Germany 1918-1939

by Ken Webb

Here it is: the factual detail, the historiography, revision exercises and advice on how to write essays on the Germany National Study.

"Everything you wanted to know about Germany 1918-39, but were afraid to ask."

2nd Edition

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About the author

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In addition to his own work, Ken Webb has contributed to colleagues' work and to newspapers and periodicals. He has also been a consultant for various history video documentaries.

Over the years, Ken Webb has written a wide range of study guides and textbooks including:

- World War 1: From Sarajevo to Versailles (McGraw-Hill)
- Discovering Australian History (Cambridge University Press)
- Extension History: The Historians (HTA of NSW)
- Excel School Certificate Australian History (Pascal Press)
- International Relations Between the Wars (McGraw-Hill)

"Germany 1918-1939" is one of eleven titles in the "Everything you wanted to know about... but were afraid to ask" series. Other titles in this series include:

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Foreword

This book has been written with the HSC specifically in mind:

- it strictly follows the format of the Modern History syllabus;
- its content has been designed with the type of questions in mind which might be asked in the HSC;
- the advice given for writing essays on Germany 1918-39 is the result of years of teaching and studying Germany, and marking essays at the HSC.

This book endeavours to provide the following:

- detailed historical information about the key elements of Germany between 1918 and 1939;
- useful historiographical information which can be used to reinforce the arguments presented by students in essays;
- frequent revision exercises to help students come to terms with the factual detail;
- specific advice on writing essays in response to HSC style questions.

It is hoped that this book will provide students with:

- solid historical information, but not too much that they will drown in an excess of the written word as can happen with some works;
- enough historiographical information to supplement their arguments – how many students have the time to go off and read Kersahw, Evans, Burleigh, Bullock, Fest etc for themselves? (Indeed how much time do teachers have to do this?)
- a chance to frequently consolidate information;
- some of the techniques required for writing effective essays.

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Chapter 1:
The emergence of the Democratic Republic

In November 1918, Germany's Democratic Republic was born into a world of violence, revolution, defeat and chaos. It would be difficult to imagine a worse way of introducing such a novel, untried, form of government that had no precedent in German history. After over four years of war, Germany was on its knees and facing imminent defeat. The Home Front was in a state of political, economic and social collapse. Starvation and Spanish Influenza threatened large sections of the population, and by late 1918, strikes and mutinies were spreading across the country.

Background

- By 1916, Germany had become in effect a military dictatorship under the control of Field Marshal Hindenburg and General Ludendorff. The Kaiser had been relegated to the position of figurehead.
- In September 1918, Ludendorff gave up his power, handing over control of the country to a civilian government which had the support of the German parliament, the Reichstag.
- Ludendorff had not been converted to democracy:
  - he hoped that with the setting up of a moderate, democratic government, Germany would be able to avoid a complete social revolution of the kind that Russia had experienced in November 1917;
  - knowing that Germany would soon have to surrender, he sought to shift the blame for defeat and the inevitable harsh post-war treaty away from the army and onto the democratic politicians.
- On 3 October, Prince Max von Baden became the new chancellor and immediately sought an armistice.

Events now moved very quickly and beyond the new government's control.

5 October: Prince Max introduced measures to turn Germany into a democracy.

23 October: The Kaiser became a constitutional monarch.
Anti-war protestors were released from prison.

26 October: Ludendorff was dismissed.

3 November: Mutiny broke out in the northern port of Kiel.
A Soldiers' and Workers' Council was set up, similar to the 'Soviets' that had been created in Russia the previous year.
These Councils spread across northern Germany.

7 November: A socialist revolutionary government was established in Bavaria.

9 November: The Kaiser abdicated and fled to Holland.
Deputy SPD (Social Democratic Party) leader, Philipp Scheidemann, declared Germany a Republic.

11 November: Germany signed the armistice, bringing the Great War to an end.

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The "stab in the back" legend

The shock of defeat was so great for ordinary Germans when it came that many could simply not accept it. The German people had been told for years that victory was coming. There were no allied troops on German soil, indeed on 11 November 1918 the German army still occupied sizeable parts of Belgium and France. Only a few months earlier, German troops were almost on the point of taking Paris. But now defeat! How? Why? Who was to blame?

- The belief spread that the German army had not been defeated in the field but had been "stabbed in the back" at home.
  - The Germans called this notion "dolchstosslegende".
- Who did the stabbing? Socialists, pacifists, Jews, democratic politicians.
- This belief served the German Army command very well.
- It was they who had explained the need for an armistice but since Ludendorff's surrender of power in September 1918, it was the civilian politicians, mostly socialists, who would now be burdened with the blame for surrender, defeat, armistice and a peace treaty.
- Scapegoats had been found who had stabbed the German army in the back, known from now as "the November Criminals".
- This idea provided fertile propaganda for anti-democratic right wing political parties.

The failure of the Revolution of 1918-19

Arguably the key reason for the eventual collapse of the democratic republic was its failure to bring about fundamental socio-economic-judicial change.

This failure would leave in positions of power and influence people who were fundamentally opposed to the concept of democracy. The political structure of Germany changed from an autocratic, authoritarian system to a democratic one. However, everything else about Germany remained unchanged and this meant that the people who continued to own, control or dominate the media, industry, agriculture, the judicial system, the police, the army, the bureaucracy, education, religion – indeed all aspects of German life – were people who were fundamentally opposed to the notion of democracy. These are the people who become known as the conservative elites. The **conservative elites** would at best 'tolerate' the democracy when times were good, and at worst actively 'undermine' it when times were not.

How and why did this happen?

Germany's new government was called the Council of People's Commissioners. It was led by moderate SPD (Social Democratic Party) leader, Friedrich Ebert.

- Ebert had clear views on Germany's future:
  - Ebert did not want a full-scale, social revolution along the lines of the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917. He said at the time: "I don't want that; indeed I hate it like sin".
  - He sought order out of the chaos that Germany was experiencing; he opposed major change, preferring instead to introduce basic democratic and social reforms such as freedom of speech, an eight hour working day and wide-ranging welfare reforms; he wanted democratic elections for a new assembly.
  - For Ebert, the revolution was over!

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- The radical, far left in German politics had different ideas:
  - For them the revolution had not even begun.
  - It sought socialist ownership of industry.
  - It wanted the establishment of a People's Militia instead of an army.
  - It saw a key future role for the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils.

Ebert feared the possibility of a 'second' revolution as had occurred in Russia. In 1917, the moderate Russian socialist leader, Kerensky, had been overthrown by the revolutionary Bolshevik Party led by Lenin. Ebert was keen to make sure this did not happen to him.

The revolutionary left destroyed

As soon as he came to power, Ebert made a secret agreement with General Groener, Ludendorff's replacement on the Supreme Command. This agreement, which became known as the Ebert-Groener Pact, stated the following:

- Ebert would oppose any revolutionary/ Bolshevik socio-economic changes.
- Groener would maintain army discipline, bring the army home in an orderly fashion and ensure army support for Ebert's government against any threats.

The Ebert-Groener Pact was of decisive importance:

1. It meant there would be no right-wing army coup against the government
2. It guaranteed the survival of Ebert's government
3. It meant that there would be no radical socio-economic changes in Germany
4. It guaranteed the survival of the conservative elites and the maintenance of army political influence in the future.

The far left in German politics were known as the Spartacists and were led by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. They had broken off from the USPD (independent, left-wing SPD). On 30 December this group became the Communist Party of Germany (KPD).

- In early January 1919, following demonstrations over the dismissal of a USPD official in Berlin, the Spartacists called a general strike.
  - This quickly led to an attempt to seize power.
- Defence Minister, Noske, called in 'Freikorps' units to oppose the rebels.
  - The Freikorps were right–wing volunteer units, or para-military groups, made up of former soldiers.
  - They hated socialists, blaming them for Germany's defeat in the war (see page 6). The Freikorps were more than willing to butcher what they saw as socialist traitors.
- After a week of savage fighting, the revolution was over. The general strike was called off, many of the captured rebels were executed, and Liebknecht and Luxemburg were murdered.
- Freikorps units suppressed other left-wing revolts throughout Germany. This included the destruction of Kurt Eisner's socialist republic in Bavaria.

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Ebert's moderate government had survived; there would be no Bolshevik Revolution in Germany. However, these events were to have an enormous and lasting impact on the fate of the Democratic Republic:

- The conservative elites remained in power.
- The army would remain as a key (anti-democratic) force in German politics.
- The 'left' in Germany would be forever divided and distrustful of each other. This would be of crucial importance in the early 1930s.
- Ebert issued decrees which were backdated to legitimise the Freikorps actions. This set a bad precedent. Government authorities often overlooked right-wing violence while dealing harshly with the left.

The Weimar Constitution

Following elections in January 1919, a National Assembly met in Weimar and appointed Ebert the Republic's first President, with Scheidemann its Chancellor (prime minister). The Assembly also approved the 'Weimar' Republic's new constitution.[1] The Weimar constitution was one of the most democratic documents of its kind ever produced, but it also had its flaws.

- The constitution guaranteed basic political liberties such as freedom of speech, equality before the law and gave all men and women over the age of twenty the right to vote.
- The head of state was a President, elected by the people for seven years.
  - The president could appoint/ dismiss the chancellor, and under Article 25, close the Reichstag and call elections.
  - Article 48 gave the President emergency powers in time of crisis, the right to close parliament and issue decrees. A most undemocratic element which, if misused, could undermine the democracy.
  - Article 48 became known as the 'suicide clause'.
- Parliament had two houses: the Reichstag (people's house) and the Reichsrat (states' house). Reichstag members were elected on the basis of Proportional Representation, one seat for every 60 000 votes.
  - This is very democratic as all but the tiniest parties are represented.
  - However, it makes it almost impossible for a party to gain a majority. This forces parties to form coalition governments which can cause political instability. Governments often collapsed as one or more members of a coalition withdrew due to differences over policy.

1 The National Assembly met in Weimar because at the time Berlin was not safe as it was experiencing violent political clashes on the streets. Hence the term "The Weimar Republic".

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What do historians have to say about the "emergence of the Democratic Republic"?

1. Richard Evans: The Coming of the Third Reich

- Evans argues that WWI had effectively legitimised the use of violence. Before 1914, parliamentary proceedings had been decorous; after 1918 they descended into shouting matches and on the streets armed groups of thugs were everywhere, often peopled by men in their late teens and twenties, not old enough to have experienced 'the real violence of war'. Soon, political parties were setting up their own groups of para-military thugs.
- A fundamental weakness was the republic's failure to gain the loyalty of the army and the civil service. Army disloyalty and officer intrigue did not bode well for the young republic. Little had been done to reform the civil service and ensure it was committed to the 'democratic political order'.

"...Weimar was weak in political legitimacy from the start. It was beset by insurmountable problems of political violence... It was unloved and undefended by its servants in the army and the bureaucracy..." [1]

2. Michael Burleigh: The Third Reich – A New History

- The conservative elites were stunned by the speed of defeat and the creation of the republic. They viewed events with hostility and incomprehension. "Their world had collapsed".
- The moderate left in Germany – the political SPD and the industrial trade unions – was essentially conservative. The SPD had achieved power; the unions had made gains for their members and had had a say in decision making later in the war. For them further revolution was not on the agenda.

"The threat from the extreme left had been neutralised, albeit in a fashion that soured relations between Social Democrats and Communists up to and beyond the eventual advent of a Nazi government..." [2]

3. Edgar Mowrer: Germany Puts the Clock back

- From his standpoint in the 1930s, Mowrer writes with incomprehension about Weimar's earliest years. How could a democratic republic allow a revival of militarism and pay generous salaries to officers and civil servants who seek the overthrow of the system?

"What can be said for a republic that allows its laws to be interpreted by monarchist judges, its government to be administered by old-time functionaries ... watches passively while reactionary school teachers... teach its children to despise the present freedom..." [3]

1 Evans, RJ, *The Coming of the third Reich*, Penguin, London, 2003, p 102
2 Burleigh, M, *The Third Reich: A New History*, Pan, London, 2001, p 40
3 Mowrer, E, *Germany Puts the Clock Back*, Penguin, London, 1937, p 18

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Exercise 1.1

Write out the events listed on the left, into the correct chronological order on the right.

Schiedemann declares a republic	1st event =	
Freikorps attack Spartacists	2nd event =	
Ludendorff surrenders power	3rd event =	
Kaiser abdicates	4th event =	
Spartacists attempt revolution	5th event =	
Ebert-Groener Pact	6th event =	
Outbreak of World War I	7th event =	
Prince Max becomes Chancellor	8th event =	

Exercise 1.2

Match the term or name given in the box below to the description listed on the left.

Description	Correct term or name
Leader of Germany in 1914	1
Supreme Army commander during WWI	2
First Democratic President of Germany	3
German army head in November 1918	4
Leader of the far left of German politics	5
Far left-wing political group of 1918-19	6
Name of moderate socialist party	7
Right wing paramilitary group	8
SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY; GENERAL GROENER; THE FREIKORPS; LUDENDORFF; SPARTACISTS; ROSA LUXEMBURG; EBERT; KAISER WILHELM II	

Exercise 1.3

Answer the following questions:

1 Why did Ludendorff hand over power to the Reichstag in September 1918?	

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2 What agreement assured army support for the new republic?	
3 What was the dolchstosslegende?	
4 What did the Spartacists seek?	
5 How did the Freikorps affect German politics?	
6 What happened to Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in 1919?	
7 Who were the major winners from the events of January 1919?	
8 What happened to the 'left' of German politics because of January 1919?	
9 What was Article 48 known as?	
10 What was the main drawback of proportional representation?	

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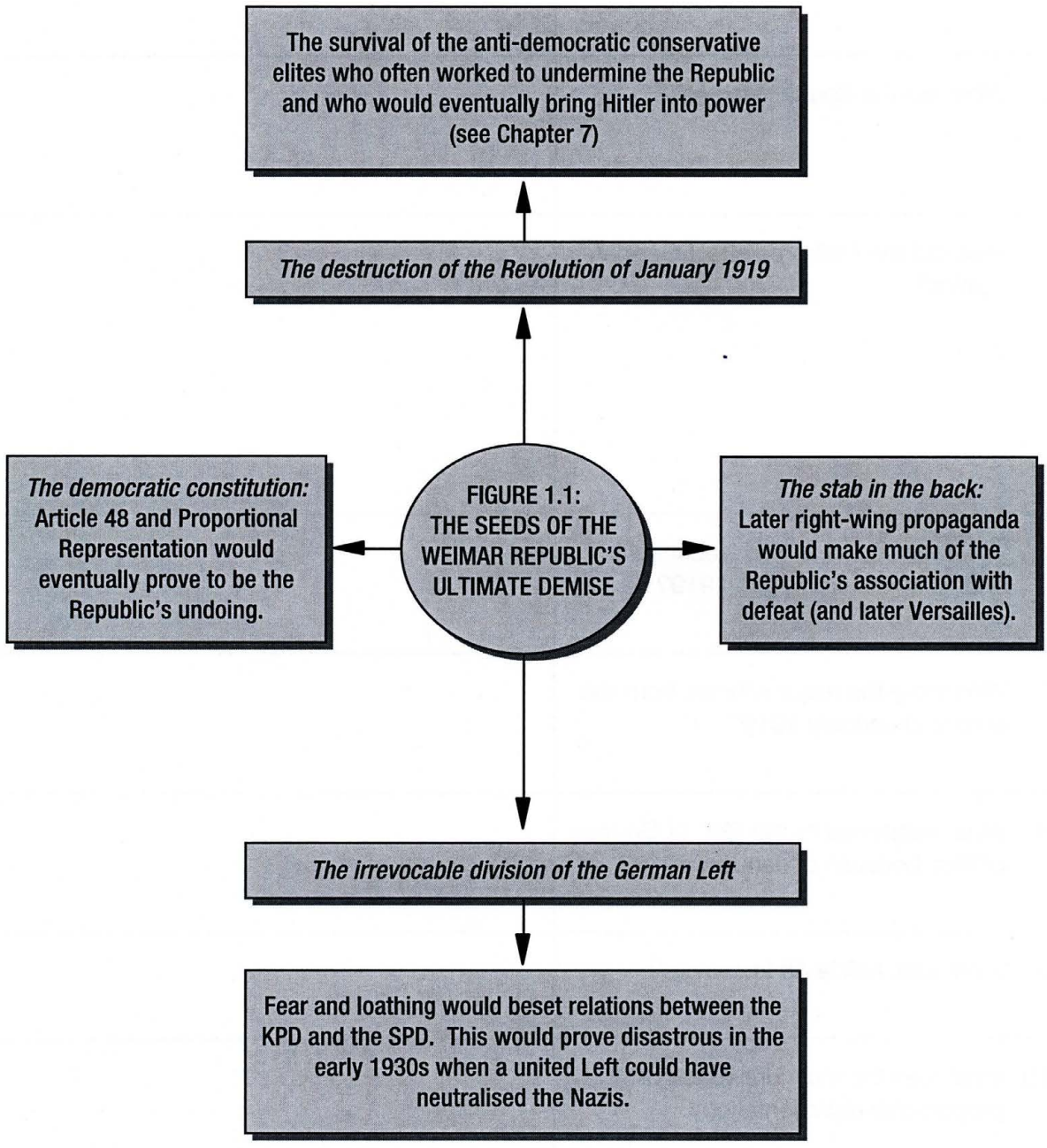
An additional point to consider

An argument could be made that the seeds of the Weimar Republic's eventual demise had been firmly planted as early as February 1919. Figure 1.1 outlines this idea.



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Chapter 2:
The impact of the Treaty of Versailles – German politics: 1919-23

The victorious allied powers met in Paris between January and June, 1919, to work out the terms of the post-war settlement. The Paris Peace Settlement would eventually comprise five separate treaties, but for Germany only the Treaty of Versailles was of concern.

- The French Premier, Georges Clemenceau, sought a tough treaty that would punish Germany and prevent another German invasion of his country. His aims could be summed up in three words: revenge, security, compensation.
- US President, Woodrow Wilson, sought an idealistic peace free of bitterness and recrimination and wanted to create a new world order which could guarantee the future peace of Europe.
- Britain's David Lloyd George stood somewhere between the other two men. His prime concern was Britain's national self-interest, though he had an electorate back home which was also seeking a tough treaty.

The treaty of Versailles was signed on 28 June; it turned out to be a compromise which satisfied no-one: too tough for the Germans, lacking idealism for Wilson, not tough enough for Clemenceau. The Germans were particularly angry about the way proceedings had gone:

- no German delegates were allowed to attend discussions;
- the Germans were ordered to sign the Treaty or face the possibility of invasion.

The diagram on the following page summarises the ways in which the Versailles Treaty attempted to punish Germany.

Impact of the Treaty of Versailles: (1) Political impact

The immediate reaction to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles inside Germany was a combination of shock, disbelief and deep anger. Germans seemed united in their opposition to signing the treaty, from Chancellor Scheidemann on the left, to Field Marshal Hindenburg on the right.

- In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler would later describe the treaty as "this instrument of boundless repression".
- The Deutsche Zeitung newspaper urged the government not to sign "the disgraceful treaty".
- Chancellor Scheidemann and half the German cabinet resigned rather than accept the humiliation of signing the hated Treaty.

However, President Ebert, his Defence Minister, Noske, and army commander Groener argued that Germany had no choice but to sign. On 28 June, 1919, two members of the new German cabinet, Johannes Bell and Hermann Muller, made their way into the Hall of Mirrors of the Palace of Versailles and signed the treaty. The humiliation felt by Germans was made worse because it was in the Hall of Mirrors that the German Empire had been proclaimed back in 1871.

The impact of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles by the democratic politicians was long-lasting and extended well beyond the immediate angst of the moment.

- The Republic's willingness to accept the Treaty became the greatest piece of anti-republican propaganda that the extreme nationalist right ever had.

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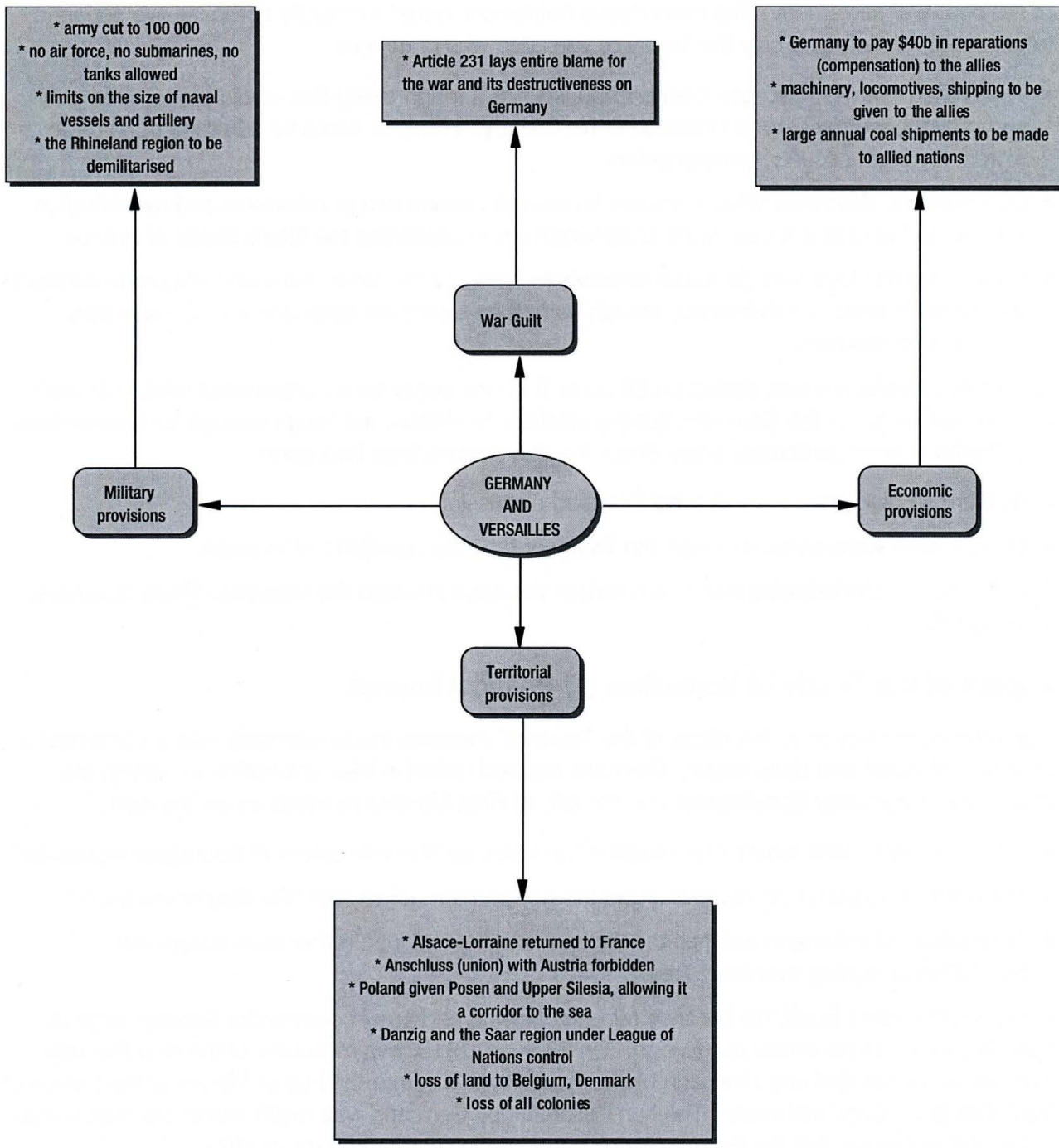
Figure 2.1 Germany and the Treaty of Versailles



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- Opponents of the Republic could now accuse it of surrendering in November 1918 by signing the armistice, of having 'stabbed the German army in the back', and now of signing away not only German land and German military strength, but also German honour.
  - The democratic politicians of the Republic could indeed be aptly labelled "the November Criminals".
- It is no accident that Hitler's strident and vocal opposition to Versailles would be a key factor helping to build up his support amongst ordinary nationalist-minded Germans, and amongst the elites in the army and business.
- Right-wing nationalist opposition to the Republic, even violent opposition, could thus be justified.

From its inception, the Republic was to be burdened with a fatal cocktail of military defeat, national humiliation and treachery.

Continuation of violence: 1919-22

Between 1919 and 1922, political violence continued across Germany. This violence came from both the left and the right. However, due to the failure to remove the anti-democratic bias of the police and the judiciary, those on the right were treated far more leniently than those on the left. During these years there were 376 political murders across Germany. Of these, 356 were committed by the right. However, the police often made little effort to seek out the perpetrators of right-wing violence. These people, often former soldiers who now operated in Freikorps units, were looked on as patriots. However, those on the left were seen as being anti-German, traitors to the fatherland. Sentences handed down following crimes committed by the right were usually very lenient; left-wing offenders were often executed.

The most significant attempt by the right to bring down the Republic came in 1920 with the Kapp Putsch.

