curriculum.

Biology, History and German became the means for conveying Nazi philosophy. In Biology, racial differences and the Nazis' interpretation of Darwin's theory of selection and survival of the fittest were emphasised. History was designed to 'awaken in the younger generation that sense of responsibility towards ancestors and grandchildren that will enable it to let its life be subsumed in eternal Germany'. German lessons encouraged a consciousness of the nation and there was an emphasis on folklore. Ideology even entered the curriculum in a lesser way in Maths, where problems were posed in ideological language. At further education colleges and universities, new subjects such as genetics, racial theory, folklore, military studies and the study of German borders made an appearance. There was also a huge emphasis on sport, which occupied a minimum of five hours a week, giving the gymnastics teacher a new status. This was at the expense of religious education, which ceased to exist as a subject in the school-leaving examination in 1935. There was also differentiation between the curriculum for males and females, with the latter emphasising home economics.

Teachers and lecturers were also subject to Nazi controls. Some were dismissed under the 1933 Civil Service Law and in 1939 all teachers became Reich civil servants. The National Socialist Teachers' League and National Socialist Lecturers' League organised special 'camps' to reinforce Nazi values. At these camps, all teachers below the age of 50 were expected to participate in sport. The teaching profession was required to be actively anti-Semitic, and 'Jewish' theses, such as Einstein's theory of relativity, were banned.

It is hard to gauge the effect of Nazi youth policies, but the willingness of millions of young people to fight for the Nazi cause when war broke out must suggest some degree of success. However, the quality of educational provision declined and extra youth activities sapped young people's energies. Furthermore, there was active discrimination against women and Jews and, in wartime, evacuations and the conscription of teachers further disrupted education.
How extensive was the persecution of minorities within the Nazi state?

Those who failed to fit Nazi criteria for Volksgenossen were subject to intimidation and persecution. Ideological enemies have already been considered in Units 1 and 2, but two other important minority groups suffered:

- asocials such as habitual criminals, the work-shy, tramps and beggars, alcoholics, prostitutes, gay men and lesbians, and juvenile delinquents
- biological outsiders, including those suffering hereditary defects that were considered a threat to the future of the German race and those who were regarded as a threat because of their race, such as gypsies and Jews.

Asocials

In September 1933, 300,000–500,000 so-called beggars and tramps were rounded up. Some (mainly the young unemployed) were given a permit (Wanderkarte) and had to perform compulsory work in return for board and lodgings, but the 'work-shy' were dealt with under the Law Against Dangerous Habitual Criminals, 1933. They were sent to concentration camps and made to wear a black triangle. They could also be compulsorily sterilised, since 'social deviance' was considered to be biologically determined. In summer 1938, another big roundup took place under the 'Work-shy Reich' programme. Those arrested were mostly sent to Buchenwald. Of the 10,000 tramps incarcerated during the Third Reich, few survived.

In 1939, the Reich Central Agency for the Struggle Against Juvenile Delinquency was established and a youth concentration camp set up in Moringen near Hannover in 1940. Here, youths were subjected to biological and racial examination and those deemed unremovable were sterilised. If the 1940 Community Alien Law had been carried out, all those considered deficient in mind or character would have been similarly treated, but this policy was abandoned because of the war.

Biological outsiders

In July 1933, the Nazis introduced a law demanding the compulsory sterilisation of those suffering from specified hereditary illnesses. These included some illnesses that had a dubious hereditary base, such as schizophrenia and 'chronic alcoholism'. Heredity courts were established to consider individual cases and, between 1934 and 1945, around 350,000 people were sterilised under this law. People who had been sterilised were forbidden to marry fertile partners.

Euthanasia

The Nazis also launched a propaganda campaign to devalue people with mental or physical disabilities as 'burdens on the community'. This culminated in the euthanasia programme, which began in summer 1939. Practised in secret, the programme initially targeted children under 3, but it was later extended to children up to 16 years of age. By 1945, 5000 children had been murdered by injection or deliberate starvation. In order to extend this programme to adults, carbon monoxide gas was used in six mental hospitals in various parts of Germany. By August 1941, when the programme was officially stopped because of public outrage, 72,000 people had been murdered. However, between 1941 and 1943, the secret programme '14F13' led to the gassing of 30,000–50,000 in the concentration camps, on the grounds of mental illness or physical incapacity.
Hitler and Nazi Germany

Fact
Gypsies were given different coloured papers according to their origins. The pure, Sinti, gypsies received brown papers, the Mischlinge were given blue and ‘nomads’ received grey. There was a suggestion that the Sinti (who had kept their race ‘pure’) should be assigned areas in Bohemia and Moravia where they could live traditionally as ‘museum specimens’. However, the war stopped this from becoming more than a plan.

