

# The Bigger Picture

## Germany 1918-39

- The Weimar Republic 1918-33
- Hitler and the Nazi Party 1919-33
- **The Nazi Dictatorship 1933-39**
  - **How Hitler became Führer**
  - **The Police State**
  - **The Churches**
  - **Propaganda**
  - **Why there was little opposition**
- Nazi Domestic Policies 1933-39

# How did Hitler become Führer?

There are 6 major events you need to know about:

The  
Reichstag  
Fire,  
Feb 1933

The  
Enabling  
Act,  
Mar 1933

The  
Concordat  
– Jun 1933

The Night  
of the Long  
Knives,  
July 1934

Hindenburg  
Dies,  
Aug, 1934

Oaths of  
Loyalty,  
Aug 1934

You will now find out about these 6 key events

# The Reichstag Fire

## What happened?

- The Reichstag Fire was an arson attack that happened on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1933
- When the police inspected the scene following the fire, they found Marius van der Lubbe, a Dutch communist

## Why was it important?

- Hitler used this event to show the Communists in a very negative light
- During the trial of van der Lubbe and other leading communists, there was much negative publicity
- Van der Lubbe was sentenced to death and executed by guillotine

# The Enabling Act: 23rd of March 1933

## What happened?

- The Enabling Act was presented to the Reichstag on 23rd of March 1933
- The intention was that Hitler would be given full power over other parties in the Reichstag
- **The act was passed with a large majority**

## Why was it important?

- By July 14th Hitler had proclaimed a law stating that the Nazi Party was to be the only political party allowed in Germany and all other parties were banned
- Hitler now had full power to pass any law he wanted

# **The Night of the Long Knives**

## **What happened?**

- In June 1934, Hitler sent his SS men to wipe out the leaders of the SA and others who had angered him
- He was worried about the strength of the SA as they had the power to take over the Nazis if they wanted to
- Ernst Rohm, leader of the SA, was forced to commit suicide
- Over 85 political opponents of Hitler were murdered, including Kurt von Schleicher and Gustav von Kahr

## **Why is it important?**

- The threat of the SS, now lead by Heinrich Himmler, was now huge and many people were scared of what they would do

# The Concordat

## What happened?

- On the 20<sup>th</sup> June 1933 Hitler made an agreement with the Pope – called the Concordat
- They agreed that Hitler could take over political power in Germany as long as he leaves the Catholic Church alone
- This is an example of negative cohesion

## Why is it important?

- The Pope saw Hitler as someone who could defeat the Communists
- It made Hitler even stronger and free to take over all political power

# Hindenburg Dies

## What happened?

- On the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1934, 87 year old Hindenburg, Hitler's last obstacle on his way to total power, died
- Hitler used this as an opportunity to seize total power in Germany by elevating himself to the position of Führer, or absolute leader, of the German nation and its people

## Why was this important?

- Hitler now had complete power by combining the position of Chancellor and President into one role – Führer
- He could appoint his own men into other positions in parliament

# Oath of Loyalty

## What happened?

- After Hindenburg's death, Hitler was able to make sure any one in authority supported him by making them swear an oath – The Führer's Oath
- The men in the German army swore an oath to Hitler (see below the Hitler's edited version of the army oath)
- He also extended this to the courts – all judges had to swear an oath to him

## Why is it important?

- To Hitler now attained absolute power over the German people
- Anyone who broke the oath was harshly punished

Oath of Allegiance before August 2, 1934	The Fuhrer Oath (effective August 2, 1934)
"I swear by almighty God this sacred oath: I will at all times loyally and honestly serve my people and country and, as a brave soldier, I will be ready at any time to stake my life for this oath."	"I swear by almighty God this sacred oath: I will render unconditional obedience to the Fuehrer of the German Reich and people, Adolf Hitler, Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, and, as a brave soldier, I will be ready at any time to stake my life for this oath."