- On 12 March 1920, an attempt was made by right-wing nationalist conspirators to overthrow the Republic. They were led by:
  - Wolfgang Kapp who was a civil servant in Prussia;
  - General von Luttwitz who was the military commander of Berlin;
  - Captain Hermann Erhardt, commander of the Erhardt Freikorps brigade.
- The government had issued an order for the Erhardt Brigade to be dissolved. Instead, Luttwitz ordered the brigade to march into Berlin.
- Defence Minister Noske expected the army (now called the Reichswehr) to oppose Kapp's forces and defend the Republican government. After all, this is what the army did when the government had been faced with attacks from the left.
- However, the new commander of the army, Hans von Seeckt, made it plain that he had no intention of using army forces to attack other army forces.
  - He argued that these men had been comrades in arms in the trenches and would not fight each other.
  - As he said at the time: "Reichswehr does not shoot upon Reichswehr".
- The government fled Berlin. It was saved, not by army action, but by a very well organised general strike which took a hold in Berlin and other cities. The putsch had been poorly organised, did not have full army support and so five days after it started it collapsed. The government returned to Berlin.

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- The Kapp Putsch was very significant.
  - It showed that the army could not be relied upon to support the democratic republic. Indeed, von Seekt and other leading officers despised the republic and sympathised with the rebels.
  - It also suggested that the army was becoming 'a state within a state', answerable to itself, rather than the government.
- During the Kapp Putsch, workers in the industrial Ruhr area had been armed and were now not keen to lay down their arms.
  - The government ordered Reichswehr units into the Ruhr to disarm the workers.
  - The army had no qualms about obeying the government this time; they were happy to move in and wipe out what had become known as the 'Red Army of the Ruhr'.
  - Many atrocities were committed against this workers group and by late April their short-lived uprising had been broken.

By the end of 1922, the democratic republic found itself in a very precarious position. The elections of June 1920 showed what little faith German voters had in democracy. The three main democratic parties – the SPD, the Centre Party and Democratic Party – all suffered major electoral losses. Voters had moved to the extremes as the KPD on the left and nationalist groups on the right made major gains. The loyalty of the army was at best suspect; violence seemed to have become a normal part of German democratic political life. The most high-profile victim of this cycle of violence was the Foreign Minister, Walther Rathenau, who was assassinated in June 1922. His extreme right-wing murderers believed they had good reason to murder this man: he was part of the shameful republican government, he had just signed a treaty with the Communist government of the Soviet Union and he was Jewish.

Impact of the Treaty of Versailles: (2) Economic impact

If the political impact of the Treaty of Versailles was great, the economic impact was to be catastrophic. The British economist, John Maynard Keynes, wrote a book called "The Economic Consequences of the Peace" in which he argued that the economic measures contained in the treaty would be impossible for Germany to honour. He showed any failure to maintain interest payments on the reparations bill would have the effect of increasing Germany's reparations bill as time went on.

Germany did manage to make its first payment in 1921 – but only as a result of a loan it received from London. By the end of 1922, it was having difficulty making its next payment. The French government, led by Raymond Poincare, believed that Germany was simply trying to get out of paying what it owed to France. In December 1922, it was announced that Germany had defaulted because it had failed to deliver 140 000 telegraph poles to France. This minor infraction was to lead to the traumatic events of the year of 1923.

The French Occupation of the Ruhr

11 January

On the pretext of making Germany pay, French and Belgian troops invaded the industrial area of the Ruhr. In the areas that it was to occupy, the French imposed harsh controls on the German population.

16 January

German Chancellor Cuno called upon the German people to refuse to cooperate with the occupying forces. Military resistance was out of the question, so the order was given to proceed

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with a policy of 'passive resistance'. Workers refused to carry out French instructions and strikes broke out; employers too refused to cooperate. The government agreed to pay much of the wage bill to the now non-working population. (This would later have a major impact on Germany's serious inflation problem.)

January-May
Relations between French troops and German workers deteriorated. Incidents ranged from minor scuffles to a massacre of German workers in a Krupps factory in Essen in March. In May, a man called Leo Schlageter was executed by French troops for sabotage. He became an instant martyr and hero.

Hyper-inflation

In 1923, the German economy went bankrupt as hyper-inflation took off. Hyper-inflation is a form of inflation in which prices and wages rise to such fantastic levels that the currency ceases to have any value. It is impossible for us to even imagine what this means. For the Germans, it had this impact on daily life:

- Workers were paid two or three times daily.
- Prices could double in an hour.
- The exchange rate collapsed as no nation was willing to buy the German mark. This effectively put an end to Germany's international trade.
- People shopped and carried their money in boxes and large baskets, rather than a wallet or purse.

The figures below give an idea of the impact of hyper-inflation on Germany.

	German marks needed to buy one loaf of bread		German marks needed to buy one American dollar
1918	0.63	1918	40
1922	160	1922	80
January 1923	250	January 1923	18 000
July 1923	3 500	July 1923	4 600 000
November 1923	201 000 000 000	November 1923	4 420 000 000

What was the cause of this unbelievable inflation?

Economists and historians are divided on this issue. Several factors seem to have come together to explain the phenomenon:

- Germany was already suffering high inflation during the war. The government had pursued a policy of deficit financing in the belief that the debts accrued during the war would be paid for by the nation's post-war gains.
- The economic impact of Versailles, particularly reparations, completely distorted Germany's (and Europe's) economic situation.
- During the French occupation of 1923, passive resistance and the strike movement reduced output to a trickle. However, the government continued to pay workers' wages. Extreme demand-pull inflation was the result.

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- The government placed no limits on the printing presses during 1923. Some historians argue that the government deliberately allowed the inflation to explode. The logic behind this is that if Germany went bankrupt, the allies would have no choice but to end or at least greatly reduce future reparations.

The impact of hyper-inflation on German politics

The disaster of hyper-inflation was overcome remarkably quickly and efficiently, and the German economy was soon to enter a boom phase of unrivalled prosperity (see Chapter 3). However, hyper-inflation was to have major, long lasting effects on the political life of the Weimar Republic.

- Working class Germans suffered enormously.
  - The unemployed – numbering in the millions – had nothing, while those in work received worthless pieces of paper. These people were reduced to scavenging and picking in coal tips and piles of rubbish. Starvation was a reality for many working class Germans.
  - Once the dust of hyper-inflation settled, most of this group remained loyal to the left wing political parties. Some workers veered towards the KPD but most stayed with the SPD.
  - It was not until the depression that significant numbers of working class Germans turned to the Nazis.
- For some the hyper-inflation was a positive blessing.
  - Those who had debts of any kind were able to pay off those debts with worthless money and so entered the post-inflation era owing nothing. This was of particular benefit to the government which was able to pay off war debts and war bond interest.
  - Hyper-inflation was a boom time for the asset-rich, or those who could become asset-rich. The wealthy elites, who were prescient enough to see what was happening, quickly bought up what they could and then sat tight.
  - Again, once the inflation was over, these groups suddenly found themselves extremely wealthy.
- However, for one section of the population there could be no positive results of hyper-inflation. Though it is a gross generalisation, these people can be classed as the broad lower middle-class.
  - This group comprised the self-employed, those on fixed incomes, those living off their savings and low level white-collar workers such as minor bureaucrats and teachers.
  - People who had been frugal all their life, had saved for their retirement, did not believe in taking from the government, found themselves suddenly reduced to nothing. Their life savings gone in a moment.
  - People in this group found themselves being dragged down to the level of the despised 'proletariat' (working class). This group would never be reconciled to the Republic.
  - These people would never forgive the Republic for destroying their lives. To them the story of the Republic was one of defeat, surrender, Versailles, occupation and now hyper-inflation.
  - It is not surprising that some historians have argued that the backbone of later Nazi support was to come from this lower-middle class stratum of the community.
- In August 1923, a coalition government was formed by the DVP leader Gustav Stresemann. In September, Stresemann ended passive resistance and put the nation back to work. However, there was still political upheaval to come:
  - in Bavaria and Berlin, right-wing groups attempted another Kapp style putsch;

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- in Saxony and Thuringia, left-wing rebels attempted to seize power;
- in Munich in early November, Hitler's fledgling Nazi Party attempted to seize power. (see Chapter 6).

- Stresemann's government fell in November but was replaced by another that included him as Foreign Minister, a post he held until his death in October 1929. It was Stresemann who would guide Germany out of the morass of 1923.

What do historians have to say about the "impact of the Treaty of Versailles"?

1. William Carr: A History of Germany 1815-1985

Carr enumerates the reasons why the German people were angry with the Treaty of Versailles. They saw the granting of land to Poland as merely a way of weakening Germany; the loss of colonies as merely a penalty for defeat; they resented the 'moral stigma of sole war-guilt'; the dictated nature of the settlement rankled with the German people.

"...The signature of the peace treaty cast a long shadow over the political life of the 1920s.... (This and the creation of the 'stab in the back' myth led to the) denigrating (of) prominent republican politicians...and of pouring abuse on democratic institutions..." [1]

2. Alan Bullock: Hitler – A Study in Tyranny

Bullock makes the point that the hyper-inflation of 1923 did far more than merely disrupt economic activity. It hurt all members of the community, wiped out the savings of the middle classes and did much to destroy any faith the German people might have had in the Republic.

"...the result of the inflation was to undermine the foundations of German society in a way which neither the war, nor the revolution of November 1918, nor the Treaty of Versailles had ever done." [2]

3. Louis L Snyder: The Weimar Republic

Snyder argues the line that the main sufferers of the hyper-inflation were Germany's middle classes. Those frugal, responsible types who had saved all their lives and who, because of the Republic's financial irresponsibility and willingness to accept reparations, had been driven into the ranks of the working class.

"...These were the people who later turned to Adolf Hitler as the messiah to lead them out of financial chaos." [3]

1 Carr, W, *A History of Germany*, 1815-1985, Edward Arnold, London, 1987, pp 263-4
2 Bullock, A, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, Penguin, London, 1952, p 91
3 Snyder, L, *The Weimar Republic*, Anvil Books, London, 1966, p 55

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Exercise 2.1

Understanding Versailles: fill in the gaps in the following passage

The post-World War I peace conference was held in _____. Germany signed the Treaty of _____ on _____ under the threat of _____ by the allied armies. The treaty aimed to break Germany's _____, _____ and _____ power. Germany was to be denied an _____ _____, _____ and _____. Its army would be limited to _____. It lost territory in Europe, mainly to _____ and _____, and lost its entire colonial _____. It had to pay compensation to the allies in the form of _____, amounting to $40 billion. Under Article _____, Germany was also given the entire blame for _____ the war back in 1914.

Versailles	Poland	starting	submarines	Paris	air force	economic
100 000	28 June 1919	France	tanks	empire	military	political
reparations	231	invasion				

Exercise 2.2

The following sentences have been written out of order. Rewrite the following passage with the sentences presented in the correct order.

The army refused to defend its government when called upon. It proved to be a major propaganda asset for the nationalist right. By the end of 1922, politics had polarised, violence dominated political life and the army was becoming a 'state within a state'. From the beginning the Republic had to live with the burden of the Treaty of Versailles. Within nine months of Versailles, the Republic faced a major threat in the form of the Kapp Putsch.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Exercise 2.3

Read each of the following statements. Circle either the words THIS IS TRUE or THIS IS FALSE as it applies to the statement.

1	The Weimar Republic quickly overcame the stigma of having signed the Treaty of Versailles.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
2	Violence plagued the early years of the Weimar Republic.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
3	Keynes was a keen supporter of the economic measures of the Treaty of Versailles.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
4	France invaded the Ruhr in order to guarantee payments of future reparations.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE

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5 Chancellor Cuno was opposed to the policy of passive resistance.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
6 Franco-German relations deteriorated during 1923.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
7 The German government bore no responsibility for the hyper-inflation.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
8 Germany's international trade was affected only slightly by the inflation.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
9 There were no winners from the period of hyper-inflation.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
10 Germany's lower middle-class suffered most during the hyper-inflation.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE

Some further food for thought

A useful brief account of the republic is Ruth Henig's book "The Weimar Republic".[1] Henig raises some interesting issues, though her descriptions of party politics can be too detailed for some students. Here are some of her thoughts regarding the period 1919-1923.

1. Political parties found it impossible to change themselves into broad based coalitions which might appeal to a wide range of people. The reason for this was the fact that regional, religious and social divisions were so deep-seated that any transformation was never going to happen. Rather than develop into real, democratic parties along the British model:

   "...It was much easier to maintain support by basing electoral appeals on established class interest, on religious affiliation and regional identity." (p29)

2. Henig makes the point that allied leaders were suspicious of the German government's willingness to allow the mark to fall. It was assumed that this was done to avoid reparation payments. To an extent this is true and any German chancellor who cooperated over reparations was castigated as a traitor to the fatherland. Henig quotes a contemporary newspaper:

   "...we turn red with shame at the sight of a chancellor...boasting to the world... how conscientiously he is turning us into slaves." (p 33)

3. Henig shows that though the economy did recover by the mid-1920s, and thought the currency was stabilised, this was done at great economic cost.

   "...It turned Germany into a country of high prices and low wages. Unemployment shot up, and farmers also suffered as agricultural produce flooded onto the markets." (p 37)

1 Henig, R, *The Weimar Republic*, Routledge, London, 1998

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Notes

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Chapter 3:
Political, economic and social issues in the Weimar Republic to 1929

The chaos and damage wrought by the hyper-inflation and French occupation of 1923 were overcome very quickly. Indeed, by the mid-1920s, Germany had become arguably the most dynamic nation in Europe. It had a booming, modern economy which was quickly reasserting itself as a dominant force in both the European and World economy. It could boast a social welfare system which had no equal in the developed world. The political situation had settled down, violence was rare and the fears held by many about the nature of the Weimar Constitution seemed groundless. Internationally, Germany had retaken its rightful place as a key player in European affairs and its Foreign Minister, Gustav Stresemann, was respected at home and abroad. Berlin had become the cultural centre of Europe.

However, Germany's story of success in the mid-1920s was merely superficial. Beneath the surface existed major fundamental flaws in the entire socio-economic-political fabric of the Republic. Germany's international success was not all that it seemed, and the dazzling nature of German cultural advances had come at a great price to the regime.

Political issues to 1929

To understand fully political issues in Weimar Germany, it is necessary to fully understand the notion of the political spectrum, and what the terms 'left' and 'right' meant, as applied to 1920s Germany.

- The idea of a political spectrum can best be thought of as a semi-circle, with the flat side at the base.
  - Political parties range from the extreme left of the semi-circle to the extreme right.
  - Parties positioned between the centre of the semi-circle and the right side are called right-wing; parties positioned between the centre and the far left are called left-wing.
  - Parties can thus be described as right/ left of centre, far right/ left, extreme right/ left.
- Right-wing parties were "broadly":
  - nationalist and strongly opposed to the Treaty of Versailles
  - convinced of the "stab in the back" idea and the notion of the November Criminals
  - supportive of Germany's military tradition and the army
  - anti-communist
  - likely to be racist and anti-semitic
  - pro-business, anti-state intervention, opposed to government welfare policies, anti-trade union.
  - likely to oppose the democratic Weimar system, the further to the right the party positioned itself.
- Left-wing parties were "broadly":
  - internationalist rather than nationalist, and sought cooperation with other nations
  - opposed to the "stab in the back" idea and the notion of the November Criminals

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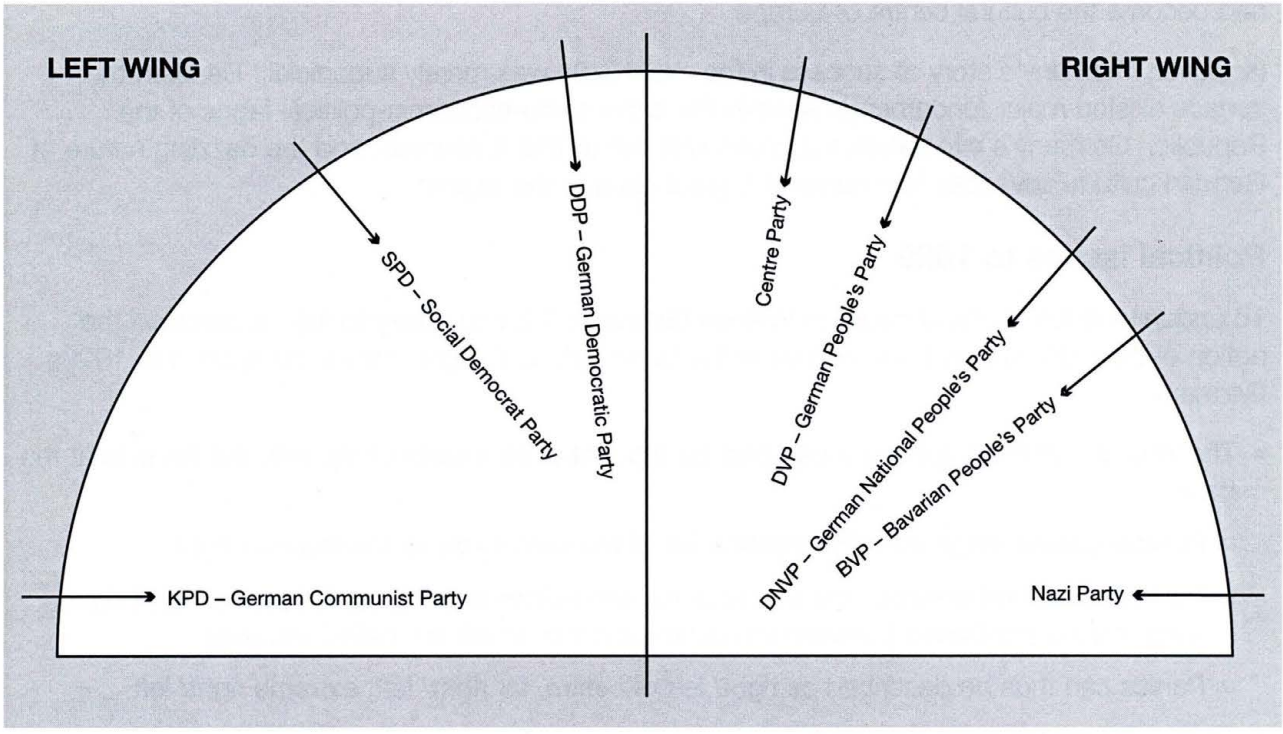
- not racist
- not pro-business, supportive of state intervention and government welfare policies, pro-trade unions
- however, the extreme left (KPD) shared the extreme right's opposition to the democratic Weimar system.

This last point prompted Winston Churchill in 1937 to make a comparison between the right-wing Nazi dictatorship in Germany and the left-wing Communist dictatorship in the Soviet Union. He said that people think Nazism and Communism are poles apart:

"...But what difference is there between life at the North Pole and life at the South Pole...there may be a few more penguins at the one or polar bears at the other. At both, life is miserable."

Figure 3.1 The political spectrum in Weimar Germany



Germany's internal and external political situation improved greatly during the 1920s. However, beneath the surface, political issues were bubbling and were likely to cause the Republic enormous harm should the country face a major crisis. The table below contrasts the superficial positive and the more fundamental negative aspects of the political issues facing Germany.

Economic issues to 1929

Superficial positives	Fundamental negatives
▪ The democratic parties often polled up to 50% of the vote, whilst parties on the far left and right were being ignored. The Nazis gained only 12 Reichstag seats in 1928. The SPD remained the party of choice for most German workers.	▪ A negative consensus towards the republic remained. Even when political stability and economic prosperity prevailed, most German voters still supported non-democratic parties of both the left and the right. The most pro-democracy political party, the SPD, were in opposition throughout most of the 20s.

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Superficial positives	Fundamental negatives
▪ There was a significant decrease in violent political activity.	▪ Political parties were developing para-military groups in the 1920s. On the right were the Nazi SA and the Stalhelm, on the left the KPD Red Front Fighters' League and SPD Reichsbanner. They fought each other on occasions.
▪ Germany's most respected man, General Hindenburg, became the Republic's president in 1925.	▪ Hindenburg might have been respected, but everyone knew he despised democracy.
▪ Gustav Stresemann's presence in every German government between August 1923 and October 1929 guaranteed stability and smooth changes. ▪ Government proceeded peacefully and efficiently.	Stresemann's key role in keeping an even political keel begged the question 'what would happen to German democracy if he suddenly left the scene'? ▪ The anti-democratic thinking conservative elites still controlled the major institutions of Germany – the police, the judiciary, education, the bureaucracy.
▪ Thanks to Stresemann's diplomatic skills, Germany made significant international gains in the 1920s. These included: – a reduction in reparation payments in the Dawes (1924) and Young Plans (1929) – The Locarno Agreement of 1925 guaranteeing Germany's western frontiers and entry into the League of Nations in 1926, marked Germany's readmittance into the family of nations.	Great though Germany's international progress seemed on the surface, every diplomatic success provided the right with anti-republican propaganda. ▪ Accepting lower reparations meant accepting the principle of reparations which meant accepting war guilt. ▪ Signing Locarno meant accepting the validity of the Treaty of Versailles. ▪ Entering the League of Nations also meant acceptance of Versailles as the 26 Articles of the League Covenant comprised the first 26 Articles of the hated treaty.
There was no army interference in the running of the democracy.	▪ Army contempt for the Republic had not disappeared and its unreliability had been seen during the Kapp Putsch. ▪ Under von Seekt, the army operated like a 'state within a state', free of government control. It even had its own foreign affairs section that dealt secretly with the Soviet Red Army.
Proportional Representation did not prevent orderly changes of government and Hindenburg did not abuse the powers of Article 48.	▪ Governments were still formed after inter-party haggling which would always be more difficult in times of crisis. ▪ There always remained the potential for the misuse of Article 48 by Hindenburg, or by him on advice from his inner circle.

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Germany recovered from the hyper-inflation remarkably quickly. Stresemann's end of passive resistance in August 1923 allowed the country to get back to work. In 1924, American assistance rescued the situation. A committee of experts led by US banker Charles Dawes tabled a series of recommendations which became part of the Dawes Plan:

- the US would make a loan of $800m to Germany;
- there would be a two year moratorium on reparation payments;
- reparation payments were to be scaled down.

However, Germany did have to pay a price:

- it lost control of its Central Bank:
  - this was to ensure there would be no repeat of the note-printing frenzy of the previous year and to secure government revenues;
- it lost control of its railways.

The Dawes Plan was not immediately popular in Germany. However, it was eventually accepted and within a few months all the occupying French troops had gone. In fact, the Dawes Plan heralded the dawn of a German economic boom. Figure 3.2 opposite summarises the main elements of Germany's prosperity in the 1920s.

However, beneath the façade of boom and prosperity there was a German economy which was suffering fundamental flaws:

- Germany's economic success in the 1920s relied almost entirely on the flow of US loan money into the country. Any crisis inside the United States could see an end to this flow, and indeed see demands for repayments of money lent.
  - Once this happened, German economic prosperity would collapse immediately.
  - US loans were lent on a short-term basis; most German investment was in long-term projects. "Borrowing short and investing long" is never sound economics.
  - Germany's ability to pay reparations hinged largely on its receipt of foreign loan money. This led to the ridiculous cycle of international payments illustrated in Figure 3.3. Again, if US loans dried up, so too would this payments system.
- Germany's economic modernisation caused high structural unemployment. In 1926, unemployment was as high as 10%.
- Though industry boomed, agriculture stagnated. By 1926, Germany's farming sector was experiencing an agricultural depression like the rest of the world with prices of farm products at rock bottom.
- Germany's reliance on international trade was dangerous. The 1920s was a period of growing protectionism which worsened once the depression hit and so it became very difficult to sell German exports.

