

## Nazi Germany [Revision]

In 1928 Germany was a democracy [The Weimar Republic]. Two of its rules [Constitution] were important. Proportional Representation: This was an electoral system. Parties got a share of seats for the share of the vote. This meant everyone got a say in the Reichstag [Parliament], every minority group had a say. BUT no one party had a majority. During the crisis of 1930-2 too many small parties couldn't cooperate to deal with it. Article 48: In an emergency the President could let the Chancellor rule without going to the Reichstag. This was meant to deal with a crisis and would protect the country. Unfortunately between 1930-2—with the parties disagreeing—the President let the Chancellor use Article 48 to run the country. Democracy was dead by 1932. Giving into Hitler was only a small step.

In 1928 the Nazis only got 2.6% of the vote. No one cared about them. Then the Wall Street Crashed world traded halted. This meant countries weren't buying German goods. American banks demanded their loans back [the money that had got Germany working again in 1924.] Unemployment rocketed. 6 million Germans were out of work. Those in work had low wages or part time employment. Many people who could not afford rent were made homeless. People were desperate for a party that would sort out the mess. The Nazis said they would. The other parties did not seem to be able to cope.

The Nazis offered many things. Women: The Nazis said they supported family values, honoured women as home makers and would offer money for married couples. Working Class: Work—6 million Germans were out of work and the Nazis said they would fix it. Middle Class: The Nazis said they would protect businessmen and shopkeepers from the Communists. All: The Nazis said they would get rid of the Treaty of Versailles and make Germany strong. They also had a good Messenger. Hitler was a persuasive speaker and used aircraft to tour Germany to get his message to Germans. Other politicians didn't do this.

In 1930 the Social Democrats were in power—but needed other parties to help them in a coalition. The coalition could not agree on how to get out of the mess. The Social Democrats walked out when everyone else wanted them to cut dole money. Several leaders, like Von Papen and Brüning tried to run a government but these did not last long and needed Article 48. In January 1933 Hindenburg finally was persuaded to let Hitler become Chancellor, if Von Papen was his Vice-Chancellor. It was hoped Von Papen could control Hitler. Hitler became Chancellor and called a new election.

On 27th Feb 1933. the Reichstag [Parliament] building burnt down. Hitler blamed the Communists for the fire, claiming it was the start of a Communist Revolution. A Dutch Communist, Marinus van der Lubbe, was caught nearby. Van der Lubbe was an unbalanced individual. He may have caused the fire but it spread very quickly. Some people blamed the SA. We may never know. Hitler used the fire to get President Hindenburg to pass an Emergency Decree to allow Hitler powers to arrest people, ban newspapers and the Communist party.

Hitler said he needed emergency powers to crush a communist rebellion. He wanted the Reichstag to pass an Enabling Act. This would get rid of democracy for two years. To pass the law Hitler needed a 2/3rds majority. After the election the Nazis still did not have 2/3<sup>rd</sup> majority he needed. They promised to leave Catholic church schools alone and so the Catholic Centre party supported him. Only the Social Democrats opposed him. The Enabling Act was passed and Hitler had the power to do whatever he wanted – legally.

Hitler used the Enabling Act to close down the political parties and Trade Unions. He still could be opposed by ordinary Germans. The SA, Army and Hindenburg.

The SA [the Brownshirts] had battled Hitler's enemies in the 1920s. They now wanted their reward. Ernst Rohm, their leader, wanted the SA to take over the army. The SA were also angry because Hitler seemed to be more interested in his new middle class allies—rather than the working class SA. On 30th June 1934 the SS [Hitler's Bodyguard] struck. Top SA leaders were arrested and 200 were shot—as were some other opponents. Hitler told the Reichstag he had done it to prevent a rebellion by the SA]. Hitler had a double victory. He had got rid of the SA as a potential rival to him. The army had been another rival to Hitler for power. The Army were so grateful that Hitler had got rid of the SA that they swore an oath to obey him.

President Hindenburg was from a rich family who owned land. He became Chief of Staff for the Army in World War One. Hindenburg became President in 1925. Many saw him as standing for old fashioned values. Hindenburg didn't like Hitler but agreed to the Enabling Act. He stopped the Nazis sacking Jews from government jobs if they had been in the army. Hindenburg died in August 1934. Hitler combined the jobs of chancellor and President and called himself Fuhrer. He now had sole power.