Fact
Mengele’s ‘research’ included an attempt to change eye colour by injecting chemicals into children’s eyes, experiments involving the amputation of limbs, or the injection of deadly viruses and shock treatments.

Gypsies
The Nazis persecuted gypsies, because of their alleged inferior racial character. There were only around 30,000 gypsies in Germany, but they were included in the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, which banned marriage between Aryans and non-Aryans. Physical traits were analysed and efforts made to distinguish between pure gypsies and half-gypsies (Mischlinge) at the Research Centre for Racial Hygiene and Biological Population Studies.

From December 1938, gypsies were registered and, from 1940, deported to Poland to work in camps. In December 1942, they were transferred to Auschwitz and subjected to medical experiments carried out by Dr Josef Mengele, a Nazi German SS officer known as the ‘Angel of Death’.

Mengele supervised the selection of incoming prisoners to determine who should be killed, who would become a forced labourer, and who would be used for human medical experiments. Most of those Mengele experimented on died, either from the experiments or later infections. He also had people killed in order to dissect them afterwards.

It was not just the gypsies who suffered such cruelty, but of the 20,000 gypsies sent to Auschwitz, around 10,000 were murdered. Probably a total of around half a million gypsies were killed in occupied Europe.

Nazi troops hold anti-Semitic placards in front of a locked shop in an organised boycott of German Jewish businesses in Berlin, 1933; one of the signs reads ‘Germans defend yourselves! Don’t buy from the Jews!’
Jews

Although there were only about 500,000 Jews in Germany itself (less than 1% of the population), and most had been thoroughly assimilated into the German community, Jews were portrayed by the Nazi regime as a serious racial threat and the root cause of Germany’s ills.

The first state-sponsored act of persecution was a one-day boycott of Jewish shops and businesses in March 1933. The action was largely taken to fulfill SA demands and was not repeated, since the economy was too fragile and fear of international repercussions too great. The government continued to issue contracts to Jewish firms, although Jewish civil servants were dismissed under the Law for a Restoration of a Professional Civil Service, 1933. Persecution increased from 1935, with the announcement of the ‘Law for Protection of German Blood’ (Nuremberg Laws), which banned marriage between Jews and Germans and deprived Jews of German citizenship.

In 1938, persecution escalated as the regime grew increasingly radical. Jews were no longer awarded public contracts; all Jewish property valued at over 5000 Marks had to be registered and could not be sold; Jews could no longer be employed in businesses; Jewish doctors, dentists and lawyers were forbidden to offer services to Aryans; all Jewish children were required to bear the names Israel or Sarah in addition to other names; and Jews were obliged to carry identity cards and have their passports stamped with a ‘J’.

On Reichskristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass), 9/10 November 1938, there were attacks on synagogues, businesses, homes and shops – leaving broken glass (like ‘crystal’) everywhere. Hundreds of Jews were injured, 91 murdered and 20,000 sent to concentration camps on ‘the night the national soul boiled over’. The official excuse for the attacks was the murder by a Jew of Ernst von Rath, a German diplomatic official in Paris. In reality, this orgy of violence was orchestrated by Goebbels.

Increasing numbers of Jews emigrated between 1934 and 1939, as they were expelled from economic life, schools, cinemas, universities, theatres and sports facilities. In cities, they were even forbidden to enter areas designated ‘for Aryans only’ and, in January 1939, Hitler threatened ‘the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe’ in the event of war.

The invasion of Poland in September 1939 added 3 million Jews to the German empire. Jews were placed in ghettos where they were forbidden to change residence, were subject to a curfew, had to wear a yellow star on their clothing and were compelled to perform labour service.

A final attempt to rid the German Empire of Jews – the Madagascar Plan of summer 1940 – had to be abandoned after Hitler’s failure to conquer Britain left the British in control of the sea. This left millions of Europe’s Jews facing death – through malnutrition and hard labour, and by mass shootings as the Germans advanced into Russia from June 1941. Following the Wannsee Conference of January 1942, Jews were gassed in the extermination camps created at Auschwitz, Chelmo, Majdanek and Treblinka, an event ambiguously referred to as the ‘final solution’. Around 6 million Jews died in the camps. The operation was shrouded in secrecy, but the fact that scarce resources were diverted to facilitate this Holocaust at a time when the Germans were struggling in the war gives some indication of the irrationality of Nazism.