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Figure 3.2 German economic prosperity in the mid-1920s

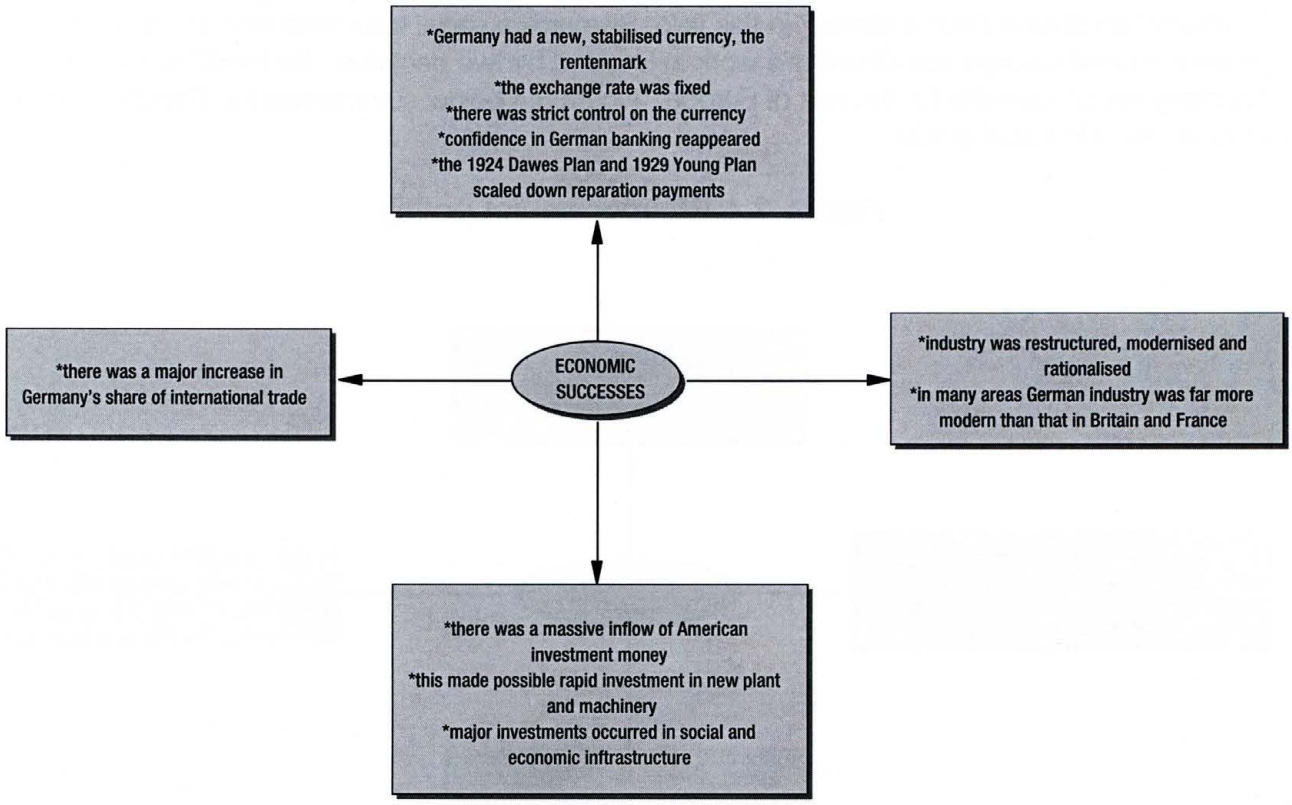
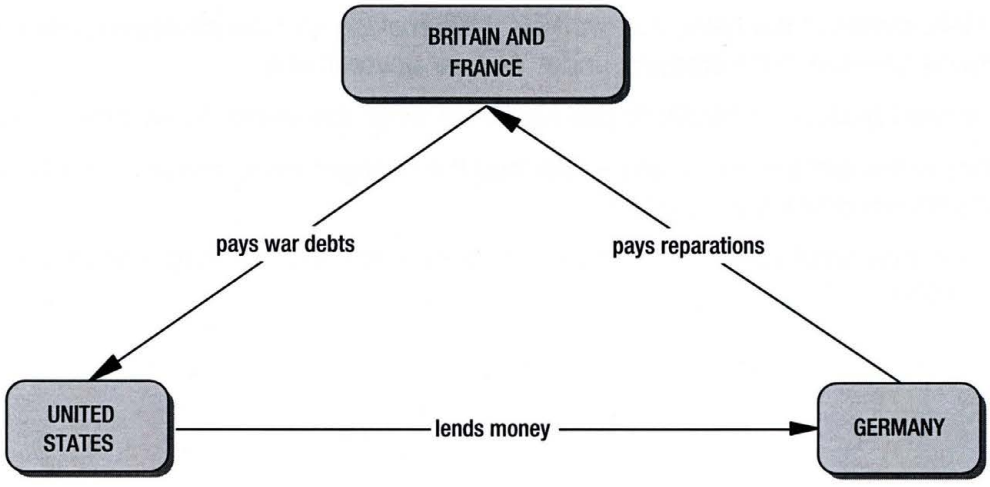


Figure 3.3 1920s International payments system



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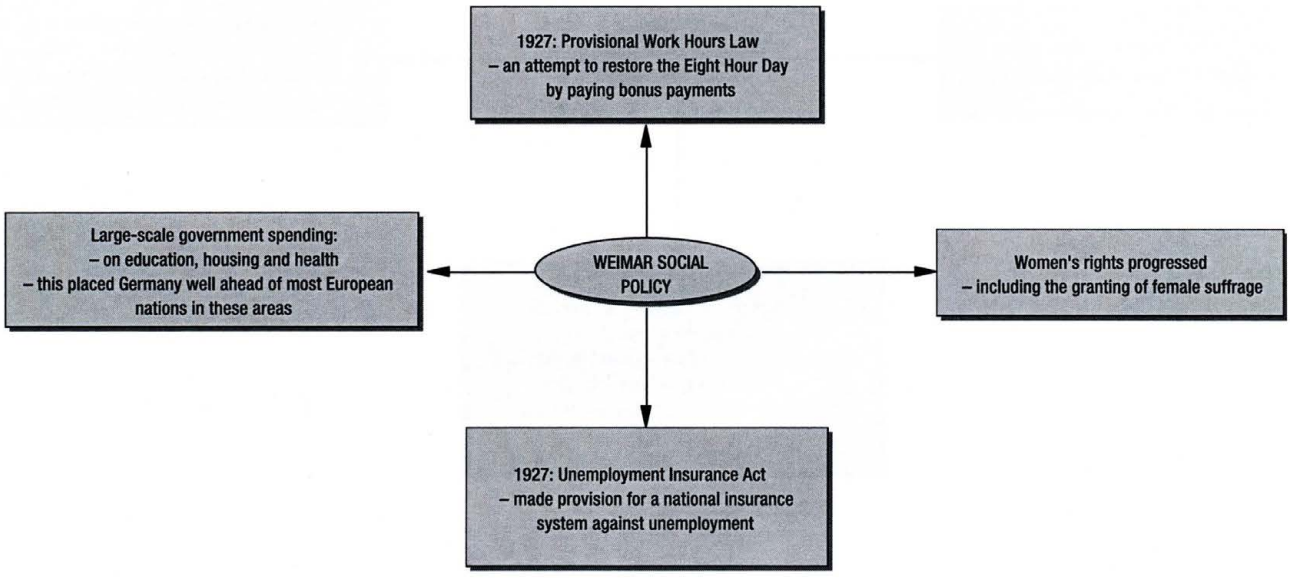
Social issues to 1929

The Weimar Republic made enormous strides in the area of social policy during the 1920s. Germany had always been a pioneer in this field; Bismarck's social insurance laws of the 1880s preceded Lloyd George and Churchill's work in England by two decades. So too Stresemann's Germany set an example for the rest of Europe. Figure 3.4 below summarises the Republic's main achievements in social policy.

Figure 3.4 Weimar social policy



However, Germany's success in social issues also had a down side.

- These progressive measures had to be paid for.
  - This forced Weimar governments to impose heavy taxation levels which were strongly resented by businessmen and middle class salary earners.
- Industrialists resented the gains that workers were making and the privileged position that the trade unions seemed to be enjoying under Weimar governments.
  - They looked back nostalgically to pre-war times when the unions knew their place.
- The conservative elites – in all areas – tolerated the changes being made by the Republican governments when times were good.
  - However, they would seek to overturn such gains if times turned bad – as happened from March 1930.

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The issue of German cultural developments

Germany became a mecca for artistic endeavour during the 1920s. Berlin took over from Paris as the centre for avant-garde experimentation in a wide range of fields. For anyone interested in music, art, dance, theatre, cinema, architecture and literature, Berlin was definitely the place to be. When one needed a break from artistic creativity in the evening, there was the excitement of Berlin cabaret to experience.

The range of German artistic achievement during the 1920s was impressive:

- Art was affected greatly by the expressionist movement. Artists were less governed by convention and sought to interpret the world around them through their own individual perceptions.
  - Notable painters included Heinrich Zille and Otto Dix. George Grosz used his skills of caricature to satirise bourgeois society.
- There were exciting developments in the world of theatre:
  - Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill produced musical works which often presented stories from a working class perspective in contrast to the traditional middle class styles.
  - Berlin's cabaret shocked and dazzled its audiences with openly sexual style and devastating political satire. The oscar-winning film Cabaret, based on Christopher Isherwood's "Berlin Diaries" brings this scene to life.
- In the 1920s, Berlin rivalled Hollywood as a world leader in cinema:
  - Director Fritz Lang could produce a masterpiece like 'Metropolis' which is still watched today;
  - Other notable films of the time include 'Nosferatu' and the 'Blue Angel', the film which brought Marlene Dietrich to world attention.
- Literature also brought forth some great names such as Thomas Mann and Hermann Hesse.
  - In 1928, Erich Maria Remarque published one of the all time great anti-war novels 'All Quiet on the Western Front'.
- Architecture brought forth the Bauhaus style, led by architect Walter Gropius. This style said architecture should reflect function and sought to use new technology. This showed the importance of modernism on the thinking of the time.

Though artistic achievement was significant in 1920s Germany and is admired even today, there was a dark side to this aspect of Weimar life. It tended to be concentrated both geographically and demographically – the young in Berlin. Older Germans, those living in regional and rural areas, those who treasured the traditional values of the old Germany – these people hated everything about the cultural explosion that was taking place in Berlin.

- The right in Germany viewed much of the art as decadent, sexually explicit and morally disgraceful. Moral values were collapsing and the Republic was blamed for this.
- Expressionism and modernism were seen as a betrayal of Germany's great cultural traditions.
- The pacifism connected with much of the new work angered those who sought a reassertion of German military prowess and celebration of wartime sacrifices.
- Many of Germany's artists sought inspiration from outside Germany, many were Jewish, some were communist. Three reasons for those on the nationalist right to despise what was happening.

This flowering of artistic originality was only made possible because of the freedoms which were now available to artists and performers under the Republic. However, this did not guarantee support for the new system. Much of the new literature and theatre openly mocked German society and politics of the 1920s.

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What do historians have to say about "Political, economic and social issues to 1929"?

1. Richard Evans: The Coming of the Third Reich

Evans argues that the apparent political stability of the mid-1920s was a mirage. He makes the point that the Centre Party and the DNVP had fallen under the leadership of avowed opponents of democracy while the DVP's loyalty relied upon the person of Stresemann. Once the threat of Bolshevism had faded, the right wing parties were less and less likely to make accommodations with the SPD. Meanwhile, violence was bubbling along under the surface.

"...Even in the mid-1920s, therefore, the political situation was looking extremely fragile...The brutal fact was that, even in 1928, the Republic was as far away from achieving stability and legitimacy as ever..." [1]

2. Michael Burleigh: The Third Reich – A New History

Burleigh makes the point that the Republic's economic fragility was beyond the control of the government. The pre-war population spurt was now of working age and there was on average a shortage of five million jobs in the mid-1920s. Germany's obsession with technology and rationalisation led to structural unemployment and over-production. Inflation had created a disinclination to save and the economy became reliant on overseas investment funds.

"...By pre-1914 or post-1945 standards, Weimar politics were highly unstable...But instability combined with chronic economic problems was liable to engender a sense of despair and hopelessness, though there was no simple correlation between acute economic distress and extremist politics..." [2]

3. S William Halperin: Germany Tried Democracy

Halperin makes an interesting point about the strength of the army by 1928. Otto Gessler, a favourite of the army, had been Minister of War since 1920. He was forced to resign over financial improprieties and army opponents celebrated. However, their celebrations were short-lived as President Hindenburg appointed as Gessler's successor General Groener. Groener shared completely Hindenburg's, and other militarists' hopes of restoring the army to its former exalted position in German society.

"...(Hindenburg and Groener) had been at the head of the Supreme Command during the closing moments of the empire. Now ...nine years later, they were once again the most powerful men in Germany by virtue of their control of the Reichswehr..." [3]

1 Evans, R, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, Penguin, London, 2003, p 96
2 Burleigh, M, *The Third Reich: A New History*, Pan, London, 2001, p 61
3 Halperin, S, *Germany Tried Democracy*, Norton Library, New York, 1965, p357

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Exercise 3.1

Place the following groups/ individuals/ institutions under their correct political spectrum heading.

Hindenburg, Ludendorff, KPD, Spartacists, DVP, SPD, BVP, DNVP, Nazi Party, Ebert, Stresemann, Conservative elites, the army, DDP, Centre Party				
Extreme left	Moderate left	Left/ right of centre	Nationalist right	Extreme right

Exercise 3.2

Question:	Answer:
1 How could German electoral figures be interpreted in differing ways?	
2 Was German politics free of violence?	
3 Why was Hindenburg's election as President a mixed blessing for the Republic?	
4 Why did parties of the right oppose Stresemann's diplomatic successes?	
5 What impact did the army have on democratic stability?	
6 How did Germany overcome hyper-inflation?	
7 What was the key flaw in Germany's mid-1920s economic prosperity?	

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Question:	Answer:
8 State two underlying domestic weaknesses of Germany's 1920s economy.	
9 Why was protectionism a worry for Germany?	
10 Why could Germany's economy not survive a major economic crisis?	

Exercise 3.3

Using the factual information contained in this chapter, fill in the blanks in the passage below.

During the Stresemann era of _____ to _____, Germany seemed to be enjoying enormous economic _____and political _____. Culturally Germany had become the _____ of European artistic endeavour. Internationally, Germany has become accepted in the family of nations, seen most clearly in its admission in 1926 to the _____. In the area of social _____, Germany was years ahead of other nations in terms of women's _____, unemployment _____ and working _____. However, Germany's progress was at best only _____. Beneath the surface, the economy was reliant on ____ loans, army loyalty was _____, most people still voted for _____ parties and business _____ having to pay for social reforms. The nationalist right _____ the cultural developments of the time and would never _____ the Republic for appearing to accept the legitimacy of the Treaty of Versailles.

resented	issues	forgive	superficial	US	non democratic	prosperity
stability	29	doubtful	rights	24	insurance	League of Nations
conditions	hated	centre				

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Chapter 4:
The impact of the Great Depression on Germany

The Great Depression had an obvious major economic, social, psychological and political impact on Germany. The political impact will be dealt with in detail in the following chapter. However, it is important to point out the role of the depression on the eventual political fate of the Weimar Republic.

- It is far too simplistic to argue that the Republic fell because of the depression.
- Equally, it is quite clear that without the depression, the Republic would have survived.
- Rather, the story is more complicated:
  - the depression provided the circumstances that made possible the destruction of democracy in Germany;
  - it provided the opportunities for groups and individuals to pursue actions which had the effect of destroying the democracy;
  - however, it cannot be argued that there was a simple correlation between the onset of the depression and the end of the democratic republic.

The economic impact of the Great Depression on Germany

The situation before the Wall St Crash

The German economy was already suffering long before the Wall St Crash of October 1929. Germany's economic boom had relied almost entirely on the flood of overseas investment, particularly US investment, which had entered Germany since 1924.

- However, US investors were not philanthropists; they were not sending their funds to Germany out of some humanitarian desire to assist German development.
- It was being done because interest rates in Germany were sufficiently high for US investors to receive a solid return on their investment. In addition, the short-term nature of the loans, often only three months, lessened the risk.

However, at the same time as the German economy was growing, the US Stock Market was experiencing spectacular growth. Unbelievable fortunes were being made on Wall St and the opportunity to speculate on the stock market was even being taken up by ordinary, what today are disparagingly called 'mum and dad' investors.

During 1928, stock prices rose even higher, as did the opportunities to make even more money. This affected Germany in several ways:

- firstly, US investors began to remove their funds from Germany in order to invest on Wall St; this had an immediate effect of slowing the German economy and causing an increase in unemployment;
- secondly, in order to keep foreign funds in Germany, German interest rates were increased – they had already been high; this had the effect of limiting domestic investment in the economy, and again had the effect of slowing the economy.

(In 21st century economies, increasing interest rates is a frequently used policy to slow down economic growth.)

- Thus, Germany was already moving into deep recession long before the crash of the Wall St Stock Exchange. This was happening against the background of an on-going agricultural depression and increasing protectionism around the world.

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The Wall St Crash and its impact on Germany

When stock prices on the New York market collapsed in October 1929 and continued their slide in the months to follow, the US economy went into freefall.

- American unemployment levels rocketed – reaching 15 million by 1933.
- There were thousands of bankruptcies.
- The 'holding-structure' nature of much of US business meant that if one major firm collapsed, dozens of others would follow.
- Much of the speculation on Wall St had been done on credit; within months of the crash, hundreds of US banks collapsed.

For Germany this meant the immediate end of US funds flowing into the country. It also meant that US investors urgently withdrew what funds they could from the country. The impact on the German economy was immediate and catastrophic. Businesses all over Germany collapsed; bankruptcy became a nationwide phenomenon and unemployment levels leapt upwards.

The following table illustrates the dramatic rise in German unemployment levels:

Date	Approximate level of registered unemployment
January 1929	1 500 000
January 1930	3 200 000
October 1930	3 250 000
July 1931	4 000 000
October 1931	4 600 000
July 1932	5 400 000
January 1933	6 100 000

These figures show only part of the story. Not all unemployed workers registered as unemployed. Also, there were extremely high levels of 'underemployment', ie people who might be working only one, two or three days a fortnight who would therefore not appear in official figures.

The economic impact worsens

Three sets of factors interacted to increase the impact of the depression on Germany.

1. The reaction of many countries to the depression was to move to protect their own domestic industries.
   a. This led to major increases in tariffs with the aim of keeping out foreign goods and hopefully keeping home industries afloat.
   b. The US passed the Smoot-Hawley Tariff in 1930; even Britain abandoned free trade.
   c. This devastated an economy like that of Germany which relied on international trade.
2. Between March 1930 and May 1932, the German Chancellor was Heinrich Bruning. Bruning pursued an orthodox economic policy of rigid deflation. Deflation involved increasing taxation and decreasing government expenditure.

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a. The aims of deflation were to balance the budget and ultimately restore confidence which in turn would stimulate investment.

b. We now know, thanks to Keynes, that the worst approach to economic depression is deflation. Keynesian theory showed that what was needed was to lower taxation and increase government expenditure.

c. Bruning's policies had the effect of driving the economy deeper into depression.

3. In July 1931, Germany suffered a major banking crisis. One of the country's biggest banks, the Danat, went bankrupt.

   a. This led to panic in the banking sphere and there was a run on the banks as people tried to grab their money before other banks fell.

   b. Bruning eventually brought the situation under control but not before large amounts of capital had left the country.

   c. The credit controls put in place after the Danat episode further drove the economy deeper into depression.

The social and psychological impact of the Great Depression

All nations suffered from the fallout of the Great Depression. Unemployment was high not only in Germany but also in Britain, France, Australia and the United States.

- Working class families became destitute.
  - Many suffered eviction and were forced to live in shanty towns.
  - Health levels deteriorated.
  - Children were forced to leave school early.
  - Families broke up as men left to seek work or to simply escape family responsibilities.
- Middle class families faced, what was for them, the horrors of slipping down into the ranks of the proletariat.
  - Transcending class was the shared experience of the humiliation of not being able to look after one's family.
- German cities, like British and American cities, had their share of factory closures, hundreds of men eagerly reaching for a handful of jobs or just wasting away their lives on street corners.

However, the impact on Germany was far greater. This is because the impact of the depression on the German people was not only social and economic, but it was also deeply psychological. This is one explanation of why Germany ended up taking the disastrous path that it did. Figure 4.1 on the following page illustrates this idea.

The Great Depression brought to Germany not only deep economic dislocation, not only deep social distress, but it also brought a deep sense of psychological disillusionment. It was in this atmosphere of national disillusionment that the Nazi Party was able to flourish.

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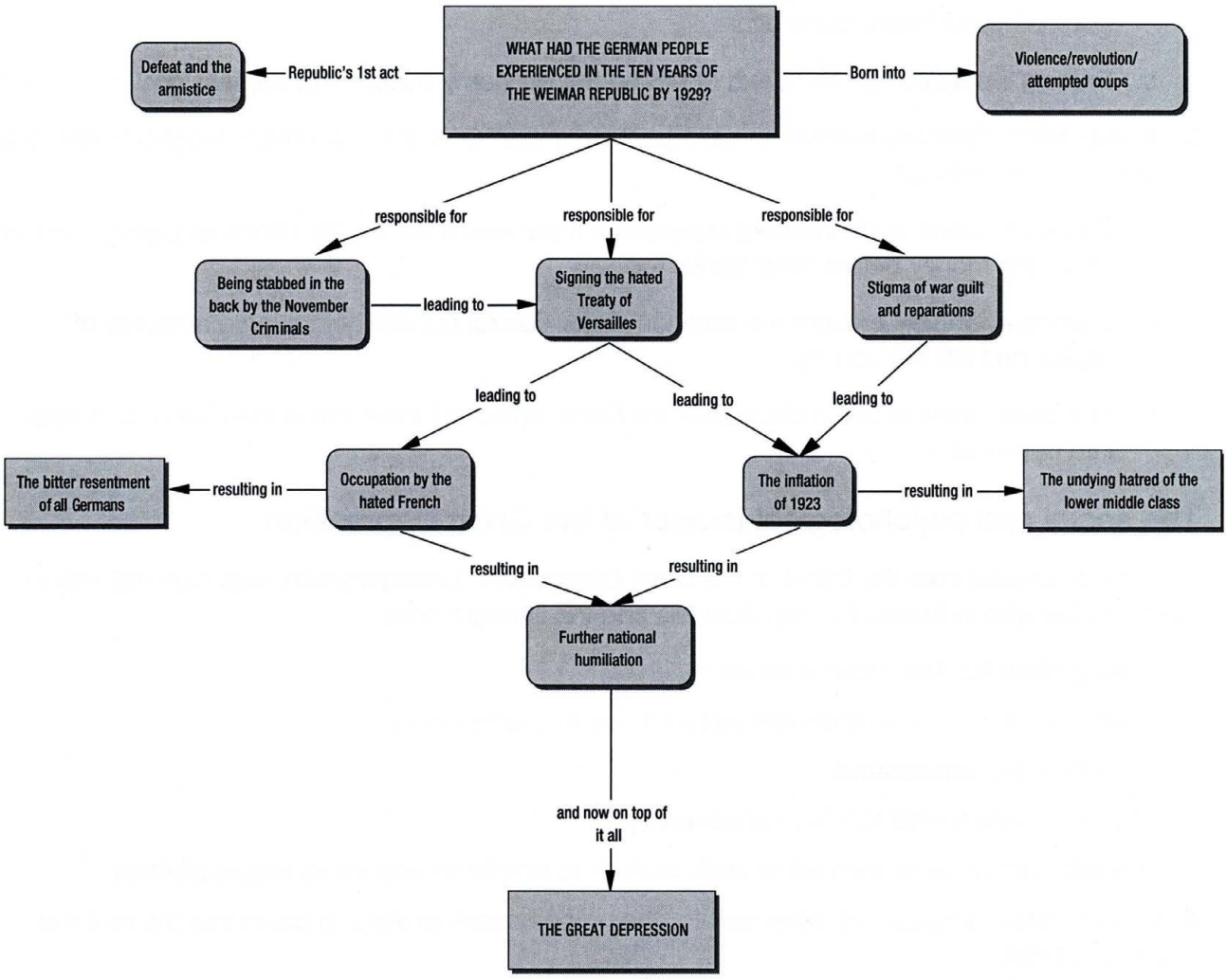
Figure 4.1 The psychological impact of the Great Depression



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What do historians have to say about the "impact of the Great Depression on Germany"?

1. William S Shirer: The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich

William Shirer makes the point that the depression did not cause the collapse of the republic. Rather it gave men like Hitler the opportunity to take advantage of misfortune. Hitler would be able to use this time of misfortune, not from any concern about the plight of the German people but purely as a means to further his political progress.

:...Like most great revolutionaries he could thrive only in evil times...when the masses were unemployed, hungry and desperate...(The people's suffering he would) transform cold-bloodedly and immediately, into political support for his own ambitions." [1]

2. David Childs: Germany Since 1918

Childs points out the severe economic effect of the depression on German industry. He shows that German exports fell by two thirds very quickly and argues that the reliance of the German economy on short-term foreign loans saw an immediate drying up of funds. He shows that the economic fears felt by many about Germany's future quickly developed into fears about its political future.

"...By September 1930 there were fears about Germany's political future which caused a massive repatriation of short-term credits. This helps explain why Germany suffered more from the crisis than other highly industrialised nations, except the United States." [2]

3. Richard Evans: The Coming of the Third Reich

Evans makes the important point that the depression had a major impact on the middle class of Germany. He argues that even before the depression, state bodies had been dismissing significant numbers of civil servants. Not only state employees suffered. Unemployment levels also increased for those working in banking, finance, retail and service industries. Hitler was quick to try and gain the support of this group.

"...As Germany plunged deeper into the Depression, growing numbers of middle class citizens began to see in the youthful dynamism of the Nazi Party a possible way out of the situation." [3]

1 Shirer, W, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, Pan, London, 1964, pp 171, 173
2 Childs, D, *Germany Since 1918*, Harper and Row, New York, 1971, p 44
3 Evans, R, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, Penguin, London, 2003, p 246

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Exercise 4.1

Match the phrase on the left, with the appropriate answer in the box below. Write your answer in the space on the right.

Keynesian theory	
Policy of deflation	
The Danat	
protectionism	
Increasing interest rates	
speculation	
underemployment	

Increasing taxation and cutting government expenditure
Buying and selling shares on the stock market to make a profit
Policy aimed at slowing an economy and attracting foreign capital
Position of workers managing only a few days work a fortnight
Lowering taxation and increasing government expenditure
Policy of increasing tariffs to protect one's own industries
One of the Germany's leading banks

Exercise 4.2

Imagine you are a 40 year old German man living in Berlin in 1930. In a paragraph explain how you feel about the state of your nation at this time.