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# The Police State

- There was supposed to be no room for opposition of any kind in Nazi Germany
- The aim was to create a **totalitarian** state which meant that there was to be no other parties other than the Nazi party
- Ordinary citizens must divert their whole energy into serving the state and doing what its leader wants
- The Nazis had a powerful range of organisations and weapons that they used to control Germany

# The Police State

- They did this in 4 main ways:
  - The SS
  - The **Gestapo**
  - The police and the courts
  - Concentration Camps
- Find out about one aspect and sum up the key information in your own words
- Feed back to your table

# The SS

## Main Information:

- The SS was formed in 1925 and was made up of loyal followers of Hitler
- After destroying the SA in the Night of the Long Knives, the SS grew into a huge organisation with many different responsibilities
- Heinrich Himmler was its leader
- Under Himmler, the main responsibility of the SS was to destroy opposition to Nazism and carry out the racial policies of the Nazis

## Extra Information:

- There were two important sub-divisions of the SS:
  - the Death's Head unit which was responsible for the concentration camps and the slaughter of the Jews
  - and the Waffen-SS who were special armoured regiments who fought alongside the regular army



# The Gestapo

## Main information:

- The Gestapo were a secret state police and possibly the force that was most feared by the ordinary German citizen
- Set up by Hermann Goering and led by Reinhard Heydrich along with the SS
- The Gestapo agents had sweeping powers which meant they could arrest citizens and send them to concentration camps without trial or even explanation

## Extra Information:

- People were that scared of the Gestapo that often they would inform on each other because of the fear that they would find out anyway and be punished
- By 1939, there were about 160 000 people under arrest for political crimes



## Police and the Courts

### Main Information

- The Nazis controlled the magistrates, judges and the courts
- German judges had to swear an oath of loyalty to Hitler
- Top jobs in the local police forces were given to high-ranking Nazis
- They had to report to Himmler of anyone who broke Nazi laws and rules
- By the end of 1934, Hitler controlled the Reichstag, the army and the legal system

### Extra Information

- All of the above meant people were rarely given a fair trial
- Hitler also had jail sentences checked, and would make them longer if he thought they were too soft



## Concentration Camps

### Main Information

- Concentration camps were the Nazis' ultimate sanction for their own people and were set up almost as soon as Hitler took power
- They were ran by the SA and the SS
- Prisoners were forced to do hard labour and food was very limited
- Prisoners also suffered harsh discipline, beatings and random executions, most did not make it out alive
- Jews, Socialists Communists, trade unionists, churchmen and anyone else who was brave enough to criticise the Nazis ended up there

### Extra Information

- There were different categories of prisoners who wore coloured triangles that represented their category including: Jews, political prisoners, sexual offenders, the work shy, religious groups, foreign groups, and professional criminals
- The first concentration camps were make-shift prisons in disused factories and warehouses but they eventually became purpose-built



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# Catholic Church

- One-third of Christians in Germany were **Catholic**. Catholics were loyal first and foremost to the **Pope**, not to Hitler.
- In July 1933 Hitler signed a **Concordat** (agreement) with the Pope which said that Hitler agreed to not interfere with each others control
- However, Hitler broke the terms of the Concordat and during the 1930s Catholic priests were arrested and many were sent to concentration camps, Catholic schools had to teach the same as Nazi schools or were closed down and Catholic youth groups like the Catholic Youth League were banned.
- He ordered Joseph Goebbels to turn the Nazi propaganda machine against the Catholic Church. Monks and nuns were accused of smuggling gold out of Germany while priests were accused of immorality.

# Protestant Church

- At first some Protestants supported the Nazis and they allowed Nazi flags to be displayed inside their churches. These Protestants formed the German Christian Movement and its leader was Ludwig Muller. Hitler made Muller the Reich bishop of Germany in September 1933. Protestant pastors who supported Hitler were allowed to carry on with their church services as normal.
- There were 28 Protestant groups in Germany, and they were merged to form the **National Reich Church** in 1936. A member of the Nazi party was elected Bishop of the Church. Non-Aryan ministers were suspended.
- Church members called themselves German Christians, with "the Swastika on their chest and the Cross in their heart."
- Not everyone was happy with the new Church. **The Confessing Church** was formed by **Martin Niemöller** in 1934 with 6,000 ministers, leaving 2,000 behind in the National Reich Church. This was a challenge to the Nazis.
- Around 800 ministers were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Niemöller was arrested in 1937 and sent to Dachau, then Sachsenhausen, until 1945. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was imprisoned in 1943 and was later executed.