To stop opposition Hitler used the 'carrot and stick' approach. He offered support to some, propaganda persuaded others and terror to keep anyone else obeying him.

Josef Goebbels was minister of Propaganda. The Nazis aimed to control the media so people constantly had the Nazi message reinforced. He achieved this by: Censorship: Only Nazi approved newspapers were printed and all media was censored. 2500 writers were banned and 20000 books burnt. Radio: Short wave radios were made available cheaply—so the Nazis got inside everyone's home. Loudspeakers: 6000 loudspeakers were put up to reinforce the Nazi

Meanwhile SS: Heinrich Himmler led the SS. Terror works two ways. It hurts opponents and scares other so they are too afraid to oppose Hitler. Gestapo: The Secret police spied on people and got people to inform on friends and neighbours. Concentration Camps: Were built for all the extra prisoners. Over 100,000 prisoners were in them. SS Death's Head Units ran them. Judges: The Nazis took over the justice system. 'People's Courts' tried people for 'Crimes against the state'.

The Nazis set about making Germany the society they thought it ought to be. The ideal Nazi woman was wife and mother. The Nazis wanted as many healthy Aryan babies as possible. Women were praised in propaganda as mothers and homemakers [the 3ks—church, cooking and children] Families were lent 1000 marks if the woman gave up work. For each child they had a quarter of the loan cancelled. Women got a Bronze Mother Cross for 4 children, 6=silver, 8=gold. HOWEVER Women were sacked as Civil Servants etc and from 1936 could not sit on juries or be judges.

Young people were a target of the Nazis. The Nazis took control of education. Boys learnt military skills and girls learnt how to be mothers. Both were taught eugenics—race theory and a Nazi view of History. Hitler Youth: Boys from 6-18 had to go to different parts of the Hitler Youth., They learnt military discipline. For many it was their first real holiday and they enjoyed the camping trips. The League of German Maidens was the girls version and taught homemaking. It also encourage girls from all over Germany to meet. All of this was with a big dose of Nazi propaganda.

Workers benefited from the Nazi rule. German Labour Front: The GLF provided canteens so workers could get hot food HOWEVER people could not just leave a job—they had to apply for permission and Trade Unions were banned so workers had no one to stick up for them. Strength through Joy. The Nazis provided activities such as holidays [they built a big resort on the Baltic] and cruise liners as well as sports and weekend trips at low cost. In 1938 they introduced the Volkswagen—a cheap car—though few people got one before the war started.

The Nazis got rid of unemployed by making all 18-25 year olds do 6 months work on projects—this was designed to get young people working and make them feel part of a bigger Germany. The German Labour Front built 7000km of motorways [autobahn]. They also organised the building of schools, hospitals and sports stadiums. The Nazis created jobs by expanding the army and buying weapons.

HOWEVER Unemployment also fell because Jews and Women were no longer included in the figures.—nor were prisoners in concentration camps. People worked longer for less pay than they had in 1928.

Eugenics was a big idea in the 1920s. It was based on the theory that people were like animals. If you breed with the best you got the best. If you let 'inferior' people breed it all went horribly wrong. The Nazis believed Aryans [Germanic people from Germany and Scandinavia] were the best—the Master Race. The English were ok, but Slavs, [from Eastern Europe], gypsies and Jews were 'subhuman'. The Nazis felt they needed to protect the Aryans from breeding with subhumans—hence all the laws—and have as many Aryans as possible—hence the laws on women..

April 1933—a one-day boycott of Jewish shops

Sept 1935-Nuremberg Laws

Jews [anyone with a Jewish grandfather] couldn't marry an Aryan.

Jews lost all rights as citizens

1936—during the Olympics things ease up

1937—Jewish businesses taken by Nazis

1938-Jews banned as doctors / Kristallnacht, shops smashed and 20,000 sent to concentration camps for a week. 7000 Jewish shops burnt.

1939 – Germany takes over Poland. Poland becomes a centre for Death camps – away from where Germans could find out about the Holocaust

1942 – Wannasee Conference – the decision is taken to gas all the Jews.

The War Changed life for Germans. Economic Conditions: Germany took resources from conquered lands. It wasn't until 1941 that rationing began to really affect Germans. Role of Women: Until 1943, German Civilians weren't fully mobilised for war. Women were brought into factories and served in the Anti-Aircraft Auxiliaries. Bombing: From 1942 German cities were increasingly bombed. In 1943 Hamburg was destroyed with a firestorm killing 42,600.