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Chapter 5:
Collapse of the Weimar Republic 1929-33

It was stated in Chapter 4 that the onset of the depression did not automatically mean that the days of the Weimar Republic were numbered. However, it is equally true to argue that the impact of the depression created the circumstances that made possible the events that would see the demise of German democracy. The evidence to support this line of thinking is as follows:

1. The economic crisis created by the depression led to a political crisis which saw the effective end of German democracy as early as March 1930.
2. The economic policy pursued by Bruning from March 1930 drove Germany deeper and deeper into depression. (see Chapter 4)
3. The suffering caused by the depression created feelings of desperation and psychological disillusionment within the German people. This led to a polarisation of German politics and increasing violence in political life.
4. It gave Hitler and the Nazi Party the opportunity they had lacked during the superficially prosperous and stable period of the mid-1920s. (The background to the rise of the Nazi Party is dealt with in Chapter 6).
5. It made possible the behind the scenes manoeuvring by the conservative elites which would lead to Hitler's appointment as Chancellor. (This aspect of the collapse of the republic will be dealt with fully in Chapter 7).

(This chapter will firstly deal with the narrative of events from March 1930 to January 1933. It will then offer a variety of interpretations that historians have presented to explain these events.)

The end of democracy – March 1930

Since May 1928, Germany had been ruled by an SPD-led 'Grand Coalition'. With Hermann Muller as Chancellor, this was the first SPD-led government in Germany since 1920 and seemed to represent a triumph for democracy. However, even at this moment, Muller needed the support of some right-wing parties to form a government. In early October 1929, Gustav Stresemann died. Stresemann had been the glue holding together several 1920s governments and his steadying influence was greatly missed. Two weeks later there was the Wall St Crash.

By March 1930 the government was in crisis:

- Germany had a generous unemployment insurance scheme. However, as the level of unemployment rocketed, it became very expensive to fund this scheme.
  - Muller and the SPD wanted to raise taxes in order to maintain this scheme for the benefit of the unemployed.
- Muller's right-wing cabinet colleagues refused to go along with this.
- Muller's response was to go to President Hindenburg and ask him to use his powers under Article 48 to push through the taxation measure.
  - Hindenburg refused; Muller had no choice but to resign.

Why did Hindenburg refuse to back Muller? Hindenburg had surrounded himself with a close-knit group of key, trusted advisors. Now in his eighties, Hindenburg relied heavily on his staff and these

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men were able to use their considerable influence to determine Hindenburg's decision-making. These men included:

- General von Schleicher, Chief of the Army Department in the Defence Ministry.
- Oskar Hindenburg, his son.
- Otto Meissner, Hindenburg's personal secretary.

These men were part of the old conservative elites; they had no love of democracy. They advised Hindenburg to dump Muller. Following Muller's resignation, the president appointed the Centre Party leader, Heinrich Bruning as the next chancellor. Bruning had no majority in the Reichstag but this was not going to be a problem. Bruning would rule using the emergency powers under Article 48.

- Democratic parliamentary government had come to an end in Germany, and this was almost three years before Hitler's appointment!
- The events of March 1930 have led British historian AJP Taylor to describe Bruning's appointment as the end of democracy in Germany.

September 1930 – Reichstag Election

Unable to get his measures through the Reichstag, Bruning had to rely almost entirely on Article 48. In July, the Reichstag was dissolved and new elections were called. The election results were a disaster for the republic.

- The German public had become polarised, ie more and more people were voting for political parties on the extremes of the political spectrum, while they were deserting the moderate parties.
  - On the far left the KPD increased its vote by a third.
  - On the far right the Nazi Party increased its vote eight times.
  - The SPD vote percentage fell by a sixth, the DDP by a fifth.

Party	1928 % of vote	1928 seats	1930 % of vote	1930 seats
KPD	10.6	54	13.1	77
SPD	29.8	153	24.5	143
DDP	4.9	25	3.8	20
Nazis	2.6	12	18.3	107

- The SPD had lost votes to the KPD while the right wing parties like the DVP and the DNVP had lost votes to the Nazis.
  - Bruning's hope of gaining a majority had failed miserably. The Reichstag was now much more difficult to control.
- Bruning held on to power.
  - The SPD supported him on several measures, seeing him as a lesser evil to the Nazis.
  - He was always able to rely on Hindenburg's use of Article 48.

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March 1932 – Presidential Election

Hindenburg's seven year term as president came to an end in March 1932. Bruning tried to have the constitution changed to extend Hindenburg's term in office but this failed. The presidential election had four candidates: Hitler (Nazis), Duesterberg (the Stalhelm), Thalmann (KPD) and Hindenburg.

- With Hitler and Duesterberg representing the far right and Thalmann the far left, Hindenburg became the moderate, pro-democracy, pro-republic candidate. This was absurd as Hindenburg clearly was neither a democrat nor a republican!
- Hindenburg just failed to gain a majority in the first round of voting. The results of the second round were as follows:
  - Hindenburg: 53%
  - Hitler: 36.8%
  - Thalmann: 10.2%.

May 1932 – The fall of Bruning

In the eyes of Hindenburg's close advisors, Bruning had been a failure and it was decided that he had to be removed from power. They managed to convince the aging President Hindenburg to follow this course. There were several reasons for this:

- He had proven spectacularly unsuccessful in dealing with the severity of the depression. Indeed, Bruning's policies had the effect of continually worsening the impact of the depression. (see Chapter 4)
- Bruning was negotiating an end to reparations and believed his deflationary policies would convince allied leaders of Germany's inability to pay reparations and see their end. Bruning's failure to end reparations was another factor working against him. Reparations came to an end at the 1932 Lausanne Conference, but by then Bruning had been ousted from power.
- German politics was clearly shifting to the right; the Nazis had gained 36.3% of the vote in the April 1932 Prussian state elections. Hindenburg's advisors decided a more right-wing government was needed.
- Bruning's attempt to 'nationalise' some of East Prussia's landed estates was deemed 'left-wing' and so he was forced to resign on 30 May.
- Franz von Papen was appointed the new Chancellor.

May-December 1932 – Chancellor Franz von Papen

Franz von Papen was one of Hindenburg's inner circle. He was from an aristocratic background, shared the values of the president and had the key support of General von Schleicher. Much of von Papen's cabinet comprised industrialists and Prussian nobles, approved by von Schleicher. This government became known as the 'Baron's Cabinet'. Von Schleicher had noted the increasing support of the Nazis and hoped to use Nazi support to shore up this new right-wing government. Several measures, such as ending the ban on the SA and dismissing the socialist government of Prussia were enacted which brought the Nazis on side. Another measure demanded by the Nazis was the calling of early elections.

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The elections for the Reichstag were held in July 1932.

- The Nazis performed spectacularly well; the Nazi Party was now the largest party in the Reichstag.
- The KPD gained an increase in support.
- German politics had become even more polarised as SPD and DDP support continued to fall.
- The level of violence accompanying political life was enormous.

The July 1932 election

Party	1930 % of vote	1930 seats	July 1932 %	July 1932 seats
KPD	13.1	77	14.3	89
SPD	24.5	143	21.6	133
DDP	3.8	20	1.0	4
Nazis	18.3	107	37.3	230

The Nazis had indeed performed very well. However, as later events were to show, this was to be the peak of their electoral success. Following on from their success in the March presidential poll and the Prussian state election, the Nazis would have expected their vote to continue to rise. The fact that it did not means that this election result was not the unmitigated success it might first seem.

As the leader of the largest party, Hitler now argued that he and his party should be brought into government, with Hitler as chancellor. However, von Papen, and more importantly Hindenburg, made it clear that the most they were willing to do was to make Hitler vice-chancellor.

- Hindenburg despised Hitler.
- He viewed Hitler as a rabble-rousing upstart and referred to him contemptuously as 'that Bohemian corporal'.

Unhappy with the results of the July 1932 poll, rather than resign Von Papen called for new elections which were held in November 1932.

- The level of violence was unprecedented with Nazi and Communists gangs engaged in large-scale street fighting.
- Hitler's failure to gain the chancellorship had given the 'left-wing' of his party greater influence (see Chapter 6 for intra-party divisions). Hitler's failure to rein in his radical SA units clearly alienated many German voters.
- The Nazis remained the largest party in the Reichstag but their vote had fallen by over two million.

The November 1932 election

Party	July 1932 %	July 1932 seats	Nov 1932 %	Nov 1932 seats
KPD	14.3	89	16.9	100
SPD	21.6	133	20.4	121
DDP	1.0	4	1.0	2
Nazis	37.3	230	33.1	196

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December 1932-January 1933: Chancellor von Schleicher

General Kurt von Schleicher now moved to have von Papen removed. Von Schleicher believed that von Papen had been a failure as chancellor.

- Von Papen's intellectual prowess had been a joke around the corridors of powers for a long time.
- He had failed to ameliorate the Depression.
- Von Schleicher believed that von Papen's refusal to use the Reichstag could throw the nation into civil war.
- On top of this, the Communists were the strongest they had ever been.

General von Schleicher was also jealous of von Papen's closeness to President Hindenburg. Planting fears of civil war and concerns about the role of the army in such a conflict into Hindenburg's mind, von Schleicher convinced the aging president to request von Papen's resignation. On 3 December, General von Schleicher was appointed German chancellor.

General von Schleicher remained as chancellor for only two months. He tried and failed to entice 'moderate' Nazis, such as Gregor Strasser into his cabinet. Von Schleicher tried to remove von Papen from the scene by appointing him as German Ambassador to France. Von Papen refused the post and dedicated himself to bringing about the demise of von Schleicher, the man he blamed for causing his downfall. Von Papen was motivated by the basest of motives:

- personal animosity and jealously drove him to bring down von Schleicher;
- he genuinely believed that only he could lead Germany out of the depression and saw himself as resuming his role as leader of Germany.

Von Papen was thus willing to be persuaded to do a deal with Hitler. (The details of the manoeuvrings which led to Hitler's accession to power will be dealt with in Chapter 7).

Von Schleicher repeated Bruning's mistake of attempting to nationalise some of the East Prussian landed estates and this was used as the excuse for removing him from power. He resigned on 28 January 1933.

The advisors surrounding President Hindenburg, including von Papen and his son Oskar, and industrialists like Hugenburg, convinced Hindenburg that there was no danger in making Hitler chancellor. The secret deal worked out in January 1933 was put into place on 30 January 1933:

- Hitler would become chancellor;
- von Papen would be vice-chancellor;
- the cabinet of 11 would contain only two Nazis, Frick and Goering.

At the time, von Papen and his allies boasted that Hitler would be "a chancellor in chains" and that "we have hired him".

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What do historians have to say about the "Collapse of the Weimar Republic: 1929-1933"?

Historical interpretations about the collapse of the Weimar Republic and the Rise of the Nazis – not necessarily the same thing – could fill a library. There will be no attempt to deal with them all in this chapter. Instead, several lines of argument will be suggested which might be used as the basis for an explanation of the collapse of the republic. These are summarised in Figure 5.1.

NB: This diagram will contain ideas which will not have been dealt with in full until Chapter 6 (Rise of the Nazi Party (NSDAP) from 1923) and Chapter 7 (Hitler's accession to power).

1. AJP Taylor: The Course of German History

Taylor argues that it was not the economic crisis that ended the democracy but the appointment of Bruning as chancellor in March 1930. Taylor says the army stood behind Bruning, ensured order and allowed him to ignore the Reichstag, just as Bismarck had done before 1890. In return, Bruning pushed rearmament and sought to undo the Versailles Treaty.

"...The army was the sole "authority": that was the key to Bruning's position...The economic crisis of 1929-33 did not give the deathblow to the republic; at most it drew attention to the fact that the republic was dead." [1]

2. JW Hiden: The Weimar Republic

Hiden argues the case that there was an undeniable link between the growth of Nazi strength and the depression. More than this, he shows how important the 'petit bourgeois' or 'lower middle class' element of this support was. He provides evidence to illustrate that Nazi support was essentially youthful and strong in those lower middle class occupations such as shopkeepers, merchants, civil servants and white collar workers.

"...More than any other party the NSDAP depended on the crisis for its successful growth... (party membership increased) from 129 000 in 1930 to 849 000 by the end of January 1933... the SA...reached nearly 300 000 men." [2]

3. Richard Evans: The Coming of the Third Reich

Evans highlights the divisions on the left. Social Democrats were concerned at the unruly elements joining the Communists; the Communists resented SPD union bosses pointing out communist trade union members who were always therefore the first to be sacked. Evans further shows how the KPD became gradually more extreme as time went on which pulled the two left wing parties further apart.

"...There was already a legacy of bitterness and hatred bequeathed by the events of 1918-19 when...(under SPD Defence Minister Noske's orders) Free Korps...had murdered prominent communist leaders...The murders were publicly recalled at every ceremony that the Communist Party staged in their memory." [3]

4. Martin Broszat: Hitler and the Collapse of Weimar Germany

Broszat highlights the effect the depression had on the voting patterns of the German people. He shows how, what he calls the 'bourgeois parties' – the DNVP, DVP, DDP and agrarian

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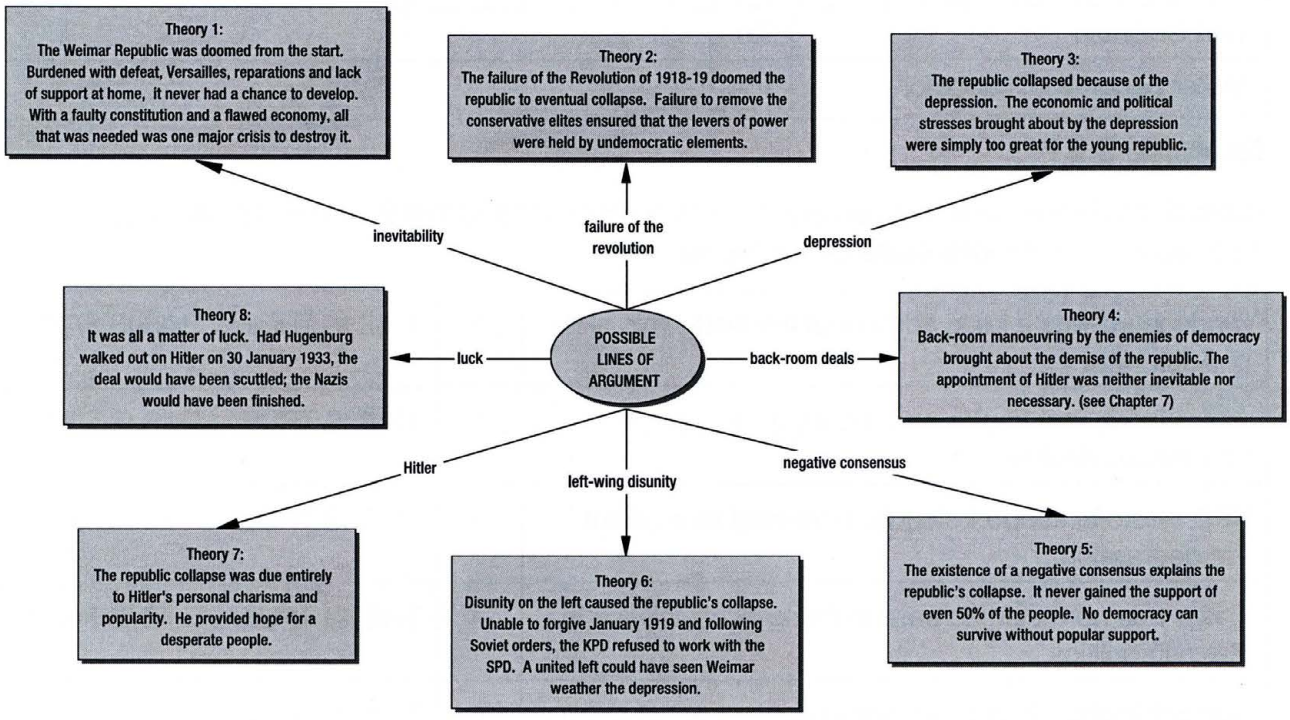
parties – lost most of their support to the Nazis. He shows that the DVP/ DDP share of the vote fell from 20% at the start of the 1920s to 2.2% in July 1932; the DNVP share fell from 20% to 5.9%.

"...the NSDAP had grown from a radical splinter party into a mass movement. It had changed the framework of politics in Germany in a revolutionary way and mopped up above all the former adherents of the 'bourgeois parties'." [4]

1 Taylor, AJP, *The Course of German History*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1956, p 204
2 Hiden, JW, *The Weimar Republic*, Longman, Harlow, 1974, p 66
3 Evans, R, *The Coming of The Third Reich*, Penguin, London, 2003, p 238
4 Broszat, M, *Hitler and the collapse of the Weimar Republic*, Berg, Leamington Spa 1987, p 83

Figure 5.1 Lines of argument to explain the collapse of the Weimar Republic



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Exercise 5.1

Look at the events listed on the left. Rearrange them and write them out in the correct chronological order in the spaces provided on the right.

Mixed up list of events		Correct chronological order
Hindenburg wins second term	1st	
Grand coalition faces crisis	2nd	
Resignation of Bruning	3rd	
Death of Stresemann	4th	
Appointment of Bruning	5th	
Sept 1930: Nazis gain 107 seats	6th	
Appointment of von Papen	7th	
Resignation of Muller	8th	
Wall St Crash	9th	
Muller becomes Chancellor	10th	

Exercise 5.2

Carefully study the statements on the left. Circle either THIS IS TRUE or THIS IS FALSE to indicate if you agree with the idea expressed in the statement.

Hindenburg was a keen admirer of the leadership skills of Adolf Hitler.	1	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
After his fall, von Papen was motivated by vengeful and jealous desires.	2	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
KPD electoral support steadily increased throughout the depression.	3	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
There was no major increase in the level of violence in German politics.	4	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
Von Schleicher always remained reluctant about dealing with the Nazis.	5	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
Oskar Hindenburg and Otto Meissner were powerful behind the scenes.	6	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
Hindenburg's advisors did not fear Hitler's appointment in January 1933.	7	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
Von Schleicher viewed von Papen's period of rule as a failure.	8	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
Von Schleicher played no role in bringing about von Papen's demise.	9	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
Hindenburg ironically became a symbol of the democratic republic.	10	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE

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ADVICE ON WRITING ESSAYS

(These comments should be re-read when approaching the sections called ESSAYS 1, ESSAYS 2, ESSAYS 3 and ESSAYS 4.)

Introduction to essay writing

People who have been marking the HSC for a few years can read an essay and with little hesitation can say "that's a 'B' level answer, 16/ 25", or "that's a 'mid-A' range answer, 23/ 25", or "this is a 'D' answer, 8/ 25". HSC markers do occasionally disagree about answers but once they share their disagreements, the value of the essay becomes clear. It is one of the comforting things about how Modern History is marked at the HSC, that the legendary level of accuracy is almost scientific.

The reason for this is that essay writing is both a literary and a scientific skill. There is no mystery in writing a good essay. Certainly some people are better writers than others: they might have a wider vocabulary, they might know more, they might have a better turn of phrase, they might be smarter and so understand the issues more clearly. However, everyone can come to terms with the basics and write a reasonable essay.

So what makes for a successful essay?

1. Answer the question. This sounds almost trite and an insult to the intelligence, but the majority of responses presented in the HSC which score poorly, do so because they do not answer the question. Failing to answer the question can be done in a variety of ways. In summary it can happen because:

   a. A student fails to address the issues presented in the question, ie he or she decides to write about something else. For example in the essay:

      How important was the depression in bringing about the collapse of the Weimar Republic?

      A student decides to argue that:

      - the depression had nothing to do with the collapse of the Weimar Republic;
      - it was the result of a flawed constitution which enabled the conservative elites to manipulate the system and manoeuvre Hitler into power.

      A nice line of argument, but it is not answering the question. The student could argue 'the conservative elite' line, but first of all he needs to deal with the issue of the depression, even if it is to show that the depression was not an important factor. He cannot simply ignore the focus of the question because he wants to write about something else.

      - He could argue that yes, the depression was important in bringing about the collapse of the depression and show why this is so, and then argue "but of course other factors were also of importance such as....."
        - as a rule of thumb, if you are going to pursue this style of argument, make sure that about half of your essay deals with the subject of the question, in this case 'the depression'.

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b. A student writes about the issues presented in the question, but instead of providing an argument to answer the question, they simply 'narrate' or 'tell a story'. For example in the essay:

How important was the depression in bringing about the collapse of the Weimar Republic?

A student fails to present an argument, instead they simply narrate:

- she might describe economic developments in the mid-1920s and even show that German economic success was superficial;
- she would then bring in the Wall St Crash and the outflow of funds from Germany and move on to describe Bruning's deflationary policies and the 1931 Banking Crisis.

This is all relevant, factual detail but she is merely telling a story and not presenting an argument which is showing how important these economic events were in bringing about the collapse of the Weimar Republic.

c. A student does not really understand the question and has so little factual detail they are unable to sustain even a narrative response.

d. A student does understand the question and attempts an argument but has so little factual detail that the argument cannot be sustained.

'c' and 'd' can only be fixed up with solid work and revision on the part of the student; 'a' and 'b' can be learned.

2. Provide an argument in your introduction which will form the basis of the essay. The introduction is the most important paragraph of the essay; if it is written properly it should leave the marker in no doubt what is going to come up in the essay. So what does a good introduction involve?

a. Avoid the dramatic 'setting the scene' method. For example in the essay:

How important was the depression in bringing about the collapse of the Weimar Republic?

A student should avoid opening like this:

- The German people suffered unbelievable misery during the years of the depression. Men trudged disconsolately from factory to factory in an effort to gain even a day's work while their hungry children's pleas for milk were tearfully rejected by heartbroken mothers, shamed by their inability to look after their loved ones.

b. Avoid providing lots of factual detail in the introduction. Introduce the broad areas you will discuss, but leave the detail to the body of the essay. For example in the essay:

How important was the depression in bringing about the collapse of the Weimar Republic?

This is not a good introduction:

- The collapse of the US stock market on Wall St in New York that occurred in October 1929 led to the Americans demanding back the funds that they had been lending to Germany. Since the 1924 Dawes Plan, which had been brought in following the hyper-inflation of 1923, which had caused the collapse of the Germany currency, US capital had flowed into Germany. Its departure led to a collapse of German industrial activity and unemployment rose rapidly and had reached three million by early 1930. This caused...

+

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c. Be careful with length. Three lines is not an introduction, no argument can be properly introduced in such a small space. However, a page and half is too long. With average sized writing, 6-8 lines should be enough to present the argument of the essay.

d. Instead try to present an argument in your introduction. There is no 'right' answer to a Modern History essay question; the right answer is the argument which you have presented, logically developed and backed up with detailed factual evidence. For example, for the essay:

How important was the depression in bringing about the collapse of the Weimar Republic?

A student might try to argue:

- The Depression did not directly cause the collapse of the Weimar Republic but it did produce the circumstances that made possible that collapse. The depression produced an economic crisis which in March 1930 produced a political crisis. Out of this crisis, democratic parliamentary government ceased which was to allow back room elites in the army, business and around Hindenburg enormous influence. Desperation led many Germans to embrace Nazism. Nazi electoral strength, the failure of democratic government and the manoeuvring of the elites would combine to bring about the collapse of the Weimar Republic.

3. Provide your essay with a structure. Your introduction should show where the essay will lead, eg the above introduction might lead to the following structure:

- some points about the economic crisis/ outflow of US loans/ collapse of industry/ rise of unemployment;
- the political crisis this caused for the Muller coalition in March 1930 which led to Bruning's appointment;
- points which illustrate the influence of the various elite groups;
- the growth in Nazi electoral support;
- the failures of Bruning, von Papen and von Schleicher which led to the elites' manoeuvring which led to the deal with Hitler;
- conclusion: the Depression itself did not bring down the republic but it created the political conditions which made possible the role of the elites, Nazi popularity and manoeuvring of January 1933.

(NB: this is only one of a hundred ways of dealing with this question)

4. Structure paragraphs carefully. There are some simple rules to obey:

- open with a topic sentence which outlines what the paragraph is going to be about;
- develop the argument presented in the topic sentence;
- support the argument with specific factual detail;
- if appropriate, support the detail with historiographical evidence.
- link your paragraphs – this can be achieved easily with certain stock phrases, eg:
  - "not only was 'x' of significance but 'y' also had an impact...."
  - "in addition to "a and b", "c and d" were also to benefit from....."
  - "in contrast to "e", "f" reacted quite differently...."