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# Newspapers



Non-Nazi newspapers and magazines were closed down. Editors were told what they could and couldn't print, which meant that the German people only read what the Nazis wanted them to know. If an editor refused to follow the Nazis' orders they would be arrested and sent to a concentration camp.

Official orders from the Minister of Propaganda 1935

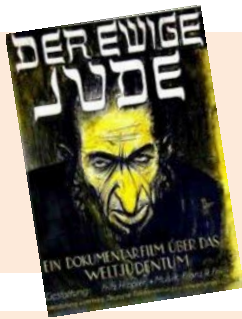
“photos showing members of the Reich Government in front of rows of bottles whilst dining must not be published. This gives the ridiculous impression that members of the Government are living it up”



# Radio



All radio stations were placed under Nazi control. Cheap mass-produced radios were sold to make sure all Germans had them (however, these radios could only access German Nazi stations and could not access foreign radio stations). Sets were installed in cafes and factories and loudspeakers were placed in the streets. It was important that the Nazi message was heard. Hitler and Goebbels regularly made broadcasts and when they did people were expected to stop their daily life and listen wherever they were.



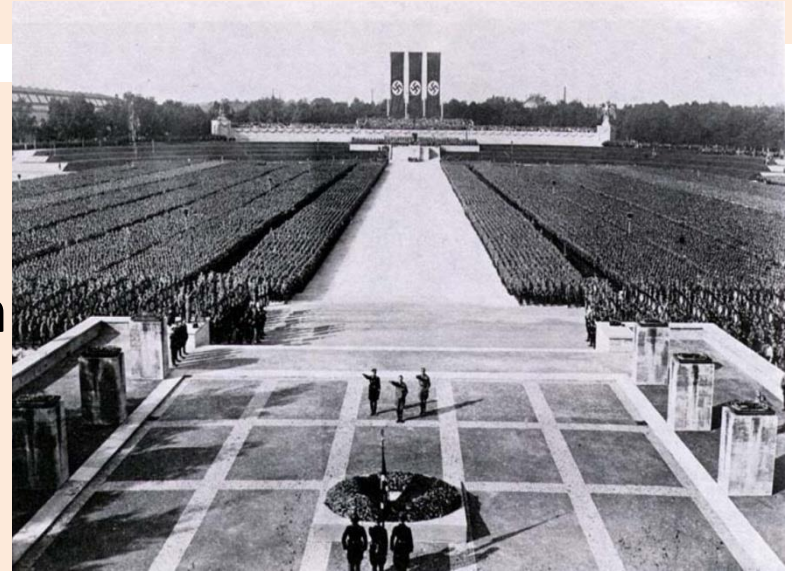
# Cinema



Goebbels also realised the popularity of the cinema. More than 100 films were being made each year and audiences were topping 250 million in 1933. Goebbels ordered that all film scripts/plots should be shown to him before going into production. He realised that Germans were bored by overly political films and instead love stories and thrillers were given pro-Nazi slants. One of the best known was “Hitlerjunge Quex” (1933) which tells the story of a boy who broke away from a Communist family to join the Hitler Youth only to be murdered by Communists. All films were accompanied by a 45 minutes newsreel which glorified Hitler and the Nazis. You could not gain entry to the film once this newsreel had started meaning you had to watch it.

# Rallies and Posters

A mass rally was held at Nuremberg every year to advertise the power of the Nazis. Spectacular parades were held on other special occasions and thousands of people would attend surrounded by swastikas whilst they listened to Nazi speakers.



Posters were also cleverly used to put across the Nazi message with the young being particularly targeted.





# Censorship of the arts

The National Socialist Society for German Culture was formed. This banned many artists and authors and named them degenerate (e.g. Jewish artists or modern artists as Hitler liked traditional art). The Nazis even hosted an art exhibition called “degenerate art” in 1937. The aim was to show Germans what they should avoid as it would corrupt German society.