Fact

Before 1933 in Germany, 17% of bankers, 16% of lawyers and 10% of doctors and dentists were Jews. Jews were also influential in the clothing and retail trades.

Fact

Himmler had encouraged an emigration policy for Jews since 1934, but it met with limited success. Only 120,000 of around 500,000 Jews had left Germany by 1937 – and many had subsequently returned. The annexation of Austria in 1938 had added 190,000 Jews to the German Reich and led to an intensified emigration policy whereby 45,000 were forced to leave Austria in six months. During 1939, 78,000 more Jews were forced out of Germany and 30,000 from Bohemia and Moravia in Czechoslovakia.

Historical debate

No written order to exterminate the Jews exists. However, intentionalists such as Christopher Browning and Andreas Hillgruber believe orders were given in the summer of 1941 when it was felt Russia would soon collapse. Goering’s order to Reinhard Heydrich, Himmler’s deputy in the SS, on 31 July 1941, ‘to bring about a complete solution of the Jewish question within the German sphere of influence in Europe’ supports this. However, structuralists such as Mommsen and Broszat believe the order came in the autumn when the policy of Jewish resettlement east of the Urals was wrecked by Germany’s failure to defeat Russia.
What was the relationship between the Nazis and the Churches within Germany?

Germany contained both Protestants (58% of the population) and Catholics (32%), as well as other religious groups. Some of these, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, refused to compromise with the regime and were deported to concentration camps.

The mainstream Churches proved much easier to influence. This is partly because the Protestant and Catholic Churches shared a good deal of common ideological ground with Nazism, in their dislike of Marxism, their conservatism, belief in family values and underlying anti-Semitism (even if in principle they spoke against it).

However, Hitler's determination to set up an Aryanised social community left little room for religion. He feared an outright attack on the Churches would do more harm than good, but he wanted to restrict the Churches to a purely spiritual role. This ran counter to the desire of most churchmen to maintain the Church's role in other activities such as youth groups.

The Protestant Church

The Protestant Church, which had Lutheran and Calvinist branches, had never been fully united and, with the rise of Nazism, a 'German Christian' movement emerged calling for a new national 'People's Church'. This was mainly supported by young pastors and theology students who saw the Nazis' 'national uprising' as the opportunity for religious as well as political renewal. The German Christians described themselves as the SA of the Church and adopted uniforms, marches and salutes. Their motto was 'the swastika on our breasts and the cross in our hearts'.

In May 1933, Hitler set up the Reich Church with the help of the German Christians, and he appointed a Reich bishop to co-ordinate the Protestant churches under his authority. In July, Ludwig Müller took this position and German Christians were appointed as state bishops and given other senior positions in the Church.

Some German Christians even wanted to remove the Old Testament from religious practice, calling it 'Jewish'. However, not all members of the Protestant Church approved of the German Christians and certainly not of their more outspoken devotees.

In September 1933, a group of 100 pastors headed by Martin Niemöller set up the Pastors' Emergency League to resist the German Christians and defend traditional Lutheranism. Some members of this League were arrested, including Bishop Meiser of Bavaria and Bishop Wurm of Württemberg in 1934, provoking mass demonstrations.

In October 1934, the Pastors' Emergency League formally broke with the Reich Church to form their own Confessional Church. This led Hitler to abandon his attempt to impose direct control on the Protestant Church through the Reich bishop. The bishops of Bavaria and Württemberg were reinstated and orthodox officials and bishops allowed to continue in their positions.
This left the Protestant Church divided into three:

- the 'official' Reich Church under Müller, which co-operated with the regime but tried to retain organisational autonomy
- the German Christians, who tried to control the Reich Church but whose influence declined
- the Confessional Church, which formed an oppositional Church and was subject to harassment from both the state and other Church authorities but had strong support in some areas.

From 1934, the Church suffered less from direct persecution than from attempts to curb its activities. Confessional schools were abolished, religious teaching downgraded in schools, and young people's time taken up with the Hitler Youth to such an extent that attendance at Sunday services as well as participation in other Church activities was hindered. The weakening of the Church was, however, sporadic and unco-ordinated, because of the way the Nazi state was run, with some Gauleiters being far more anti-religious than others.