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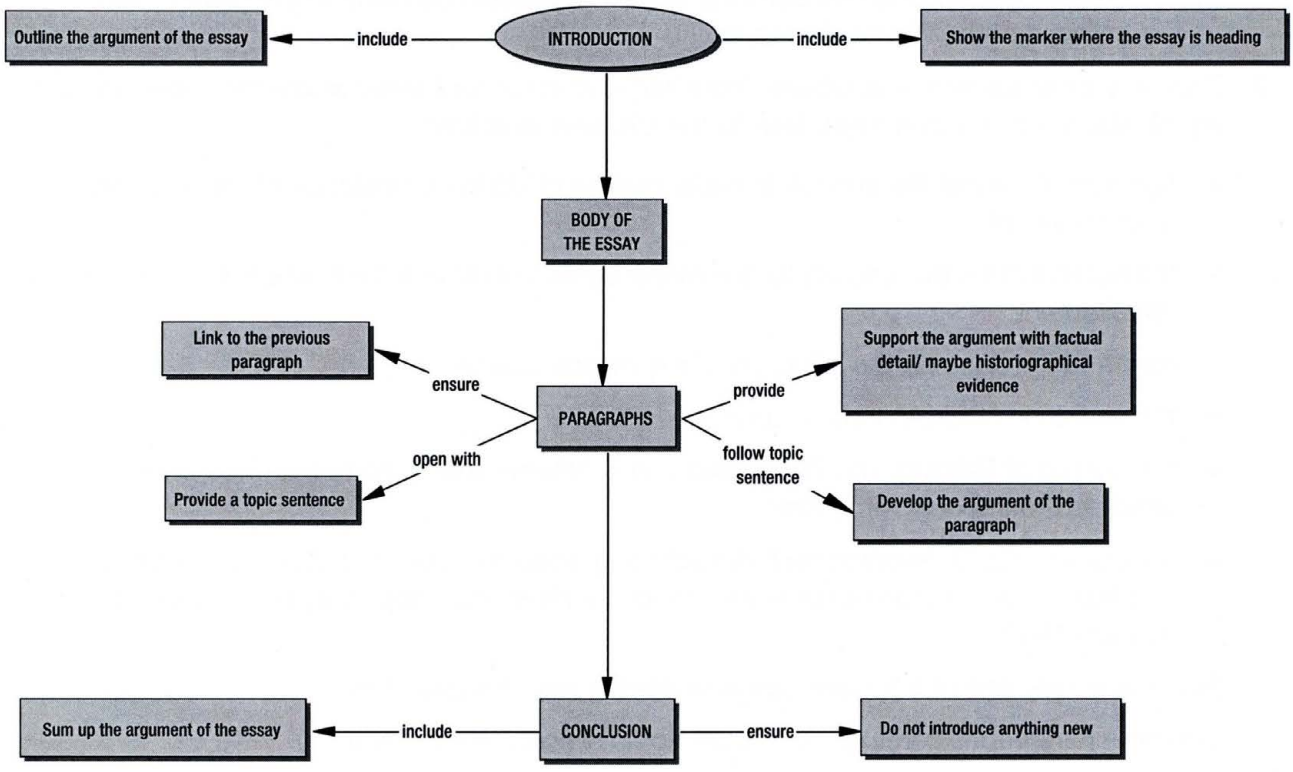
NB: Do not open paragraphs with historiography. The aim should be for the student to show the marker what he knows. Therefore, open with your ideas, back it up with factual detail and then, if appropriate, back up your idea with what a historian has said:

- argument>detail>(maybe) historians' ideas;
- do not name drop for the sake of it – markers are not fooled or impressed by having lots of historians dropped into an essay when their books have almost certainly never been looked at;
- fewer historians mentioned is better than lots.

NB: Do not quote, paraphrase! This shows that you understand what the historian is saying; giving a three line quotation merely shows you have remembered a three line quotation, whereas paraphrasing the historian's view in your own words shows that you have understood what you are writing.

The diagram below sums up some of the main ideas that have been discussed in this section.



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ESSAYS 1
Weimar Republic

The purpose of this section is to provide some ideas for the type of questions which could be asked on the first section of the syllabus: Weimar Republic. These outlines are not presented as the 'be all and end all' responses to these questions. To provide a sense of reality to this section, what follows is a 'first draft response' to each question, ie what were the first ideas that came into the author's head as he thought about each question?

Essay No 1:

"To what extent had the Weimar Republic overcome its problems by the start of 1929?"

You could argue a positive line which essentially asserts that yes, Weimar had overcome its key problems by early 1929.

- You need to isolate the problems that Weimar had been facing:
  - Economic: post-war dislocation, inflation, reparations, collapse of the currency
  - Political: lack of democratic tradition, opposition from conservative elites, early political violence, growth of parties on the extremes
  - Constitutional: proportional representation, Article 48
  - International: Germany's pariah status, impact of Versailles
  - Psychological: having to cope with the burden of defeat, Versailles, the French occupation of 1923.
- Show how each of these had been overcome:
  - Economic: the inflation had been dealt with, a new currency, US loans stimulating the economy, control of banking, reparations scaled down
  - Political: violence had ended, extremist parties losing support, tolerance of the republic by the elites, general army support
  - Constitutional: governments operating and changing successfully despite proportional representation/ role of Stresemann, no misuse of Article 48 by President Hindenburg
  - International: Germany regaining its status as a key European power, eg entry into the League of Nations
  - Psychological: the traumas had been overcome, Germany developing into a dynamic, modern, forward thinking nation, seen most clearly in its advanced social policies and its leading cultural position in Europe.
- Conclusion: despite tremendous early difficulties, Germany had overcome the worst and could look forward confidently to the future.
  - It was not to know that the depression was around the corner.

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Essay No 2:

"To what extent was the prosperity and stability experienced by the Weimar Republic in the mid-1920s superficial?"

You could argue a negative line which essentially asserts that yes, Weimar's success was only superficial. Beneath the surface lurked fundamental problems which would come forth if a major crisis occurred.

This question could follow one of the following structures:

1. Paint the positive picture first, then break down these points by painting the negative picture.
2. Deal with each aspect of the time individually, eg economics, and contrast the positive with the negative.

The second approach will be suggested as it makes for a more cohesive response.

Deal first with the economic aspect:

- On the surface the economic picture was positive:
  - massive investment from overseas, reformed banking and currency, scaled down reparations
  - German industry becoming modernised, rationalised, a technological leader in Europe etc.
- However, beneath the surface, things were not so good:
  - Germany's prosperity rested on short-term US loans which could be removed if a crisis hit America; this would destroy German prosperity.
  - Protectionism, high structural unemployment, agricultural depression were all working against long-term economic prosperity.
- Politically, things had quietened down after the violence of the early republic:
  - The constitution was operating well.
  - Stresemann had achieved continuity in government.
  - Extremist parties were in the minority.
  - Hindenburg added prestige to the regime.
- However, beneath the surface:
  - The conservative elites still despised the democratic republic.
  - The army was acting as 'a state within a state'.
  - Violence had lessened but para-military activity was growing.
  - The constitutional defects still had the potential to wreak havoc and government stability depended on one man: what if Stresemann left the scene?
- The republic had made great progress internationally:
  - evidence can be seen in the Reparations Agreements, Locarno, entry into the League of Nations;
  - Stresemann's reputation.
- However, all this implied acceptance of the hated Treaty of Versailles
  - This provided great propaganda for the right.

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- Germany was a model of social progress:
  - Women's rights;
  - Social legislation, workers' rights.
- However, this was bitterly resented by the industrialists and middle class groups who had to foot the tax bill and who disapproved of such policies.
- Conclusion: on the surface things seemed to be going very well economically, politically and internationally, beneath the surface the republic was experiencing fundamental problems which would come to the surface if a crisis came along.

Essay No 3:

Evaluate the view that the Weimar Republic was doomed from the start.

Be careful not to fall into the trap of a detailed, narrative response to this question. You are meant to consider a certain point of view; you have a choice of arguing a case which accepts the proposition or which disagrees with it. It is better to do this rather than sit on the fence and say that 'in some ways the view is valid, but in other ways it's not'.

- This question will contain many of the elements of the previous two questions.
- Be willing to go out on a limb, ie agree with the statement or argue strongly against it, but avoid sitting on the fence.
- For the purpose of this answer, a pessimistic view of Weimar's prospects will be argued.

It will be necessary to deal with some issues from the very early period of Weimar:

- The republic would always be burdened with the blame for the defeat, the armistice, accepting the humiliation of the Treaty of Versailles.
  - The Republican politicians were blamed for 'stabbing Germany in the back'.
  - They represent the November Criminals.
  - This is great propaganda for the right in Germany.
- The failure of the revolution of 1918-19 allowed the conservative elites to remain in power.
  - Explain what happened.
  - Refer to the Ebert-Groener Pact.
  - Explain the influence the conservative elites could have.
  - Refer to the army's divided loyalties, eg the Kapp Putsch.
- The republic had proven itself to be economically incompetent and irresponsible.
  - Deal with the issue of hyper-inflation and the French occupation.
  - How did this impact on the republic.
  - The lower middle-classes never forgave the republic for what happened.
- The constitution was another long-term burden .
  - Comment on its democratic nature.
  - Explain the drawbacks of proportional representation and Article 48.

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- Even when things improved during the mid-1920s, the fundamentals of the republic remained weak:
  - The economy relied totally on short-term US loans which could end at any time.
  - Despite the political stability, a negative consensus prevailed, violence lurked under the surface and the constitution still had its flaws.
- The Right's resentment towards the republic was still strong below the surface and it was waiting for an opportunity to act:
  - Resentment was related to the shame of defeat and Versailles.
  - The implications of Stresemann's policies in the 20s.
  - Anger at the cost of social policy and disgust at Weimar cultural expression.
- When the Depression did hit, the republic collapsed in on itself:
  - Democratic government ceased as early as March 1930.
  - The Depression was intense, due partly to earlier economic developments and partly to Bruning's deflationary policies, partly the result of his desire to remove reparations.
  - The conservative elites in the army, business and around Hindenburg were able to manoeuvre to destroy the republic.
- Conclusion: the republic never had a chance.
  - When times were good, its enemies on the right and in the elites would at best tolerate it and bide their time.
  - When times deteriorated, the fundamental flaws going back to the beginning of the republic would come to the surface.

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Chapter 6:
Rise of the Nazi Party (NSDAP) from 1923

Background

In the period after the defeat of November 1918, Germany was in political ferment. Leading army officers were fearful of the possibility of a communist revolution, one of the reasons for the establishment of the Ebert-Groener Pact (see Chapter 1).

- It was in this situation that an Austrian born corporal in the German Army, Adolf Hitler, was made a 'political indoctrination official'.
- Hitler's purpose was to root out possible communist activists.
- In this role he joined a small Bavarian political party called the German Workers' Party.

Hitler soon left the army and began his rise through the ranks of this small, insignificant party. By 1920, he had contributed much to the party's new 25 Point Program and on his suggestion, the party was renamed the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP). It was during this very early period that Hitler gathered around him that small band of loyal followers who would stay with him throughout most of the Nazi period. These included the former fighter-pilot Hermann Goering, a former Freikorps fighter Rudolf Hess and former front-line soldiers such as Ernst Rohm and Gregor Strasser. He also drew to him men whose interest in political affairs would centre on the issue of 'race' such as Alfred Rosenberg, Julius Streicher and Heinrich Himmler.

1920	–	Party membership had reached 3000.
1921	–	The party newspaper, the Volkischer Beobachter is launched.
July 1921	–	Hitler becomes leader of the party and is referred to as Fuhrer.
Sept 1921	–	Hitler sets up the para-military arm of the party, the SA or Sturmabteilung, the Brownshirts. The SA comprises many former Freikorps and frontline troops. Its purpose is to protect party leaders and party meetings; they will later become engaged in full-scale street violence against the communists. At this time the swastika and the outstretched arm salute are adopted by the party.
Jan 1923	–	Hitler is made head of the Kampfbund, a loose grouping of all right-wing Bavarian political groups.
Mid 1923	–	The party had 70 000 members and 15 000 in the SA.

The Munich (Beer Hall) Putsch: November 1923

The Nazis would later make a great deal out of their heroic, but failed attempt to seize power in the November 1923 Putsch in Munich.

- Bavaria was under the effective control of three men: State Commissioner von Kahr, Army Commander von Lossow and Police Chief von Seisser. These men had even thought themselves of taking advantage of Stresemann's difficulties in Berlin and seizing power.

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- Hitler decided to force the issue, supported by the Kampfbund and General Ludendorff.
  - On 8 November, Hitler burst into Munich Burgerbraukeller where von Kahr was speaking.
  - Von Kahr and the others were ordered to join Hitler in an attempted putsch.
  - Von Kahr agreed but once freed of his captors, he reneged on the deal and ordered the arrest of the rebels.
  - On 9 November, Hitler led 2000 supporters in a march to Munich's centre. Here they were met by police and in the shooting that followed, 16 Nazis and 4 police were dead.
  - Hitler escaped but was later captured and he and nine others were put on trial for treason.

Hitler was sentenced to five years imprisonment and fined 200 gold marks for his 'treason'. The lightness of the sentence – he was eligible for parole in six months – is an indication of the sympathy felt for Hitler and the other conspirators by the judges. In fact Hitler would spend only nine months in Landsberg Prison, and in a degree of comfort not shared by other prisoners.

Though the Munich Putsch was a laughable failure, it proved to be of enormous significance for Hitler and his movement in several ways:

1. Failure to achieve power by force convinced Hitler that the only way he could gain power was legally through the ballot box. Following his release from prison, he set out to reorganise the party and seek power by winning elections.
2. He realised that in order to hold on to power in the future, he would need the support of the army. In the years to come, Hitler would cultivate relations with the army.
3. Of greatest importance, the trial brought Hitler to national prominence. Before the putsch, Hitler was a minor right-wing politician in southern Germany. Now he was a national figure. His ideas and his speeches in the courtroom had been read all across Germany.

Once in prison, he set out to write his autobiography, *Mein Kampf*, My Struggle.

Nazi ideology

When he was in prison, Hitler dictated his autobiography, Mein Kampf (My Struggle) to his loyal secretary and later Deputy Fuhrer, Rudolf Hess. In Mein Kampf, Hitler laid out the main goals of the party, his belief and his thoughts on everything from foreign policy to boxing to syphilis.

The Nazis never produced a clear cut statement of their ideological goals.

- Nazi ideology was in fact based on a crude form of Social Darwinism in which nations existed and prospered at the expense of others.
  - In the same way that nature was cruel, one species surviving at the expense of another – the strong succeed, the weak go under – so too nations and races behave in the same way.
- In addition, Nazi thinking also absorbed a range of late 19th century pseudo-scientific ideas. These ideas included:
  - notions of racial selection
  - the idea of male superiority
  - nostalgic ideas of a rural past
  - the supremacy of German culture
  - the Nietzschean notion of the need for a super leader.

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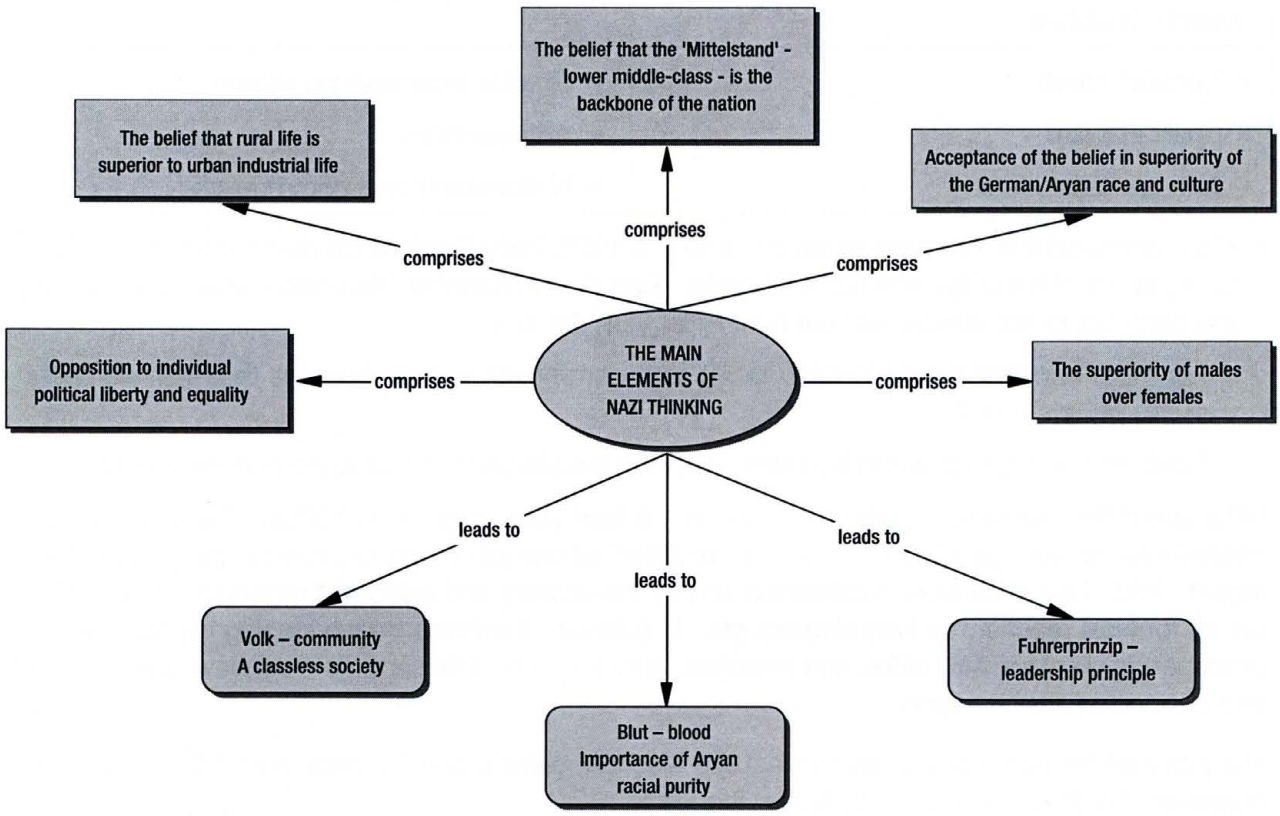
Figure 6.1 below summarises some of the main elements that were to comprise the basics of Nazi ideology.

Figure 6.1 The basics of Nazi ideology



These fundamental ideas would later have a major impact on Nazi policy once power had been obtained. This will be dealt with from Chapter 9 onwards.

Party growth from 1924 to 1933

When Hitler left prison in late 1924, the Nazi Party was not in good shape.

- The failure of the Munich Putsch and Hitler's imprisonment had had a demoralising effect and party membership had fallen substantially.
- The party had been banned in Bavaria, a ban which though dropped in January 1925, was soon reimposed for another two years.
- Hitler himself faced a rival in the form of Gregor Strasser. Strasser represented what might be called the 'left' of the party.
  - He was promoting the party in the northern and western industrial cities and sought to increase the support of industrial workers and pull them away from their traditional political bases, the SPD and the KPD.
  - Strasser's side of the party promoted more socialist aims.

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- In the mid-1920s, the Nazi Party was facing a significant ideological division. The table below summarises the main differences in their thinking.

Northern and western Nazis	Southern Bavarian Nazis
Gregor Strasser Otto Strasser Joseph Goebbels	General Ludendorff Alfred Rosenberg
▪ Socialist ideals ▪ Egalitarianism ▪ Anti-capitalist ideas	▪ Greater emphasis on racism ▪ Anti-semitism ▪ Nationalism/ anti-communism

- Hitler opposed the 'northern socialists' and in a 1926 Party Conference demanded unity and acceptance of his unquestioned leadership. Due to his charisma, his oratory and the belief that the party could not survive without him, Hitler won the day.
  - His more conservative nationalist/ racist/ anti-communist agenda became the main elements of the party's creed.
  - Goebbels, wildly impressed by Hitler, dropped his allegiance to Strasser and joined Hitler.

Hitler spent time reorganising the party during the lean years of the mid-1920s. The country was divided into various 'gaus', each led by a 'gauleiter' whose job it was to promote the party in his region. Party branches were established across the country and specialist organisations were set up for Nazi teachers or Nazi doctors etc. In addition, the Nazis began staging impressive propaganda displays with rallies and marches, dominated by thousands of flag-waving enthusiasts and of course Hitler's oratory.

The party performed disastrously in the 1928 election, gaining only 12 seats and 2.6% of the vote. However, the times were soon to favour the Nazis.

- In June 1929, the Muller government agreed to the terms of the Young Plan. The Young Plan reduced reparation payments but provided for their continued payment until 1988. The plan also returned control of German railways and banks to the government.
  - The right were angered at the idea of 'enslaving' the German people for another fifty years.
  - Led by DNVP leader and powerful media man, Alfred Hugenberg, a national campaign was organised to destroy the Young Plan. Hugenberg's campaign failed.
- However, it was to prove of great importance for Hitler. Hugenberg had invited Hitler to join the anti-Young Plan campaign.
  - This was significant as it gave Hitler several important things: publicity and media prominence, money and respectability.
- The onset of the depression was of course of even greater importance. AJP Taylor has said that 'the depression put the wind in Hitler's sails'. Able to exploit the misery and fears of the German people, the Nazis made massive electoral breakthroughs in the next three years:
  - September 1930: 18.3% of the vote and 107 seats
  - April 1932: 36.3% of the vote in the Prussian state election
  - March 1932: 36.8% of the presidential vote
  - July 1932: 37.3% of the vote and 230 seats.

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Hitler was now beginning to make contacts with increasingly important people.

- In October 1931, Hitler joined leading right-wing figures in the Harzburg Front protesting against the policies of Bruning.
- In January 1932 he made an effective address to the Dusseldorf Industry Club, at which he discarded his Nazi uniform for a sober business suit and presented himself as a model of moderation and respectability.

However, for all his electoral success, his high-powered business and media contacts, Hitler was no nearer to gaining power. It was going to take some old-fashioned, back-room manoeuvring to get Hitler into power.

What do historians have to say about "the rise of the Nazis"?

1. John Toland: Adolf Hitler

Toland's biography of Hitler is interesting in that he provides a very detailed narrative of his life, sometimes providing day by day accounts. When describing the impact of the Munich Putsch, Toland highlights Hitler's enormous self-belief and self-confidence, and the contempt in which he held his accusers.

"...He told the...court that, despite the failure of the November Putsch, they must honour him as the future power in Germany. For it was destined that the army and those who supported the ideals of the Putschists would be reconciled." [1]

2. Alan Bullock: Hitler – A Study in Tyranny

Bullock shows how Hitler was able to make great use of the campaign against the Young Plan. Though the referendum against the Plan had failed, Hitler had managed to break into national politics and showed his skills as a propagandist. Hitler's speeches were well covered by Hugenberg's media organisation. In addition, Hitler was coming to the favourable attention of wealthy businessmen.

":...To millions of Germans who had scarcely ever heard of him before, Hitler had now become a familiar figure, thanks to a publicity campaign entirely paid for by Hugenberg's rival party." [2]

3. Martin Broszat: Hitler and the collapse of Weimar Germany

Broszat explains the importance of propaganda as a means of keeping the Nazi movement going even when, electorally, it was failing. He argues that Hitler knew he had to keep alive the hope of gaining power to his followers. This had to be more than a belief; it had to be presented in material form. This was the point of the giant rallies, uniforms and flag waving that appeared even before the depression.

"...(members were provided) with an emotional experience and strengthened their thirst for future action...(This) facilitated the crystallisation of the hopes, expectations and resentments of many frightened and disorientated men and women around this extremist movement." [3]

1 Toland, J, *Adolf Hitler*, Doubleday, New York, 1976, p 191
2 Bullock, A, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1952, p 149
3 Broszat, M, *Hitler and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic*, Berg, Leamington Spa, 1987, p 67

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Exercise 6.1

Match the person/ group/ event on the left, with one of the answers given in the box below. Write your answer in the space on the right.

Landsberg	1
Alfred Rosenberg	2
Kampfbund	3
Harzburg Front	4
Mein Kampf	5
Alfred Hugenberg	6
Beer Hall Putsch	7
Gregor Strasser	8
Sturmabteilung	9
Joseph Goebbels	10

Right-wing anti-Bruning government coalition
left-leaning northern Nazi leader
leading Nazi on racial matters
leading right-wing media figure opposed to the young Plan
former Strasser loyalist who joined Hitler
Nazi para-military group
loose grouping of right wing Bavarian political groups
Hitler's autobiography and statement of political ideas
failed Nazi attempt to seize power in November 1923
place of Hitler's imprisonment in 1924

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Chapter 7:
Hitler's accession to power

The argument

Hitler's accession to power was never inevitable. It was in fact the result of a back-room conspiracy that was hatched in January 1933.

At the start of 1933, the Nazi Party was in disarray and newspapers at the time were dismissing the party's chances of power and declaring Hitler to be a has-been. Indeed the Nazi Party was in a parlous state.

- Financially it was close to bankruptcy. In the previous two and half years the party had had to fight three national parliamentary elections, two presidential elections and countless state and local elections. It could not afford another. Contrary to left-wing belief, it was not being heavily funded by business at this time.
- The party was facing major divisions. Von Schleicher's offer of a cabinet post to Gregor Strasser in December 1932 revealed major fissures within the party between left and right, north and south. Could Hitler keep the party together?
- Hitler's obstinate refusal to accept the post of Vice-Chancellor had angered many in the party as they could see the possibility of power slipping away.
- The German economy, though still suffering, was past its worst and was slowly beginning to lift itself out of the depression.
- Nazi electoral support was beginning to fall significantly. In the November 1932 election the Nazis lost 34 seats and two million votes. Similarly bad results were occurring in state and local elections.
- Hindenburg despised Hitler and hated the idea of handing him power.
- The 1932 Lausanne Conference had ended reparation payments, the existence of which had been a key part of Nazi propaganda throughout the 1920s.