All books were carefully controlled and censored by the state to put across the Nazi message. Goebbels encouraged students in Berlin to burn 20,000 books written by Jews, Communists and anti Nazi authors in a massive bonfire in 1933. Many writers were persuaded or forced to write books that praised Hitler and the Nazis.



Between 1933-39 many artists and authors left Germany altogether.



## Censorship by law



Many laws were introduced which took away the right of “Freedom of speech”. There was “A law against malicious gossip” which was introduced in 1934 which forbade the telling of anti-Nazi jokes and stories. You could be fined or even sent to a concentration camp if found guilty of these crimes. The Gestapo had many secret informers who would inform on you if they overheard you “spreading anti Hitler lies”.



# The 1936 Olympics



Other Nazis were opposed to holding the Games in Berlin, but Goebbels convinced Hitler that it was a great propaganda opportunity both within Germany and internationally. They could showcase their ideology – that the Aryan race was superior to all others.

Goebbels built a brand new stadium to hold 100,000 people, which had the latest of technology - electric lighting, television cameras, photo-electronic timing devices and the largest stop clock ever built. No expense was spared to show the other 49 visiting countries that Germany was superior to all others. They presented a grand vision, efficiency, power, strength and achievement and also managed to come top of the medal table.



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# The White Rose group

A small group of students at Munich university, led by siblings Hans (age 24) and Sophie Scholl (21) and Christoph Probst. They disagreed with the Nazis aims and persecution of the Jews. They were disgusted with the lack of opposition and wanted to shame the German people for supporting Hitler.

They were most active between Summer 1942 and February 1943



“Germany’s name will be disgraced forever unless German youth finally rises up, takes revenge, smashes its torturers and builds a new, spiritual Europe” – Sophie Scholl

They spread anti-Nazi messages by handing out leaflets, putting up posters and writing anti-Nazi graffiti on walls



The Nazis branded them as outsiders and enemies of the state. The caretaker saw Hans and Sophie handing out leaflets at Uni and informed the Gestapo. They were arrested and tortured.

22<sup>nd</sup> February 1943 they were sentenced to death and executed.

# Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Bonhoeffer trained young men to become Christian ministers. He was against the Nazis from 1933, he pointed out that they were anti-Christian. He opposed their policies on race and euthanasia.

He believed that religion and politics were linked – true religion meant standing up against evil and corrupt governments. When Hitler came to power in 1933 he left Germany to work in London.

However when Niemoller set up the Confessional Church which spoke out against the Nazis in Germany, Bonhoeffer returned.



On the outbreak of WW2 in 1939, the Gestapo closed down Bonhoeffer's college and banned him from preaching. Over the next few years he continued to work closely with other opponents of Adolf.



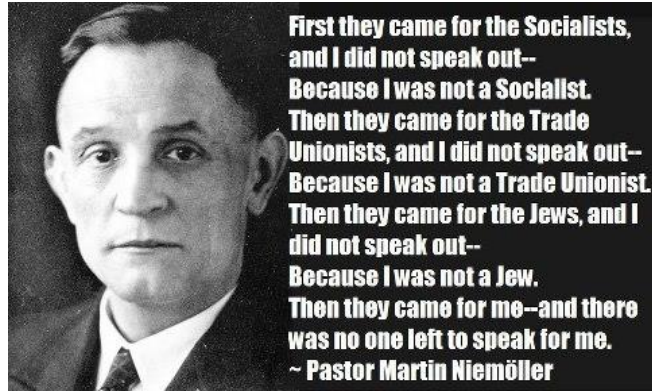
In April 1943 Bonhoeffer was arrested with his brother Klaus and brother-in-law. He had used his church contacts to help 14 Jews escape to Switzerland and was accused of plotting against Hitler.

He was held in Buchenwald Concentration Camp until being moved to Flossenburg where he was executed in April, 1945

# Martin Niemöller

Martin Niemöller was a First World War hero (U-boat captain). He was a right wing supporter, and was even a member of the Freikorps after the war.