**The Catholic Church**

The Catholic Church came to terms with the Nazis, agreeing to the dissolution of the Centre Party and, in July 1933, signing a Concordat. According to the Concordat, the Vatican recognised the Nazi regime and promised not to interfere in politics. In return, the state promised not to interfere in the Catholic Church, which would keep control over its educational, youth and communal organisations.

However, between 1933 and 1939, the Nazis increasingly tried to go back on their promises. They used propaganda insulting the clergy and Catholic practices to encourage anti-Catholic feeling. Catholic schools were closed and had almost disappeared by 1939. Catholic organisations and societies were also removed. For example, in 1936, Church youth organisations were disbanded when the Hitler Youth became compulsory.

In 1937, Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical *With Burning Anxiety* (Mit Brennender Sorge), attacking Nazi beliefs. This was smuggled into Germany and read out in Catholic churches. However, his successor in 1939, Pius XII, failed to condemn Nazism outright and has been criticised for his tolerance of the regime.

Bishop Galen's protest against euthanasia in 1941 was the most outspoken criticism to come from a Catholic prelate but, although between a third and a half of Catholic clergy were harassed by the regime, only one Catholic bishop was expelled and one imprisoned for any length of time, suggesting that protest against the Nazis was limited.

**The German Faith Movement, neo-Paganism and ‘positive Christianity’**

Moves to weaken the Church were not always well co-ordinated. In the mid 1930s, a 'Church Seccession' campaign deliberately encouraged Germans to abandon the Churches. Some members of the Nazi Party, though not Hitler himself, encouraged the pagan German Faith Movement. This embraced several beliefs that fitted well with Nazism, including a belief in Blut und Boden (blood and soil) ideology and the rejection of Christian ethics.
Although it remained a small sect, at its height the German Faith Movement had around 200,000 supporters and was particularly strong among the SS. Paganism also influenced policy. For example, carols and nativity plays were banned from schools in 1938 and the word ‘Christmas’ was forbidden and replaced by Yuletide in the war years.

Overall, the record of the Churches in the period of Nazi domination is not one of which they were to feel proud in later years. As organisations, they almost completely surrendered to the Nazi political leadership, although the breakaway Confessional Church and some individual clergymen (see profiles on Niemöller and Bonhoeffer) were able to stand out as symbols of religious opposition to Nazism.

However, Christianity as such does not seem to have been affected. Church attendance remained steady, and even increased in the war years, making Christian belief an obstacle to a fully totalitarian state.

**How did Nazism affect the arts and cultural life?**

The Nazis believed that Germany's impressive cultural history placed the arts in a unique position in German society. Both elite art, such as classical music, paintings, sculpture and theatre, and the more popular arts such as film, radio broadcasting and light entertainment were perceived as media for reinforcing Germans' shared statehood and race. Nazis despised the modernist styles of the 'decadent' Weimar era and looked to exploit 'traditional' art forms that were unadventurous, of high moral standing, dominated by Aryanism and that glorified a mythical past.

The main themes of the arts included:
- 'blood and soil', in which the peasant was cast as the representative of the 'pure' Aryan blood of the German people and his struggles with the soil and the weather were glorified
- anti-feminism, as reflected in the 'Gretchen Myth', with its emphasis on pre-industrial images of women
- anti-Semitism, which permeated all aspects of composition and performance as well as colouring the themes of literature and film
- order, as reflected in a return to the classical tradition (particularly in sculpture and architecture), with solidarity of style and a sense of dominance and purpose which served to underpin Nazi notions of the superiority of the state and the permanence of the Reich.

Goebbels was made minister of propaganda and popular enlightenment in 1933 and his office imposed rigorous censorship on all art forms, encouraging only those that conveyed a suitable propaganda message. In May 1933, Goebbels co-ordinated a 'burning of the books'. This symbolically and physically destroyed works associated with Jews, Bolsheviks and 'Negroes', as well as anything seen as 'decadent' and 'un-German'.

The annual Great German Art exhibition was another propaganda pageant, and the Reich Kulturkammer (Reich Chamber of Culture) ensured that only arts 'suitable' for the masses were permitted. An individual's artistic tastes could become the subject of a report by their local block warden.
Many artists were expelled, or went into voluntary exile. For example, the conductors Bruno Walter and Otto Klemperer, the composers Schönberg, Hindemith and Kurt Weill, and the singers Marlene Dietrich and Lotte Lenya all left the country.