Yet despite these handicaps, Hitler found himself in power by the end of January. What was to make this possible was a conspiracy that was about to unfold aimed at bringing down Chancellor von Schleicher. There were several figures involved in the conspiracy, but the key player amongst them was former Chancellor Franz von Papen. It was von Papen's manoeuvrings and the use he made of his high society contacts which was to push Hitler into power.

Why did von Papen behave in this way?

- Von Papen had developed an almost pathological hatred for von Schleicher. He blamed von Schleicher, rightly, for his removal from office in November 1932. Thus, he sought von Schleicher's political destruction at any cost.
- He wanted to re-enter the privileged circle around President Hindenburg that he believed his social class merited.
- He also had a belief that he could lead Germany out of its current troubles.
- To achieve his aims, von Papen was willing to 'use' Hitler and the Nazi Party. Like many involved in the conspiracy, von Papen vastly underrated the political skills and ruthlessness of the Nazi leader.
  - Von Papen believed that once Hitler had been placed in power, been proven incapable of ruling, the country would turn to him, von Papen, to secure the country's future.

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The conspirators manoeuvre Hitler into power

Mid-December 1932
Von Papen met Baron Kurt von Schroder, a banker from Cologne; Von Schroder was a Nazi sympathiser. Von Papen made it clear to von Schroder that he resented von Schleicher, still had the ear of the President and was willing to meet Hitler.

4 January 1933
Von Papen and Hitler meet secretly at von Schroder's home in Cologne. Nothing definite was decided at this first meeting but it was significant in that it brought to an end Hitler's political isolation.

9 January
Von Papen reported to President Hindenburg the details of his meeting with Hitler. He told Hindenburg Hitler was willing to be part of a coalition government. Hindenburg authorised von Papen to stay in contact with Hitler but on a personal and secret basis.

17 January
Hitler met with DNVP leader and media magnate Alfred Hugenberg. Relations between the two were cool and nothing definite was decided at this meeting.

18 January
Hitler met von Papen at the home of the Nazi Ribbentrop. The meeting ended inconclusively and both men left with no plans to meet again.

Chancellor von Schleicher's position was weakening by the middle of January.

- He had failed to split the Nazis with his attempt to bring Strasser into the government.
- He failed to realise the importance of the links between Hitler and von Papen.
- Relations with President Hindenburg were cooling, especially when some of Hindenburg's Junker friends were accused of financial improprieties.
- Von Schleicher totally misread Hitler's intentions, believing in fact that Hitler was not seeking the chancellorship.

22 January
Hindenburg's two closest advisors, Oskar Hindenburg and Otto Meissner met secretly with Hitler and von Papen at Ribbentrop's house. There was a series of meetings, Hitler and Oskar von Hindenburg, Goering and Otto Meissner. By the end of the night, Oskar and Meissner had conceded to each other that a cabinet led by Hitler with von Papen as vice-chancellor now seemed likely.

The gist of the deal with Hitler had now been worked out.

- Hitler would be chancellor with von Papen as vice-chancellor.
- Of the eleven cabinet members under Hitler, only two would be from the Nazi Party: Frick (Interior Minister) and Goering (Prussian Interior Minister).
- Hugenberg would be in charge of Economics and Agriculture.

23 January
President Hindenburg refused von Schleicher's request for a postponement of Reichstag elections. Their political relationship had all but broken down.

28 January
Von Papen met Hugenberg and encouraged him to accept a post in a Hitler-led cabinet.

Von Papen met Hindenburg and sought to persuade him to accept a Hitler-led cabinet, assuring him of Hugenberg's (not yet confirmed) agreement.

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Von Schleicher met with President Hindenburg for the last time. Hindenburg refused Schleicher's request this time for a dissolution of parliament.

Von Schleicher submitted his resignation to the president.

29 January

A series of meetings – between von Papen and Hitler, von Papen and Hugenberg, von Papen and Stalhelm leader Duesterberg – ironed out the final details of the deal to have Hitler appointed chancellor. These men totally underestimated Hitler. At these meetings they said things like "We'll box Hitler in", or "In two months we'll have pushed Hitler so far into a corner that he'll squeal".

Von Papen met with Hindenburg and totally misled the president about the details of the deal done with Hitler. He told Hindenburg Hitler would lead a parliamentary cabinet not a presidential one using Article 48 because the Catholic parties would support Hitler. This was a lie.

30 January

Hindenburg swore in General Blomberg as Defence Minister. Hindenburg believed Blomberg to be an apolitical army man who could be trusted to look after the army. In fact Blomberg had been steadily moving towards the Nazis.

Hitler was due to be sworn in at 11.00 am. At this time, he, von Papen and Hugenberg became involved in a major row. Just as the deal was about to unravel, Meissner called them into the president's office. Hugenberg backed down. At 11.30am, Hitler was sworn in as chancellor.

What do historians have to say about "Hitler's accession to power"?

The following points are all taken from:

Henry Ashby Turner Jnr: Hitler's Thirty Days to Power

Turner makes the point that Hitler had little control over the events which were to bring him the chancellorship. He argues that the events that propelled Hitler into power were the result of actions taken by Hindenburg, von Schleicher and von Papen. Hitler, rather than dictating how things would develop, responded to events around him.

"...Compared with the roles of these men, Hitler's was essentially reactive. He played the hand they dealt him with great cunning, but the cards were theirs, not his, to deal." [1]

Turner further argues that much of the motivation behind the actions of January 1933 had much to do with Hindenburg's affection for von Papen, Hindenburg's growing dislike of von Schleicher and von Papen's hostility towards von Schleicher.

"...some of the most elementary of human sentiments – personal affinities and aversions, injured feelings, soured friendships, and desire for revenge – had profound political effects." [2]

When it comes to assigning blame for Hitler's appointment, Turner points the finger at von Papen. Von Papen, motivated by revenge, and, as future West German Chancellor Adenauer was to say, 'nothing more than his own ambitions', was the key player.

"...None of what occurred in January 1933 would have been possible in the absence of his quest for revenge against von Schleicher and his hunger for a return to power." [3]

1 Turner, HA, *Hitler's Thirty Days to Power*, Addison-Wesley, New York, 1996, p 166
2 ibid, p 168
3 ibid, p 180

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Exercise 7.1

Read the following passage and, using the answers given in the box below, fill in the blanks.

The German chancellor at the start of 1933 was _____. However, he was gradually losing the confidence of President _____. Former Chancellor _____ used his influence with the President to consider organising a deal to make _____ chancellor. The president was at first _____ to appoint the Nazi leader but was persuaded to by his advisors _____ and _____. A crucial meeting at the home of Cologne banker _____ was the first key step in bringing the conspirators together. A deal was finally worked which made Hitler _____ and von Papen _____, with two other Nazis in the cabinet, _____ and _____. Hitler was appointed chancellor on _____.

Oskar Hindenburg/ Frick/ von Papen/ chancellor/ Otto Meissner/ Hitler/ vice-chancellor/ Goering/ 30 January 1933/ Hindenburg/ von Schleicher/ reluctant/ von Schroder

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Chapter 8:
Initial consolidation of Nazi power 1933-34

The Nazis celebrated long into the night on 30 January. However, it would be wrong to date Hitler's complete power from this moment. Hitler headed a cabinet that was dominated by his opponents, the Nazis did not control the Reichstag and the conservative elites certainly did not believe that they had handed total power over to Hitler. However, by August 1934, Hitler's power was absolute; even the army swore allegiance personally to Hitler.

There is no simple explanation for this dramatic turn of events. However, each of the following played some role in the consolidation of Nazi power:

- The Nazis' ability to take advantage of fortuitous events, eg the Reichstag Fire of February 1933.
- Hitler's ability to convince Hindenburg of the real danger of communism.
- The Nazis' willingness to be utterly ruthless.
- The use of legal procedure to bring about the creation of a Nazi state.
- The lack of will on the part of the Nazis' opponents.
- Goebbels' skilful use of propaganda.
- Hitler's willingness to turn on his trusted colleagues.

The process by which the Nazis reorganised the nation into a Nazi state is known by the German term 'Gleischaltung', or 'coordination'. By 1934, all elements of German life had been successfully brought under Nazi control.

Consolidation of power – Part 1: January 1933 – December 1934

The following table illustrates how the Nazis consolidated their power during this period.

Date	Action	Significance
1 Feb	Hindenburg dissolves the Reichstag	Nazis will have the full resources of the state to fight the March election.
4 Feb	"Law for the Protection of the German People"	Bans placed on left-wing parties. Hitler makes clear the focus is on destroying the 'communist threat'.
22 Feb	Goering recruits 50 000 SA/ SS as auxiliary police	Nazis have total control of the nation's police forces.
27 Feb	The Reichstag building is destroyed by fire	Hitler points to a communist coup attempt.
28 Feb	Reichstag Fire Decree	Suspension of constitutional freedoms 4000 people arrested. KPD not banned. Its continued existence allows the Nazis to play up the fear of a communist threat.
5 Mar	Reichstag elections	Nazis win 44% of vote and join with 7% nationalists to gain a majority.

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Date	Action	Significance
13 Mar	Goebbels joins cabinet	He forms the Ministry for Propaganda and Enlightenment.
21 Mar	Potsdam Ceremony Establishment of Special Courts	Opening of the new Reichstag. This had propaganda value as opening parliament in Potsdam linked the Nazis to Germany's historic past. Hitler was keen to show Hindenburg great respect. These are set up to deal with political crimes.
March	Establishment of the first concentration camps at Dachau and Oranienburg Establishment of the Gestapo	At this stage the camps are established to deal with political opponents. Secret State Police – it becomes a law unto itself and free of any legal restraint.
23 Mar	The Enabling Act	Hitler is given total power for four years.
28 Mar	Fulda Declaration	Catholic bishops urge support for the Nazi government. Catholics can join the party.
April	Anti-Jewish measures Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service Law for the Coordination of the States within the Reich	Jewish businesses boycotted (1 April), Jews are dismissed from the Civil Service and limits placed on Jews in education. As well as Jews, any potential opponents are removed from the civil service. The civil service offered no opposition to the Nazis. This law makes sure state governments obey the central Nazi government's orders.
1 May 2 May	Day of National Labour Trade Unions banned	National holiday honouring workers. Unions are now illegal and are merged with the Nazi German Labour Front.
10 May	Burning of the books	The Nazis make it clear no independent thinking is to be allowed.
26 May	Law for the Seizure of Communist Assets	KPD effectively destroyed.
22 June	SPD is dissolved	Removal of only source of opposition.
27 June	DNVP dissolves itself	End of any possible right wing opposition.
28 June	DVP and DDP dissolve themselves Hugenberg resigns from the cabinet	Shows lack of political will and effectiveness of Nazi control. Nazi control of the cabinet almost total.
5 July	BVP and Centre Party dissolve themselves	Non-Nazi political organisations are now almost non-existent.
14 July	Law Against the Establishment of Parties	The Nazi Party is now the only legal political party in Germany.

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Date	Action	Significance
20 July	Concordat	Hitler does a deal with the Catholic Church which ends any potential catholic opposition.
22 Sept	Reich Chamber of Culture is formed	Nazi control of German culture is complete.
4 Oct	Editorial Law passed	All media now totally under Nazi control.
12 Nov	Reichstag Election Plebiscite on Germany's exit from the League of Nations	Nazis win 93% of vote. 95% of German people approve of Hitler's action.
Jan 34	Abolition of state parliaments	Ensured central Nazi political control.
Feb 34	Abolition of the Reichsrat	The upper house of parliament is not needed as power is now centrally controlled.
Apr 34	Establishment of the People's Court	This is set up to deal with 'crimes against the state'.

Through a process of legal enactments and removal of opposition political groups, the Nazis were able to quickly gain control of the German state. Under the control of Propaganda Minister Goebbels, all forms of expression were brought under Nazi control (see Chapter 11). Where persuasion did not work, the Nazis openly used terror and repression (see Chapter 12). Throughout 1933, all non-Nazi organisations were gradually either Nazified, absorbed into pre-existing Nazi groups or simply banned. This process of coordinating German life – Gleischaltung – affected areas as diverse as teaching, peasant associations, cultural groups, women's organisations and youth groups. Details on some of these aspects of life in Nazi Germany will be covered in Chapter 14.

Consolidation of power – Part 2: 1934

Hitler's ambitions from the beginning of his political career went beyond simply obtaining power and holding on to it. This was important but his real long-term aims were in the field of foreign policy. Hitler sought to undo the hated Treaty of Versailles, restore Germany's position in Europe and gain 'lebensraum', or 'living space' in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

- To achieve these aims, Hitler needed the army on side. He also needed an expanded military capability because his expansionist plans would inevitably lead to war. Hitler needed a professional army led by professional officers who could make use of the massive rearmament plans that he had in mind.
- Hitler also needed business and industry on side; German industry would be needed to produce the new planes, tanks, submarines and weaponry that the armed forces would need.

What Hitler did not need in 1934 was further unrest on the domestic front. For Hitler 'the revolution was over'. However, this was not the view of the now three million strong SA led by Ernst Rohm. Rohm had very different ideas to Hitler about Germany's future:

- Rohm sought a 'second revolution'. Gaining power was not enough; he now believed that there should be a thoroughgoing change in Germany's socio-economic set-up, a further social upheaval which would lead to the creation of a full Nazi state.
  - Such an idea frightened Germany's business and industry leaders.
  - They wanted stability at home so Germany could move out of the depression and they could set about making money out of rearmament.

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- Rohm also wanted to establish a national people's militia. He hoped to absorb the regular army into his massive SA organisation.
  - Such an idea shocked the elite of Germany's officer corps.
  - They believed that the serious business of rearmament and expansion was too serious a concern to be left to the thugs and homosexuals of the SA.
- Rohm also harboured visions of being Germany's true leader.

Throughout 1934, violence continued across Germany and Rohm's SA seemed to be getting out of hand. President Hindenburg, army leaders and business leaders all demanded that Hitler get the SA under control. Hindenburg warned Hitler that he would consider imposing martial law. This would have meant an army takeover of the country and could have spelt the end of Nazi power.

Hitler was in a dangerous position.

- Rohm's and the SA's behaviour threatened the continued existence of his regime, his long-term foreign policy aims and indeed his life.
- Hitler had to make a choice: should he throw in his lot with his long-term, loyal Nazi colleagues in the SA, or should he side with Hindenburg and the army and destroy those loyal 'comrades in arms'?

For Hitler the choice was obvious: Rohm and the SA leadership would have to be liquidated.

11 April – Hitler met army leaders on the pocket-battleship Deutschland and struck a deal. He would rein in the SA for the army's agreement to him combining the offices of chancellor and president after the death of Hindenburg.

Early June – Hitler met Italian leader Mussolini in Venice. Mussolini advised Hitler to get his 'left wing' (SA) under control.

17 June – Von Papen's 'Marburg Speech' gave rise to popular opposition to Nazi policies across Germany. Hitler was then summoned by Hindenburg and given an ultimatum to bring the SA to heel, or else!
Hitler's response was 'Operation Hummingbird'. The SA leadership was to be destroyed in a secret operation known to only a few leading Nazis. Hitler ran the operation in Bavaria, Goering in Berlin. Himmler's growing SS organisation (see Chapter 12) was used to execute the plan.

30 June – In the early hours of the morning SS units with army assistance rounded up hundreds of leading SA officials. Hitler himself arrested Rohm at the health resort of Bad Wiessee. This action would become known to history as 'The Night of the Long Knives'.

Over the next few days hundreds of SA men were murdered, without any due process or trial. Rohm was eventually shot a few days later after he refused to commit suicide. The SA leaders were accused of organising a plot against the state; this was a lie. Goering and Himmler took the opportunity presented by the Night of the Long Knives to remove other opponents of the regime. These included former Chancellor von Schleicher, General Bredow, Gregor Strasser, Gustav von Kahr (the man who had betrayed Hitler in 1923) and several of von Papen's supporters including Edgar Jung (who wrote the Marburg speech).

The significance of the Night of the Long Knives

1. The threat of the SA, Rohm's leadership aspirations and the possibility of a second revolution were gone.

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2. German business leaders were content.
3. Blomberg and other army leaders were satisfied. They were even willing to see some of their own men killed. When Hindenburg died and Hitler absorbed the office of president, the German army swore a personal oath of allegiance to Hitler as Fuhrer of Germany.
4. Hindenburg was satisfied. He said that when history was being made, blood was shed. Hindenburg died conveniently on 2 August. As Fuhrer, Hitler took all of the president's powers, including the post of commander in chief.
5. Hitler's power was now absolute.

What do historians have to say about the "Initial consolidation of Nazi power 1933-34"?

1. Richard Evans: The Third Reich in Power

Evans makes the point that the army were well pleased with what had transpired on 30 June. Champagne toasts were made as younger officers compared the destruction of the SA to 'the lancing of a boil'. Their jubilation was great; Major von Witzleben claimed that he wished he had been able to see Rohm die.

"...the army breathed a sigh of relief. General Blomberg expressed his gratitude and assured Hitler of the complete devotion of the army." [1]

2. Ian Kershaw: Hitler

Kershaw sees great significance in the action of 30 June. It ended any internal threat to Hitler's power, brought the army behind Hitler and gave a clear warning to any individual or group within the country that the regime was willing to take any measures to hold on to power.

"...The bloody repression of part of his own Movement was a critical moment in the consolidation of Hitler's power...(The) popular esteem gained through his destruction of the generally hated SA was a further boost to Hitler's power." [2]

3. William S Shirer: The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich

Shirer describes in a racy journalistic manner the fear Hitler felt when he had been summoned to see Hindenburg in early June 1934. Blomberg openly stated that Hitler must bring the SA under control or martial law would be declared; Hindenburg confirmed the ultimatum later. Hitler was clearly in trouble.

"...This was a disastrous turn of affairs for the Nazi Chancellor. Not only was his plan to succeed the president in jeopardy; if the army took over, that would be the end of him and of Nazi government." [3]

1 Evans, R, *The Third Reich in Power*, Penguin, London, 2005, p 41
2 Kershaw, I, *Hitler*, Longman, Harlow, 1991, pp 73, 74
3 Shirer, WS, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, Pan, London, 1964, p 274

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Exercise 8.1

Answer the following questions. Place your answers in the spaces provided on the right.

Why was the Reichstag Fire a stroke of good fortune for the Nazis?	1	
What was the significance of the Potsdam ceremony?	2	
What was the Enabling Act?	3	
Define the term Gleischaltung.	4	
What happened to Germany's trade unions?	5	
What happened to Germany's political parties?	6	
What was the purpose of the book burnings and the Editorial Law?	7	
Provide examples of the Nazis' willingness to use force.	8	
What happened to Germany's state governments?	9	
Was Gleischaltung a legal process?	10	

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Exercise 8.2

Read the sentences that follow. Rewrite them in the box provided, placing them in the correct chronological order.

Hindenburg and the army were outraged at such a suggestion and demanded that Hitler deal with Rohm. Hitler's position was now unassailable. In early 1934 Hitler faced a real threat from Rohm and the SA. Using SS and army units, Hitler moved against the SA on 30 June 1934. This threat existed because Rohm sought a second revolution and wanted to absorb the regular army into the SA. Hitler's position was in danger and so he decided to sacrifice Rohm and his long-time SA colleagues.

The Potsdam Ceremony:

Note Hitler's modest demeanour towards Hindenburg. He is dressed in a sober dark suit and the army's presence is emphasised. This was all part of Goebbels' propaganda to legitimise Hitler's place within the stream of German history and calm the fears of those concerned at Nazism in power.

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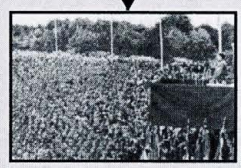
OPERATION HUMMINGBIRD

versus



The liquidated included

Von Schleicher | Von Bredow | Edgar Jung | Ernst Rohm

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ESSAYS 2
The rise of the Nazi Party

The purpose of this section is to provide some ideas for the type of questions which could be asked on the second section of the syllabus: The rise of the Nazi Party. These outlines are not presented as the 'be all and end all' responses to these questions. To provide a sense of reality to this section, what follows is a 'first draft response' to each question, ie what were the first ideas that came into the author's head as he thought about each question?

Essay No 1:

"Discuss the view that Hitler's accession to power was due to the failings of the Weimar Constitution."

Be careful with this question – the key phrase is "accession to power":

- the question is not asking for a detailed account of the rise of Nazism;
- nor is it asking for an explanation of the collapse of the Weimar Republic.
- "Accession to power" refers to the dealings which brought Hitler and the Nazi Party from apparent political oblivion into power.

Equally, this question requires more than simply a detailed narrative of the wheeling and dealing that went on in late 1932 and early 1933. A link has to be made between the constitution's failings and Hitler's "accession to power".

What made possible Hitler's accession to power was the political crisis which persisted from March 1930. The inability to form a parliamentary majority led to the abuse of Article 48 from that time. The importance of presidential power, combined with the president's frailty, gave his immediate advisors enormous influence. Von Papen's determination to make use of this situation for his own ends resulted in placing Hitler into the chancellor's office.

- Refer to the political crisis of March 1930 which saw the collapse of the Muller coalition and the appointment of Bruning as chancellor.
  - Bruning's minority status meant he relied on Article 48 to rule – refer to AJP Taylor's comments on this.
  - Despite electoral attempts to change this, Bruning, and later von Papen relied on presidential decrees to rule.
- Hindenburg was 83 years old in 1930. He increasingly came to rely on his advisors who all shared a dislike of democratic government and sought a return to a more authoritarian system.
  - His principal advisors were his son Oskar, his private secretary Otto Meissner and General von Schleicher.
  - They persuaded Hindenburg to remove Bruning in May 1932 and replace him with von Papen.
  - When von Papen appeared unable to deal with Germany's problems, von Schleicher used his influence to have himself appointed chancellor.
  - All of this was possible because of the failings of the constitution.

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- Von Schleicher's actions angered von Papen who single-mindedly worked to have the chancellor removed from office and hopefully have himself reinstalled.
  - Von Papen's motives ranged from a mistaken belief in his own abilities to simple revenge.
  - A chance meeting with a Cologne banker, von Schroder, led to a meeting in early January 1933 between von Papen and Hitler. Hitler's isolation was broken.
- This was important because the Nazi position was weakening:
  - financial problems
  - falling electoral support
  - divisions within the party.
- Von Papen and Hindenburg's other advisors now worked on a deal to have von Schleicher removed and Hitler appointed chancellor with von Papen as vice-chancellor.
  - DNVP leader Hugenberg and Stalhelm leaders were persuaded to accept the agreement.
  - Von Papen convinced Hindenburg Hitler could be controlled.
  - Hindenburg's growing dislike of von Schleicher and resultant refusal to work with him played into von Papen's hands.
  - Von Papen believed Hitler's incompetence would be revealed and the nation would eventually turn to him, von Papen, for leadership.
  - Hitler was sworn in as chancellor on 30 January 1933 as head of a cabinet that included two other Nazis.
- Hitler's accession to power resulted from the constitution's failure to provide stable government in a time of crisis, the influence that Article 48 gave to an ailing president's advisors and von Papen's selfish scheming.

Essay No 2:

"Account for the ease with which Hitler and the Nazis were able to consolidate their power by August 1934."

The danger with this question is that students may fall into the trap of simply narrating a series of events. Certainly, the events of 1933-34 need to be included in the answer. However, try to isolate lines of argument and use the events to support those ideas.

It was a combination of luck, manipulation of legal procedures and a willingness to be utterly ruthless that explains the ease with which Hitler and the Nazis consolidated their power by August 1934. The Nazi position was precarious in January 1933 but by August 1934 was completely unassailable.

Luck certainly played its part in the Nazi consolidation of power.

- The Reichstag Fire of 27 February played into Hitler's hands:
  - he was able to play up the idea of a communist coup threat;
  - he convinced Hindenburg to pass the Reichstag Fire Decree – this removed constitutional rights and freedoms;
  - it allowed the immediate suppression of left-wing opponents.

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- The German left remained divided:
  - the KPD refused to forgive the SPD for January 1919;
  - it acted under orders from Moscow not to cooperate with the SPD;
  - only a united left could have stopped Hitler at this time;
  - it was Hitler's good fortune that the left was irretrievably split.
- The severity of the depression and the ruthlessness of the Nazis demoralised other potential opponents into submission:
  - many parties dissolved themselves voluntarily (give examples)
  - the Catholic Church meekly accepted the Nazis.

The Nazis were able to manipulate legal procedure to destroy what was left of the democratic system and take over law and order:

- The Reichstag Fire Decree – 28 February
- The Enabling Act – 23 March
- Introduction of measures to bring about Gleischaltung in all areas of life, eg the Editorial Law – 4 October
- The banning of all political parties – 14 July
- Goering's recruitment of SA into the Auxiliary Police.

It took a brave person to stand up to the Nazis. The Nazis proved themselves willing to be utterly ruthless in dealing with their opponents.