He began to openly oppose the Nazis from the 1930s.



Not many Christian ministers opposed the Nazi persecution of the Jews, and only 50 ministers (out of 17,000) were arrested for opposition activities or speeches. Many ministers had sworn an oath of loyalty to the Fuhrer after he set up the Reich church.

Many however, refused. Niemöller helped set up an alternative – the Confessional Church and began to speak out against the Nazis.



In his sermons he spoke out against the arrest of Christian ministers, and the Nazi changes to the Christian church.

He did not however, speak out against Hitler's political ideas or policies, in fact he admitted that Hitler's anti-Semitism was a more extreme version of his own prejudices. He was arrested in 1937 and sent to Dachau concentration camp.

He was due to be executed, however he was freed by the Allies shortly before the end of WW2.

# Political Opponents

The main enemies of the Nazi regime were the Socialist Party, the Communist Party and workers' Trade Unions. They were targeted very early on (after the Reichstag Fire). This was because they had so many supporters. Even when they lost the elections of 1933 they had millions of members.

They wanted workers' rights. The Socialist Party wanted a return to democracy, the Communists wanted a revolution.



The Nazis banned all these organisations. However members still met in secret – although it was very dangerous because of the risk of arrest. They used passive resistance such as strikes and handing out leaflets. They also wrote anti-Nazi graffiti on walls.

From 1933 the offices of all political opponents were ransacked by the SA and later the Gestapo. Their offices were closed, and once the Enabling Law was passed, it became illegal to be a member of these groups. Many were beaten up, tortured, some were killed.



There were 400 strikes between 1933 and 1935 but the Gestapo continued to make arrests – two thirds of the Communist Party's members were arrested.

Many were sent to the Concentration camps, many more went into exile abroad or forced to go underground, holding secret meetings.

# The Kreisau Circle

This group was made up of army generals and intellectuals and officials. Many were members of the Nazi Party – but disliked their policies or became disillusioned with Hitler towards the end of WW2 (1943-45).

Many of them were middle class and disliked Hitler's working class past. They were also horrified by the actions of the SS death squads in Europe – it went against the army's code of conduct.



There were said to be dozens of plots to assassinate Hitler – this group in particular had regular access to the Fuhrer. The most famous was the July Bomb plot (known as Operation Valkyrie) – organised by Claus von Stauffenburg, a Colonel who had supported the Nazis to begin with, but was disgusted by their anti-Semitism.

He planted a bomb in Hitler's military headquarters on a day when he knew Hitler would be there. The bomb exploded and four people were killed, however it failed to kill Hitler because of two main problems – the windows had been left open, lessening the effect of the explosion, and someone had moved the briefcase bomb at the last minute. Despite this, it was the closest anybody had come to killing the Fuhrer.



All the plotters were rounded up and executed.

Hitler also used this as an excuse to get rid of other opponents – 5000 people were arrested and executed as a result of this plot including most members of the Kreisau Circle.



# The Edelweiss Pirates

The Edelweiss Pirates was a mostly working class youth group who opposed the Nazi regime.

It wasn't one big organisation but a collection of groups. Local areas had their versions or branches. Numbers varied, but it was popular and in large cities might have had several hundred members.



They used passive resistance to oppose the Nazis. They refused to join the Hitler Youth, and when this became compulsory they avoided meetings at all costs. They wanted to have fun and do what they wanted – not what they were told.

They engaged in various activities to oppose the Nazis – including making up rude alternatives to the pro-Nazi songs sung by the Hitler Youth, drinking, listening to banned music ('degenerate jazz and blues', having sex and going to dances. Some even beat up Nazi Youth members.

Their unofficial uniform was a checked shirt and wearing badges showing the edelweiss flower (a white Alpine flower which became a symbol of resistance for some)



The Gestapo did investigate the groups. Many members of the Edelweiss Pirates were beaten up but punishments were not as severe as for adult opponents. Many had their heads shaved

After a Hitler youth leader in Cologne was killed, some were even hanged in revenge.