In the concert hall, the works of the Jewish composers Mahler and Mendelssohn were banned. Modernist paintings were removed from art galleries. The Nazis also tried to prohibit American jazz and foreign dance-band music, which was referred to as Niggermusik.

However, some artists remained and helped to give the regime respectability. Composers such as Richard Strauss, who became the first president of the Reich Chamber of Music, and singers such as Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, performed for the regime.

The spread of the Volksprogramm (people’s receiver), a mass-produced radio found in over 70% of German homes by 1939, increased the number of listeners who could enjoy German classical music, which was mixed with light entertainment and traditional Germanic tunes and songs. Composers such as Anton Bruckner and Richard Wagner became popular heroes and attracted a mass following, as concerts were filmed to reach a wider audience, and skilfully edited shots of the audience reaction were displayed to reinforce the desired patriotic message.

The Wagnerian Bayreuth Festival was turned from an elitist minority interest into a great popular festival, as were art exhibitions and some theatrical performances. Attendance at arts events was subsidised and encouraged through works outings and special ‘Strength through Joy’ or Hitler Youth events. However, in popularising the arts, the Reich Kulturkammer often resorted to commissioning second-rate artists, as well as forcing those who possessed real talent into narrow and restrictive paths.

Films were seen as a useful popular diversion – partly propagandist and partly to provide relaxation and to offer a ‘shared experience’, binding the community together. Sound was relatively new and was developed to great effect in feature films. The Reich Film Chamber controlled both the content of German films and the foreign films that could be shown.

Some great producers, such as Leni Riefenstahl, flourished and produced works of art, even if the ideological themes were controversial. However, some films lacked subtlety and The Eternal Jew was so horrific that members of the audience fainted and box office receipts fell away. The cinema was used to show newsreels before the main picture and admission was restricted to the beginning of a programme, so all filmgoers had to sit through a certain amount of propaganda.

The impact of Nazism on the arts was contradictory. Not everything produced in Nazi Germany was an artistic disaster, but much individual creativity and inspiration was lost in the interests of Gleichschaltung (see page 72) and the desire to use culture as a propagandist tool. Some positive advances occurred despite, rather than because of, Nazi values. Music suffered the least, since it was played as written, but other art forms were reduced to fake posturing. After the war, artistic expression in West Germany seemed to pick up where the Weimar Republic had left off, almost as though the Nazi era had never existed.

Fact
The most famous films of the era, Hitler Youth Quex (1933), Jud Süss (1940) and Ohm Krüger (1941) (which was about British atrocities during the Boer War), all had clear political messages. However, the messages were conveyed subtly and the films are deemed to have some artistic merit. Leni Riefenstahl, who produced the Triumph of Will (1935) about the Nuremberg Party Rally and Olympia (1938) on the 1936 Olympic Games held in Berlin, was a particularly innovative and talented director.
End of unit activities

1. Draw up a table to show the economic concerns of the Nazi government at key dates during the Nazis' time in power and their success in dealing with these issues:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key stages in the development of the Nazi economy</th>
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<td>Main policies</td>
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<tr>
<td>1933–36</td>
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<tr>
<td>1936–42</td>
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<td>1942–45</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. Find out more about Schacht, Goering and Speer. Make a case for which of these men helped the Nazi government the most in his economic policies and actions. This could lead to a class debate.

3. Draw a diagram to show the various influences to which young people were subject in Nazi Germany.

4. Choose one aspect of Nazi culture and prepare a Powerpoint® presentation for your class in which you show how that art form was used as propaganda in this period.

5. Who gained most from the Nazi economy? Research the impact of economic policy on each of the following groups (you may like to divide these between members of your class):
   - big business
   - small traders
   - peasant farmers
   - factory workers.

6. Draw a spider diagram to show the influences behind changes to education in the Nazi era.

7. Find out more about alternative youth movements – the Swing Movement, the Edelweiss Pirates and the White Rose group.

8. Make a summary chart assessing whether the Nazis' social policies in the following areas were a success or a failure:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Policies</th>
<th>Success?</th>
<th>Failure?</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Women</td>
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<td>Youth</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>Religion</td>
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<td>Minorities</td>
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<td>Culture and the arts</td>
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What are the problems in assessing the success of Nazi social policy?

9. Why did the German Churches not offer more resistance to the Nazi regime?