- They had no qualms about using repression:
  - SA gangs were allowed to run amok free of any restraint;
  - a secret police, the Gestapo, was formed and operated free of legal controls;
  - concentration camps, eg Dachau, appeared and the brutality exercised in these places was not hidden.
- Hitler was also willing to turn on his own supporters if necessary.
  - Refer to the danger posed by Rohm and the SA.
  - Explain the dangers to Hitler's position emanating from the army and Hindenburg.
  - Show how Hitler was willing to brutally attack his own people (the SA) in order to consolidate his power; bring in details of the Night of the Long Knives.

Hindenburg died within a month of the destruction of the SA. Hitler absorbed the powers of the president which the army accepted by swearing an oath of loyalty to Hitler personally. A combination of luck, law and brutality resulted in Hitler's acquisition of absolute power.

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Chapter 9:
Hitler's role in the Nazi state

Study of Hitler's role in the Nazi state has resulted in a series of wide-ranging interpretations.

View No 1:

Hitler was the absolute centre of the entire Nazi system. Nothing happened without his consent, no policies were acted upon without reference to his thinking; the successes and eventual failures of the regime can be placed at his door. His personality was so strong that it would be accurate to state that 'Hitler was Nazism, and Nazism was Hitler'.

This is very much the view that was presented in the early historical works about the Third Reich. One of the best examples of this approach is Alan Bullock's 'Hitler: A Study in Tyranny'. Bullock's work has been superceded by more analytical studies in more recent years, but it still makes for fascinating reading in trying to understand 'Hitler the man'. Chapter 7 in Bullock's book, The Dictator, is well worth reading in isolation.

This Hitler-centred view of Germany in the 1930s sees the Fuhrer as a skilled political player and a man well in control. Bullock refers to Hitler's abilities in a variety of areas:

- Hitler's understanding of specific situations allowed him to seize opportunities when they arose.
- He understood the feelings of the masses and knew how to play on their grievances.
- He later understood the western allies' fears of communism and was able to play on this as he began Germany's territorial expansion.
- Use of legal measures to gain and consolidate power allowed him to sideline, and then eliminate his opposition.
- Hitler was able to destroy the independence of the army and bring it under his sway.
- He understood the importance of linking propaganda and terror, and furthermore knew how to use modern technology to promote both.
- The strength of his personality allowed him to overcome very able men of the likes of Admiral Doenitz and General Blomberg.

Hitler was not an original thinker. All his ideas he had absorbed from the anti-semitic and pan-German newspaper and pamphlets that were common in Germany before 1914. Bullock argues that Hitler's skill lay in what he did with these ideas.

"...Hitler's originality lay not in his ideas, but in the terrifying literal way in which he set to work to translate these ideas into reality, and his unequalled grasp of the means by which to do this." [1]

View No 2:

The Nazi regime was a chaotic, inefficient system with a confused overlapping structure. This was the deliberate aim of Hitler who encouraged his subordinates to compete. This fitted in with his idea 'survival of the fittest'. It also meant his position was always secure as he would always have the final say on any issue. Historians who argue this line are often referred to as 'intentionalists'.

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This line of thinking came about in the 1960s and 1970s when researchers began to more fully understand the chaotic nature of the Nazi regime. The stereotype often presented of all things German is of cold efficiency: German cars do not break down, German trains run on time. However, examination of the Third Reich showed that in fact Germany in the 1930s was not a picture of cool efficiency.

- Nazi Germany was inefficiently run with many overlapping authorities.
  - There were state bodies and party bodies.
  - There was rivalry between the various Nazi leaders.
  - Gauleiters sought to maintain their regional power.
  - The economy had no consistent direction at all. There was Schacht at the Central Bank, a Ministry of Economics, Goering and the Four Year Plan, and then Todt (and later Speer) at the Armaments Ministry.
  - Himmler's SS organisation was also growing independently.
- Historians like the German, Karl Bracher, have argued that this was Hitler's deliberate intention.
  - Bracher would argue that by allowing such chaos below him, and by encouraging such intra-party rivalry, Hitler was able to stand above the fray, almost god-like.
  - This would secure his position as undisputed leader and help develop the almost mystical notion of Hitler as the 'Fuhrer'.

For all the chaos that was Germany, Bracher points out how essential Hitler was to the functioning of the regime.

"...It was indeed Hitler's Weltanschauung (world view) and nothing else that mattered in the end, as is seen from the terrible consequences of his racist anti-Semitism in the planned murder of the Jews." [2]

View No 3:

Hitler was a weak dictator, averse to making definite decisions, lazy, unwilling and unable to organise. He hated paperwork, avoided the minutiae of day to day administration and preferred to spend his time listening to opera, eating cakes or staying at Berchtesgaden in the Bavarian Alps.

- This line of argument suggests that Nazi Germany's chaos was the result of Hitler's weakness not his strength.
- The regime was indeed chaotic and confused, but this was not the result of Hitler's intention. It was in fact an indication of Hitler's weakness as a leader. Hitler was often fearful of making decisions, never committed anything to paper if it could be avoided and allowed issues to drag on.
  - It is suggested he behaved this way for fear of weakening his prestige if errors were made.
  - The regime, in other words, spiralled out of control and this accounts for the increasing radical nature of the regime as time went on.
- Historians who argue this line are often referred to as structuralists. The best known example is Martin Broszat's 'The Hitler State' written in 1969.

View No 4:

The perception of Hitler as a weak dictator is a difficult one to grasp. Though he may well have been lazy and avoided day to day routine, and though he read little and wrote even less, there was

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never any doubt that his 'will' drove Nazi Germany forward. When Hitler failed to provide specific direction or specific policies, it became the goal of his subordinates to interpret what the Fuhrer wanted. This became known as 'working towards the Fuhrer'.

- Hitler would often not make a decision and allow issues to float. This became frustrating for those working under him.
  - In order to have a policy or a program accepted it became necessary to prove that the ideas contained in the program fitted in with Hitler's thinking.
- The central elements of Hitler's thinking – ridding Germany of Jews, dealing with the Bolshevik menace, and creating a pure Aryan community – could be attached to a policy.
  - Such behaviour had the effect of radicalising the regime as various groups and individuals sought to outdo each other in their closeness to the thinking of the Fuhrer. Everyone was keen to show that they were 'working towards the Fuhrer'.
- This argument of 'working towards the Fuhrer' has been presented by the British Historian Ian Kershaw.

During his career, Hitler was certainly an opportunist, willing to adapt his policies, even go against long-held beliefs, if such action suited his purpose:

- attacking the conservative elites, doing secret deals with them;
- extolling the virtues of loyal, brave SA, massacring them when they were no loner needed;
- promising the destruction of communism, signing a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union (see Chapter 16).

However, Hitler always kept in view the long-term goals of the regime. From the days of the 25 Point Program, to Mein Kampf to the time he gained power, the aims of Nazism retained a certain consistency:

- Aryan racial purity;
- anti-semitism;
- the creation of a people's community – volksgemeinschaft – a classless society in which Germans could share as a result of their Aryan blood;
- the pursuit of German national power;
- the ultimate achievement of lebensraum in the east for the future 250 million Aryans who 'by right' would control these lands and rule the inferior Slavs who were already there;
- the attempt to destroy the Jewish race during the war may not have been a definite goal established back in the 1920s, but Hitler's persistent emphasis on 'dealing with the Jews' ultimately places the holocaust clearly on his shoulders (not his alone, of course).

Hitler never set out these goals in government documents and he never had clear set plans meticulously worked out in advance. However, his aims and beliefs became what the regime worked towards.

"...Working towards the Fuhrer in this way pushed policy along, without close direction from above but operating in a mutually reinforcing fashion with the interests of the policy-makers and wholly eliminating the possibility of any contrary lines of policy development." [3]

Hitler's ability to be above the day to day business of government had another major impact on the functioning of the regime. Goebbels used to boast that one of his greatest achievements was the development of the 'Fuhrer myth' or the 'Fuhrer cult'. This will be examined more fully in Chapter 11.

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However, the lifting of Hitler to god-like status by the propaganda machine was a key part in the power structure of the Nazi regime.

- The positive achievements of the Nazi regime were always put down to the genius of the Fuhrer, or at least that is how it was presented to ordinary German people.
  - Hitler gained the credit for ending the depression, smashing the communists, ending the influence of the thuggish SA and restoring law and order.
  - It was Hitler who tore up the hated Treaty of Versailles.
- Germans had lots of petty gripes during the 1930s – as Gestapo records have shown – but there was little opposition to the general direction of the regime and this found its representation in Hitler's image.
  - When things went wrong, people believed that this was the price one paid when the nation was being rebuilt.
  - Hitler did not know: "If only the Fuhrer knew what was going on, he'd put a stop to it".
  - It was one of the great paradoxes of the Nazi period that many ordinary Germans might despise the Nazis, but love Hitler.

Exercise 9.1

Carefully re-read this chapter. Select three key elements from each of the interpretations which have been discussed and write in the spaces provided below. Part of this exercise has already been done for you.

The Hitler-centred view: ▪ This view was argued soon after the war by historians like _____ ▪ Hitler the absolute centre of the regime ▪ ▪
The intentionalist view: ▪ This view was argued in the 1960s and 1970s by historians like _____ ▪ ▪ ▪
The structuralist view: ▪ This view was argued in the 1960s and 1970s by historians like _____ ▪ ▪ ▪
The 'working towards the Fuhrer' view: ▪ This view was argued by historians like _____ ▪ ▪ ▪

1 Bullock, A, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1952, p 408
2 Bracher, KD, *'The role of Hitler: Perspectives and Interpretations'* in W Lacquer (ed), Fascism, Penguin, 1979, p 201
3 Kershaw, I, *Hitler*, Longman, Harlow, 1991, p 104

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Chapter 10:
Nazism as totalitarianism

Background to the issue of totalitarianism

The word totalitarian was first used by the Italian dictator, Mussolini, in 1923 when he was describing his Fascist Movement of the time. It did not come into widespread use until after World War II. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, several western writers were producing works which attempted to show the similarities between Hitler's Nazi regime from 1933-45, and Stalin's ongoing Communist regime in the Soviet Union.

Soon after the end of the war, distrust amongst the victorious allies – the US, Britain and the Soviet Union – began to appear. By the late 1940s, the world had become divided along the ideological lines of the Cold War, Europe had become separated by an 'iron curtain' and many believed that war between the capitalist west and the communist east was possible.

It is against this background that our discussion of 'Nazi totalitarianism' begins.

- It suited opinion makers in the west to argue that there was very little difference between Hitler's regime – with its repression, Gestapo, SS and responsibility for the Holocaust – and the Soviet regime of Stalin.
  - If it could be shown that Nazism and Communism were extremely similar in nature, this would constitute a great propaganda victory for the west.
- In Communist circles, their opinion makers attempted to argue that Hitler had been placed into office by powerful capitalist interests in Germany, and that Nazism was really just an extension of capitalism.
  - If this could be proven, the Soviet Union's role in saving the world from the evils of Nazi terror would be greatly enhanced.
- Neither argument stands up to sustained research and analysis!

Several western writers attempted to construct a 'model' of a totalitarian regime, and in so doing prove that there was thus little difference between Nazism and Communism. Principal amongst these were Hannah Arendt whose work 'The Origins of Totalitarianism' came out in 1951. In the mid-1950s, Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski listed five criteria that constituted a totalitarian state. These included:

1. a single party led by a charismatic dictator
2. a party ideology
3. state control over the economy
4. state use of terror and repression
5. party control over the armed forces.

Clearly, there was a western ideological purpose in developing models of totalitarianism whose prime aim was to denigrate the Soviet Union. However, let us stay with these early models and attempt to define exactly what is meant by the term totalitarianism. In essence, totalitarianism is a form of government in which the state controls all aspects of the lives of its people. Figure 10.1 illustrates the key elements of a totalitarian state.

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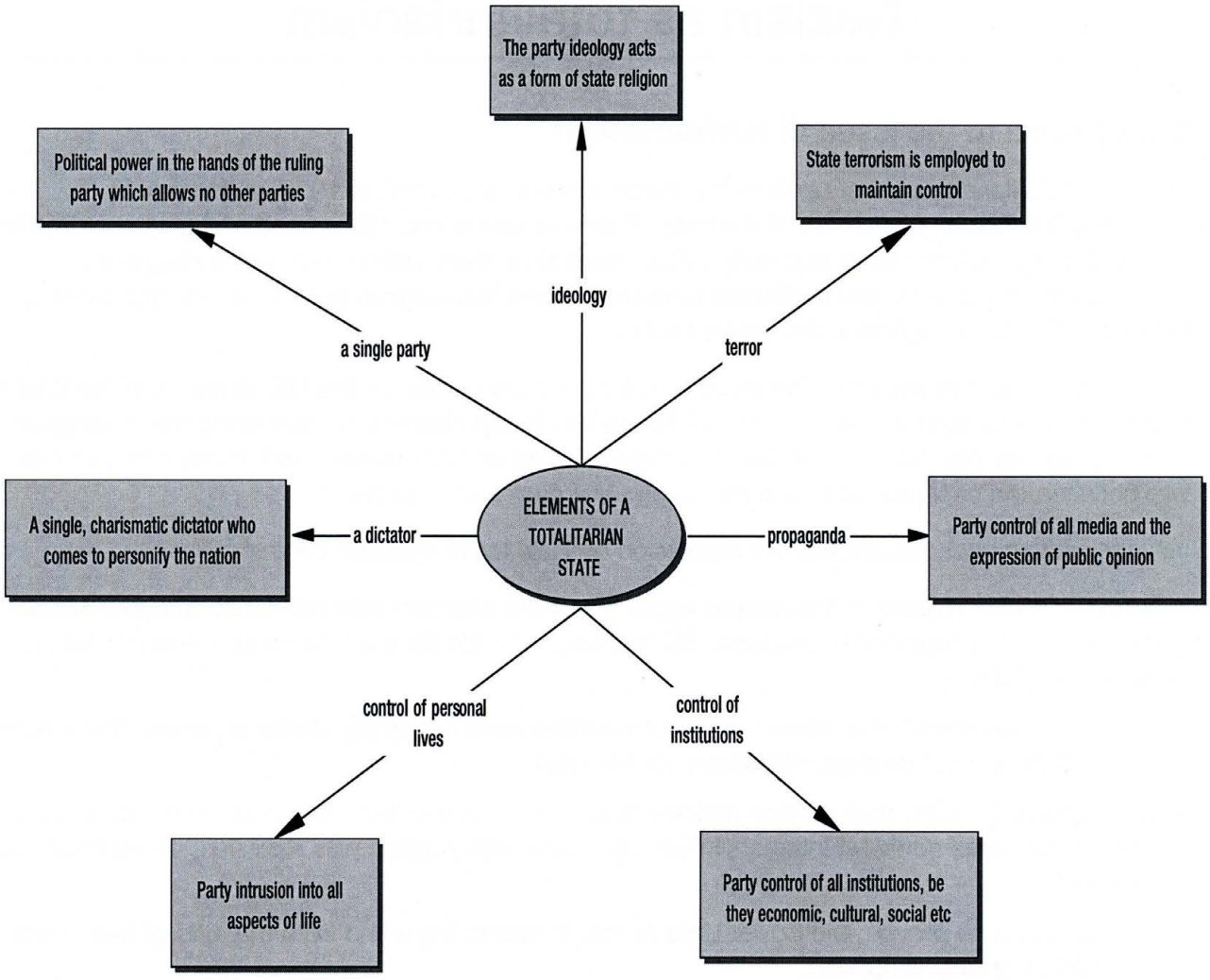
Figure 10.1 The elements of a totalitarian state



Totalitarianism – The Case FOR

1. A single, charismatic dictator who comes to personify the nation:
   - Hitler's political leadership remained completely unquestioned during the years of the Third Reich.
   - Once Rohm and others had been eliminated on 30 June 1934, Hitler faced no opposition.
   - The media built up Hitler as something more than just a politician; he had become the embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of a nation.
2. Political power in the hands of the ruling party which allows no other parties:
   - Throughout 1933, the Nazis consolidated their power to such an extent that by July, the Nazi Party was the only party allowed to exist.
   - The SA's power was destroyed in June 1934 and this was followed soon after by the army's oath of allegiance to Hitler personally.
3. The party ideology acts as a form of state religion:
   - National Socialist thinking became the basis of all key decisions and Mein Kampf could be found everywhere.

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- The goals of lebensraum, Aryan racial purity and Volksgemeinschaft – key elements of Nazi thinking – became the basis of state policy.
- The deification of Hitler and the exercise of Nazi propaganda to achieve this turned Hitler into an almost religious figure to be worshipped.

4. State terrorism is employed to maintain control:
   - The various police forces and the judicial system were under complete Nazi control.
   - The Nazis had in place various party organisations which created an atmosphere of fear. These included the SA, the SS and the Gestapo.
   - All Germans knew that the price of opposition to the regime could be an early hours of the morning visit from the Gestapo, a spell in a concentration camp or worse. The use of terror was not hidden.
5. Party control of all media and the expression of public opinion:
   - Once Goebbels had been appointed as Minister for Propaganda and Enlightenment, there existed no independent avenues of expression.
   - All newspapers and newsreel films had to express ideas which were in line with Nazi thinking.
   - Books were burned, censorship was official policy and all forms of culture were brought under party control.
6. Party control of all institutions, be they economic, cultural, social etc:
   - The process of Gleischaltung in 1933 and 1934, attempted to bring all elements of German life under Nazi control.
   - Nazi 'chambers' were created to enforce party control, eg Reich Chamber of Culture, Reich Chamber of Commerce.
   - Organisations were Nazified or taken over, eg the Boys Scouts disappeared, the Nazi Youth Movement was everywhere.
7. Party intrusion into all aspects of life:
   - Even personal life was not free of party control. The Nuremburg Laws forbade Aryans to marry or have sexual relations with Jews.
   - There were restrictions on where Germans worked, young people were forced into the Nazi Youth Movement. The Party even dictated how people should greet each other – Heil Hitler.
   - Pressures were placed on women to stay at home and become good German mothers and have as many children as possible.

Totalitarianism – The Case AGAINST

1. A single, charismatic dictator who comes to personify the nation:
   - Hitler was a lazy dictator who took no interest in day to day routine and preferred to delegate.
   - He was averse to making decisions, often to the consternation of his colleagues. He was not a leader who interfered in all aspects of the running of the country.
   - The structure of Nazi Germany was chaotic and confused. Beneath Hitler were competing personalities and competing institutions. Nazi Germany was not that centralised monolithic sort of regime one associates with the term totalitarianism.

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2. Political power in the hands of the ruling party which allows no other parties:
   - No alternative political groupings were allowed. However, the party often relied upon non-Nazi institutions. For example, the bureaucracy and the diplomatic service were never totally Nazified and these groups worked alongside similar Nazi services.
   - This added to the chaotic nature of the regime with the duplication by state and party bodies of various activities.
3. The party ideology acts as a form of state religion:
   - Ideology played nowhere near the key role that it did in the Soviet Union. Nazi ideology, as such, was a mish-mash of ideas and little more than a crude form of Social Darwinism.
   - Beyond the deification of Hitler, ideology did not play a central role in Nazi life. The exception would be in the area of racial issues.
   - Rather than acting as a revolutionary device to create a new world, Nazi ideology, for what it was, sought to bring back what was seen as a superior earlier time.
4. State terrorism is employed to maintain control:
   - The police and the legal system were under Nazi control. However, the extremes of Nazi behaviour in these areas did not appear until the late 30s and into the war years.
   - The Nazi regime did have its security organisations. However, as the American researcher Robert Gellately's research has shown, these groups were far smaller and far less pervasive than popular thinking suggests.
   - The popularity of the regime and the willingness of ordinary Germans to inform on each other meant that the regime did not need a massive secret police force.
5. Party control of all media and the expression of public opinion:
   - Nazi control of public expression was incredibly effective.
   - However, even here it was not total. Movement in and out of the country in the 1930s was not made difficult as it was in the Soviet Union. The Nazis did not fear scrutiny from outside.
   - The Nazi monopoly on cultural expression was not always effective as the existence of anti-Nazi groups like the Hamburg Swing Kids group would suggest. These young people preferred black American jazz and swing to Wagner.
6. Party control of all institutions, be they economic, cultural, social etc:
   - The Nazis never had total control of the economy as was the case in Stalin's Russia. The Nazis worked 'with' Germany's capitalists, they did not control them.
   - The army swore its oath of allegiance to Hitler in August 1934, and it was purged in 1938. However, Nazi control of the German army in the 1930s never reached the extent of Soviet control of the Red Army.
   - The Nazis were often working in partnership with various state institutions, eg the Civil Service.
7. Party intrusion into all aspects of life:
   - Nazi Germany became 'atomised' as fear caused people to keep their mouths shut and to trust nobody. This led them to become non-political and uninvolved. Such behaviour meant most Germans were able to continue living their private lives as they wished.
   - Many of the petty Nazi rules were often ridiculed and in private people did not allow the Nazi lifestyle to intrude on their day to day lives.

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- Pressure was placed on women to stay at home but as later research has shown this was not always successful. Birth rates in Germany were not far different to those of comparable societies of the time.

What do historians have to say about "Nazism as totalitarianism"?

1. Richard Overy: The Dictators

Overy argues that Hitler and the Nazi Party (and Stalin) had totalitarian aspirations in that they were concerned with the totality of their societies. Few areas of life escaped party intrusion and people had to cope with constant surveillance. Germany's geographical compactness and the closeness of the party to everyday life made total control effective.

"...For an average German family regular contact with the party youth groups, the local SA, the party welfare collections or the women's associations was unavoidable. Party symbols and language were pervasive." [1]

2. Ian Kershaw: The Nazi Dictatorship

Kershaw suggests that the term is best avoided because of its 'political colouring' as it developed after 1945. He also suggests that if the term is to be used, it be divorced from comparison with Soviet Russia. Alternatively it could be used, as Martin Broszat uses it, to describe Germany from 1937, contrasting that period to the earlier authoritarian period in the early 1930s.

"...All in all, the value of the totalitarian concept seems extremely limited, and the disadvantages of its deployment greatly outweigh its possible advantages in attempting to characterize the essential nature of the Nazi regime." [2]

3. Michael Burleigh: The Third Reich

Burleigh believes it is appropriate to consider Nazi Germany as a totalitarian state. He argues that the regime sought to use ideology, propaganda and terror to control 'social being'. Burleigh uses the analogy of changing a railway bridge bolt by bolt to illustrate the gradual way in which the Nazis totally changed German society.

He suggests that the 'total' part of 'totalitarianism':

"...captures most strikingly the insatiable, invasive character of this form of politics, which regarded the individual, freedom, autonomous civil society and the rule of law with uncomprehending hatred." [3]

1 Overy, R, *The Dictators: Hitler's Germany*, Stalin's Russia, Penguin, London, 2005, p 174
2 Kershaw, I, *The Nazi Dictatorship,* Arnold, London, 2000, p 40
3 Burleigh, M, *The Third Reich: A New History*, Pan Books, London, 2001, p 14

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Exercise 10.1

Circle the correct answer 'this is true' or 'this is false' for each of the following statements regarding the nature of a totalitarian state.

1. Free and open discussion is encouraged as this is seen as strengthening the regime.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
2. People's personal lives are considered very much their own business.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
3. Only one political party is allowed to exist and that is the ruling party.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
4. The army is allowed to function as an independent body from the ruling party.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
5. There is a dynamic and charismatic figure as head of state who symbolises the nation.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
6. State terror is rarely used as a means of maintaining control for the ruling party.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
7. The economy comes under the control of the ruling party.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
8. Few means of expression remain independent of the ruling party's control.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
9. The prevailing ideology of the ruling party takes on the semblance of a state religion.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
10. The nation's foreign relations are allowed to be conducted free of party control.	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE

Exercise 10.2

Read the statements on the left. In the column on the right circle the correct answer.

Aspect of Nazi Germany		This suggests
The existence of only one political party	1	a totalitarian regime, a non-totalitarian regime
The popularity of Swing Music in Hamburg	2	a totalitarian regime, a non-totalitarian regime
Nazi racial laws in 1935	3	a totalitarian regime, a non-totalitarian regime
Abolition of trade unions	4	a totalitarian regime, a non-totalitarian regime
Continued existence of the state civil service	5	a totalitarian regime, a non-totalitarian regime
Capitalists' control and ownership of the economy	6	a totalitarian regime, a non-totalitarian regime
Views of the historian Michael Burleigh	7	a totalitarian regime, a non-totalitarian regime
Views of the historian Ian Kershaw	8	a totalitarian regime, a non-totalitarian regime
Army Oath of Allegiance to Hitler in August 1934	9	a totalitarian regime, a non-totalitarian regime
Limited size of the security forces	10	a totalitarian regime, a non-totalitarian regime

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Chapter 11:
The role of propaganda

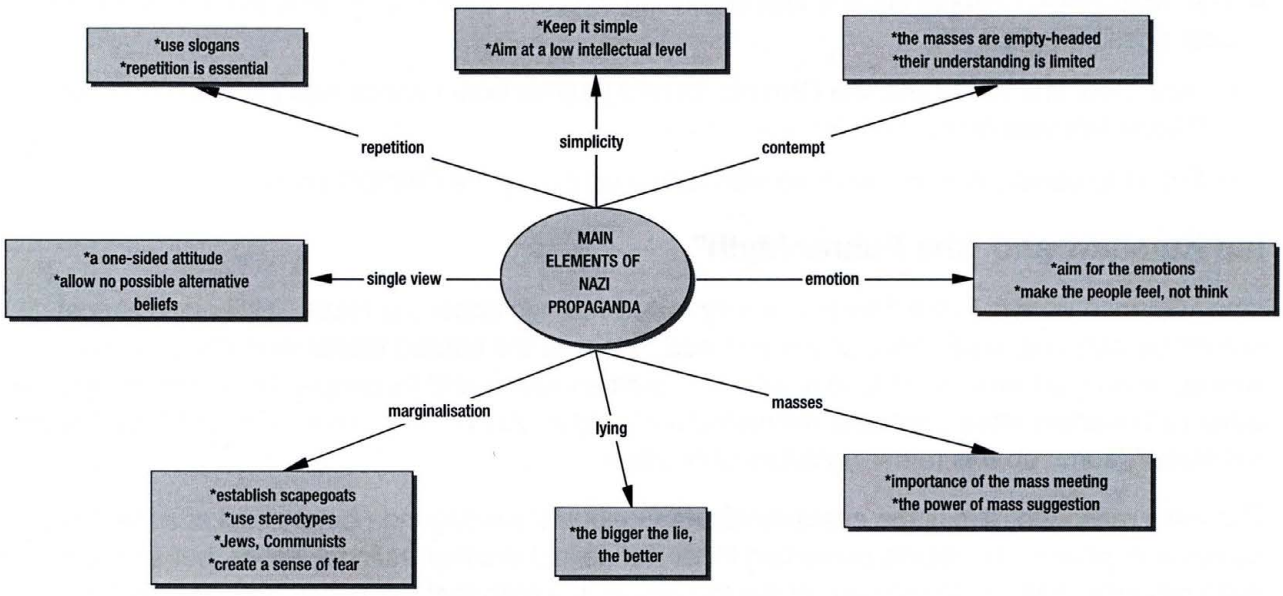
The ultimate price of opposition to the Nazi regime was a spell in a Gestapo prison, an SS-run concentration camp or worse. However, for the vast majority of the German people these were things about which they were aware but which they were most unlikely to experience. Indeed, for all the appearance of power and force, the fact remains that Hitler and his regime were extremely popular. Opposition to the regime was extremely limited, an issue which will be discussed in Chapter 13.

One of the key reasons for this was the effectiveness of Nazi propaganda. Propaganda is information aimed at making somebody believe a particular point of view.

The organisation of propaganda

Joseph Goebbels was appointed the Minister for Enlightenment and Propaganda in March 1933. Goebbels had been in charge of the Party's propaganda division since 1929. Hitler and Goebbels had an innate understanding of what constituted effective propaganda. Figure 11.1 summarises their main thoughts on how propaganda should be presented.

Figure 11.1 How to present propaganda



All aspects of expression came under the influence of Goebbels' ministry.

- Newspaper editors were summoned each day to receive their instructions on what were to be the main news stories of the day, the line to take in their editorials, even which pictures to use.
- The Nazis put great store in the effectiveness of radio. Nazi control of the radio was complete.
  - Hitler's speeches were broadcast in full.
  - Radio sets were produced at very low prices to ensure popular access to propaganda.

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- Loudspeakers were placed in public places to hear the Fuhrer.
- Goebbels was clever enough not to allow propaganda to monopolise the airwaves. He made sure there was a good blend of music, comedy and drama to mix in with the propaganda message.
- Music had its uses. Jewish or black music was banned; German music from light classical to Wagner was encouraged.

- The cinema and theatre were tightly controlled.
  - Major propaganda works were produced like Leni Riefenstahl's 'Triumph of the Will'.
  - More strident films included the 'The Eternal Jew'.
  - Censorship was used to exclude culturally undesirable things such as nudity, 'negro jazz music' and Tarzan films.
  - Like radio, the masses were also allowed their share of comedy and light entertainment at the cinema and the theatre. Escapism kept the minds of the masses off political difficulties.
- Major events were organised to present the Nazis in a positive light.
  - Party rallies were planned in detail and presented as extravaganzas which aimed to enthuse the nation.
  - The Nazis were presented as representing power, strength, unity, purpose, the hope of the nation, the essence of being German.
  - Above all, Hitler was presented as the nation's saviour (see below).
- The 1936 Berlin Olympic Games was organised to present the Nazi regime to the world in the best possible light.
  - New stadiums were built, the Olympic flame's journey from Greece was instituted and Leni Riefenstahl was on hand to film everything.
  - Even the persecution of the Jews was eased up during the Olympic period.

Ian Kershaw and "the Fuhrer Myth"

Many German people in the 1930s had very mixed feelings about the Nazis. Hitler was almost universally admired, respected, and even loved. He was the adored leader who could do no wrong, who could be trusted to look after the German nation and its people. However, many of the other Nazi leaders were despised, distrusted and held in contempt. "I love Hitler, but I can't stand the Nazis", sums up this rather paradoxical position.

The main reason for this is the effectiveness of Goebbels' propaganda before and after the Nazi takeover of power. Goebbels presented Hitler not as just another national leader, but as something quite different. Hitler was the hero of the fatherland, the man that the nation had been waiting for. Hitler was a leader who was both 'extraordinary' and yet quite 'ordinary'. This is the essence of what became known as the 'Fuhrer Myth', the image of Hitler Goebbels presented to the German people and perpetuated throughout the 1930s. In modern day politics we would call this presentation of a leader's image as "spin-doctoring".

In several works, the British historian Ian Kershaw has analysed the ways in which Goebbels developed this image.

Kershaw argues that Goebbels isolated several elements that made up a consensus of thinking about political leadership and combined them in his propaganda promotion of Hitler.

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- Hitler was given the credit for ending the Depression in Germany. While the rest of world continued to suffer high unemployment, Germany was facing labour shortages by 1936.
  - Nazi economics might be ludicrous, and Schacht might be panicking about the state of the economy, and uplift in the economy might be the result of some of Schleicher's policies, but that did not matter.
  - To the German worker, it was Hitler who ended the Depression and gave him a job.
- Hitler's strong anti-marxist stance fitted in well with the average German. It was Hitler who ended the threat of communism and it was Hitler who had restored law and order to the streets of Germany.
  - Few bothered to consider that it was the Nazis that had done so much to destroy law and order in the first place.
- Hitler was seen as a moderate. Any excesses committed by the party were blamed on other leaders. Hitler's destruction of Rohm and the SA certainly aided the presentation of this view.
  - A common cry of the time would have been, "If only the Fuhrer knew what the other Nazis were doing, he would stop them".
  - Hitler's apparent dedication to the nation's interests further helped to distance him from unpopular party actions.
- Hitler was willing to take strong action against those perceived as 'enemies of the people'. This included not only SA thugs and communists, but also Jews.
- Not only was Hitler an economic genius, but he was also Germany's greatest statesman, the man who single-handedly ripped up the hated Treaty of Versailles.
  - He had returned millions of Germans to the Reich.
  - He had restored German pride and confidence.

However, Kershaw argues that the development of the 'Fuhrer Myth' also had a second side. Hitler may have ended the depression and been a foreign policy genius, but at the same time he was also a typical German bourgeois who shared the same hopes and fears as millions of ordinary Germans.

- Hitler was a modest man. He did not go in for personal extravagance or greed. Only the simple pleasures of walks in the country and tea with friends for Hitler.
  - Goebbels was sure to emphasise this, having Hitler photographed with children, dogs, ordinary Germans.
- In his book comparing the leadership styles of Hitler and Winston Churchill[1], Andrew Roberts makes the point that while Hitler encouraged his entourage to dress up in ever more outrageous uniforms, bedecked with medals.
  - In contrast, Hitler always deliberately dressed down as 'the man of the people'.
  - The only medal Hitler ever wore was his Iron Cross First Class.
- Goebbels developed the 'pathos' of the great leader. Hitler was a man who had sacrificed personal joy and pleasure for the good of the nation.
  - He was a lonely man who bore the responsibility of the nation's destiny on his shoulders.

1 Roberts, A, *Hitler and Churchill: Secrets of Leadership*, Phoenix, London, 2003

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What do historians have to say about "the role of propaganda"?

1. Ian Kershaw: Hitler

Kershaw argues that the Nazis wanted more than to terrorise the people into submission. They wanted to win the people over to the idea of Nazism and mobilise the German spirit. This was achieved by the development of the Hitler cult which placed all success at Hitler's door, all failure elsewhere.

"...The Hitler cult became the pivot of the propaganda effort; and Goebbels was proud of his achievement in the construction of the 'Fuhrer Myth'...The final 'goal' (of Nazism)...could only be reached by blindly following the Fuhrer." [2]

2. Richard Evans: The Third Reich in Power

Evans makes the point that the Nazi regime went to a lot of trouble to keep consulting the masses and seeking their endorsement of its policies. Though the adulatory responses in favour of the regime could hardly have been genuine, they played a significant role in the propaganda effort.

"...hysterical mass adulation of its Leader would surely have an effect in persuading many otherwise sceptical or neutral Germans to swim with the tide of popular opinion." [3]

3. Andrew Roberts: Hitler and Churchill

Roberts shows how Hitler worked hard to develop his heroic image, even to the point of being sure not to be seen wearing glasses as this might hurt the 'superman' image. He refused to be photographed doing strenuous work and even his valet only ever saw him fully dressed. He refused to use the services of a masseur.

"...He liked to have his body covered at all times, and even in the hottest weather he wore long white underwear, as became apparent in the aftermath of the Bomb Plot (of July 1944)." [4]

2 Kershaw, I, Hitler, Longman, Harlow, 1991, p 98
3 Evans, R, The Third Reich in Power, Penguin, London, 2005, p 121
4 Roberts, A, Hitler and Churchill: Secrets of Leadership, Phoenix, London, 2003, p 53

Exercise 11.1

Fill in the gaps in the following paragraph. Use the words in the box below.

Nazi propaganda was run by Propaganda Minister _____. Like Hitler, he believed that propaganda should be kept very _____, should work on the people's _____, and work at a very low _____ level. The Nazis sought to create _____ on whom the nation's past difficulties could be blamed. Jews and communists were presented as _____, eg molesters of innocent Aryan girls, or aiming to betray the _____. Nazi propaganda had no problem _____, and reinforced its message with the constant _____ of simple slogans. The giant party _____ was popular with Nazi propagandists as this made it easier to get people to suspend their _____ thought, and accept the _____ of the meeting.

rational, stereotypes, Goebbels, rally, intellectual, simple, fatherland, repetition, lying, mass suggestion, emotions, scapegoats

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Exercise 11.2

Imagine you are an ordinary middle-aged person living in Germany in the mid-1930s. Describe your feelings towards the Fuhrer.

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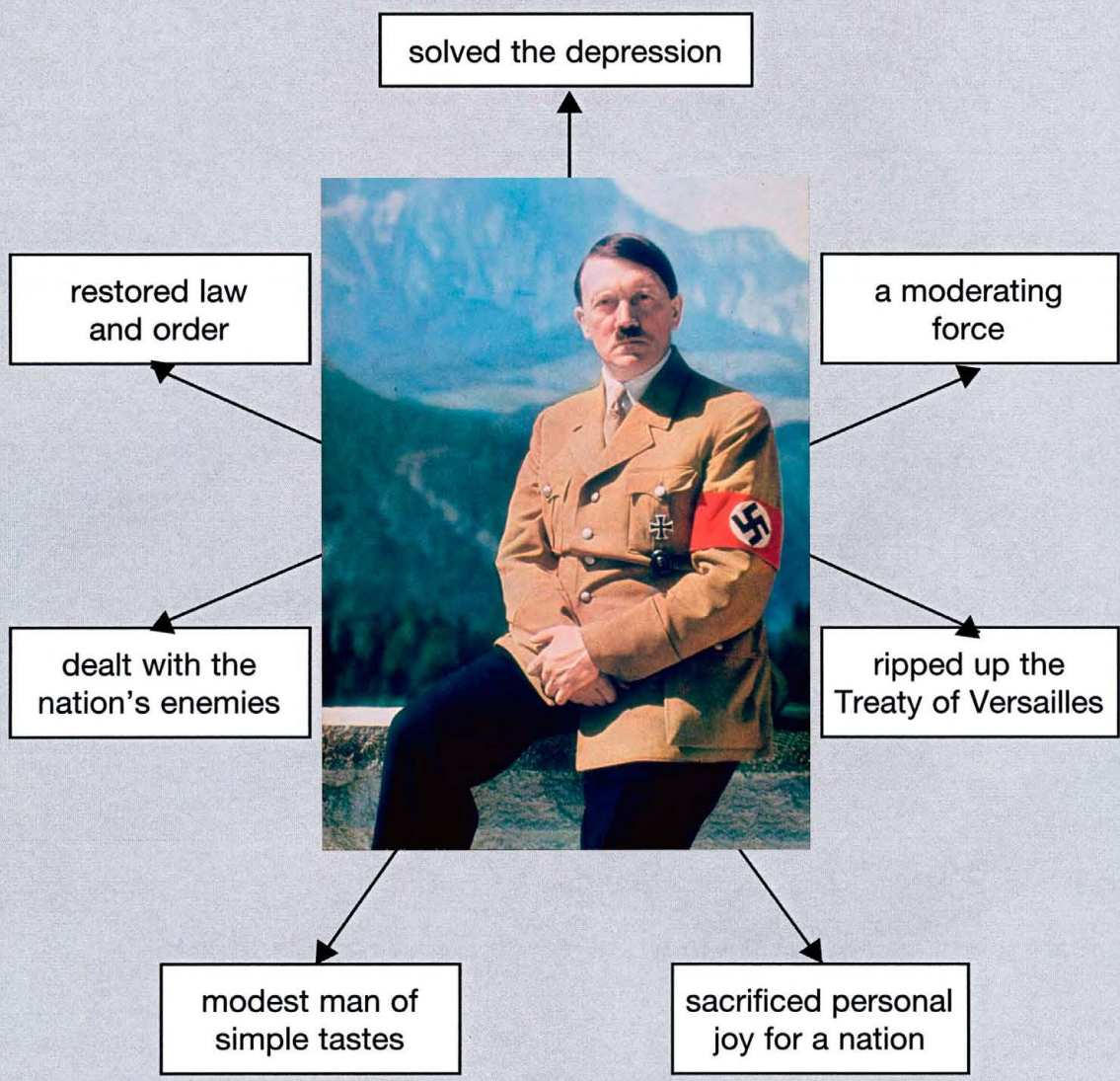
SUMMARY OF THE FUHRER MYTH



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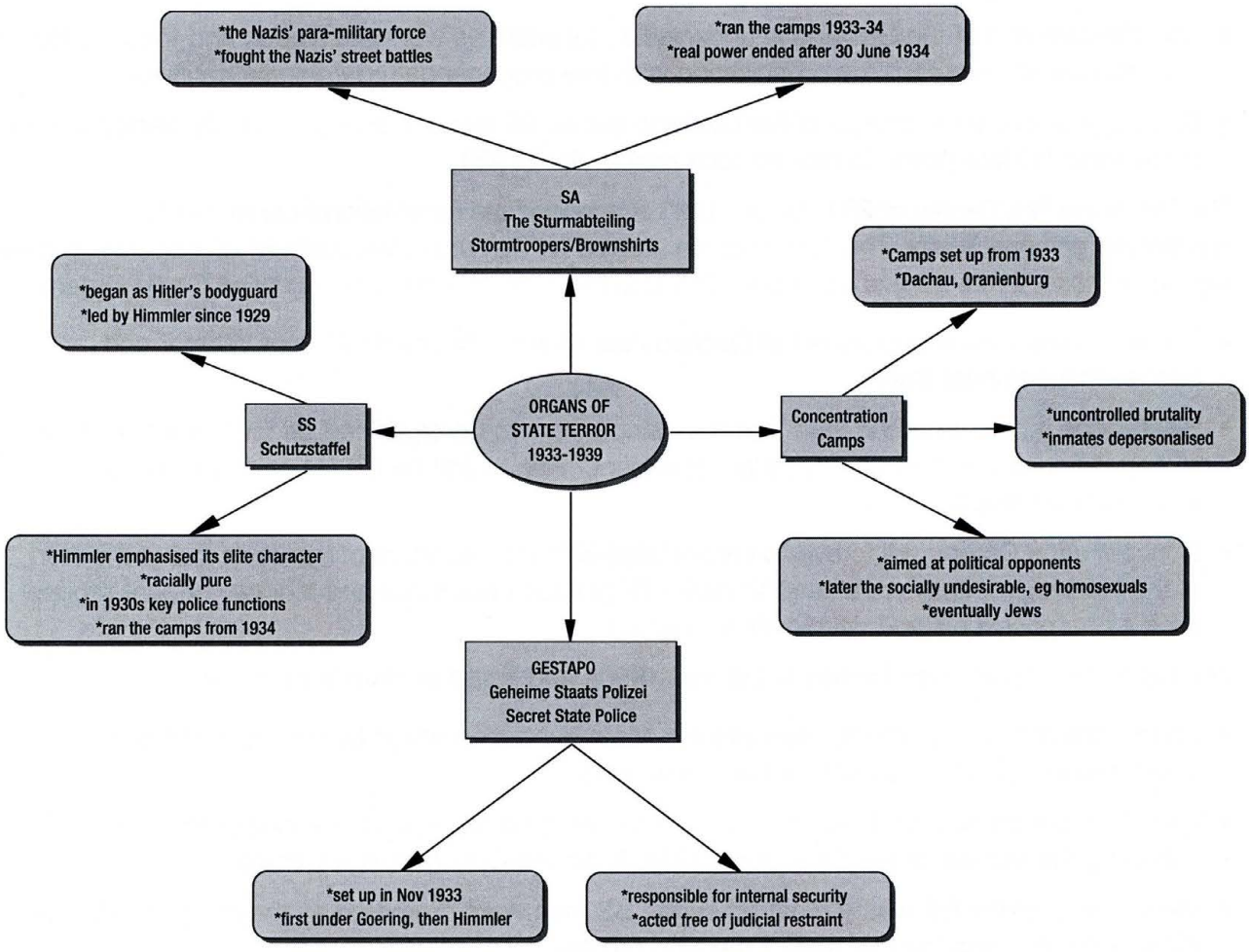
Chapter 12:
Terror and repression, the SA and the SS

Introduction

The popular perception of life in Nazi Germany used to be one of a people living in dread, under constant surveillance and living in real fear of arrest, interrogation and a spell in a concentration camp. Indeed, for some this was the reality of life in Hitler's Germany. However, the image of monocled Gestapo agents, lurking in the shadows waiting to pounce, and of a population cowed into submission does not quite fit the evidence that recent research has uncovered.

There were several organs of state terror in the Nazi regime which are summarised in Figure 12.1.

Figure 12.1 The organs of state terror



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The SA, the Sturmabteilung, had existed since the early 1920s.

- The SA was referred to by Hitler as the 'battering ram of the National Socialist Revolution'. It fought pitched battles with the Nazis' opponents up to and beyond the seizure of power in 1933.
- By early 1934, under Rohm's leadership the SA had grown to over three million.
- In 1933, the SA was given responsibility for running the Concentration Camps which it did with enthusiastic brutality.
- For reasons explained in Chapter 8, Hitler turned on the SA. Rohm and other leaders were executed.

In November 1933, the Nazis set up the Gestapo – the Geheime Staats Polizei, or secret state police.

- The purpose of the Gestapo was to protect the regime against its enemies. It became a byword for cruelty and brutality.
- The two o' clock knock on the door and an invitation to accompany agents to Gestapo headquarters at No 8 Prinz Albrecht Strasse in Berlin were things to be feared. Similarly the receipt of the more benign postcard requesting a person's attendance for talks had the same impact.
- The effectiveness of the Gestapo is undeniable. Its activities were not hidden and those released from its custody provided the organisation with free propaganda regarding its behaviour.
- Goering was placed in charge of the Gestapo but as SS leader Himmler gradually gained control of the various state police forces, he took over in April 1934.

The Reichstag Fire Decree of 28 February 1933 suspended the constitutional clauses which guaranteed personal liberty. This same decree allowed for the 'protective custody' of opponents of the regime or those 'threatening social order'. This was the genesis of the Concentration Camp system.

- The first camps were established at Dachau near Munich, Buchenwald near Weimar and Sachsenhausen near Berlin.
- Hitler made it clear from the start that the camps were to be organised on brutal lines to destroy all opposition and intimidate any potential dissent. Run at first by the SA and then the SS, his aims were achieved.
- Concentration Camps will forever be associated with the treatment of the Jews but at the start of the Nazi regime they were used to deal with political opponents and 'socially deviant groups' such as homosexuals and Jehovah's Witnesses.

The SS (Schutzstaffel) was formed in the mid-1920s and acted as Hitler's personal guard.

- Under Himmler, it was transformed into a mass organisation which by the early 1940s had its own factories, courts and even its own army units.
- The SS operated as a political police to root out all open and secret enemies of the Reich. Following the demise of the SA in June 1934, it ran the Concentration Camps.
- Membership of the SS was a great privilege. SS men were promoted as the most racially pure, most dedicated and the real elite of the Nazi regime.

The reality of Nazi terror and repression to 1939

It would be absurd to underplay the impact that the organs of terror had on ordinary German people after 1933. Fear is a powerful weapon of control. The regime certainly tried to build up the efficiency of the Gestapo and the horror of the camps. The Gestapo would always discover even the slightest

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opposition and then the camps would have the job of 'reforming' such opponents. Writers and filmmakers after the war continued to promote this view of an omnipotent security system.

However, this version of Nazi repression does not quite match the evidence that recent research has presented.

- The Gestapo simply did not have the manpower to be the overreaching security organ that popular legend would have. It often had to work in conjunction with other police organisations. In some towns its numbers were paltry. The American researcher, Robert Gellately, has shown that a city like Essen, population about 650 000, had at most 43 Gestapo personnel. This counters the idea of a Gestapo man on every corner and in every work group.
- The Gestapo was very much a reactive organisation, ie it often responded to approaches made to it rather than seeking out opponents itself. Many Germans were predisposed to cooperate with the security organs voluntarily. Why was this?
  - Many Germans took at face value the warnings of threats to the nation and so needed little prompting reporting 'anything suspicious' to the authorities.
  - Goering highlighted this point during his interrogation at the time of the Nuremberg Trials. Asked how the Nazis managed to maintain such control, he replied one simply had to convince people they were being attacked and that opposition to the regime was unpatriotic.
  - Another factor is the traditional habit of Germans to accept authority, or to at least accept the legitimacy of the regime.
  - For some it was an insurance policy, a means of showing loyalty to the regime. Denunciation of others became a feature of life in the Third Reich.
  - For others, 'dobbing people in' to the authorities became a means of settling personal scores.

Regardless of the motive, the Gestapo found much of its work done for it.

- The immediate predecessor of the Gestapo was Department 1A, the political police force of Prussia.
  - In July 1932, the socialist government of Prussia had been deposed by von Papen. Department 1A developed contacts with the Nazis which were consolidated when Goering became Prussian Minister of the Interior in 1933.
  - The Gestapo was formally created on 26 April 1933. Its numbers grew steadily, though not spectacularly. Following his victory in his 'power struggle' with Goering, Himmler took charge.
- However, there was no wholesale purging of the political police.
  - The Gestapo was not filled with Nazi fanatics but rather continued to be staffed by public servants.
  - Most members of the Prussian police establishment had right wing sympathies which might account for the ease with which these people were able to work for their new masters.
- Furthermore, deeper investigation reveals that the Gestapo was not the epitome of clinical efficiency that popular myth would have us believe.
  - It was a bureaucratic jungle, weighed down by rules and restrictions. Paperwork took up much of the organisation's time and effort.
  - There were arguments over rank and authority.
  - The end result of all this pettiness was that much effort was being put into things that were a long way from systematic, effective police work. As each year passed, the mountain of information which flooded into the Gestapo merely reduced its efficiency even further.

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- However, if history teaches anything, it teaches that 'it is not the truth that counts but what people believe is the truth'.

If the mass of German people believed that the Gestapo and the other organs of repression were the ultimate in efficiency, and that this determined the quiescent demeanour of the German people, then that is all that matters!

- Though the Gestapo may have been smaller and less efficient than was first imagined, there is little doubt that its operation became more radical with time. The painstaking police methods which it inherited from organisations such as Department 1A were gradually replaced by more arbitrary ones. This was largely the result of:
  - the enormous increase in information coming from denunciations through the 1930s;
  - the increasing number of laws outlawing what had previously been acceptable behaviour.

What do historians have to say about the "Terror and repression"?

1. Richard Evans: The Third Reich in Power

Evans makes the point that Nazi control could reach down to the lowest levels. He describes how every group of houses or flats had a 'block warden'. These were low level officials who checked on a group of about fifty families to see that they were sufficiently enthusiastic about the regime, eg hanging out Nazi bunting, attending rallies. Denouncers often turned to them first and block wardens could deny people state benefits and welfare payments.

"...Other branches of the huge Nazi Party apparatus had similar local officials...and all of them carried out similar functions of surveillance and control...The Nazi terror machine reached down even to the smallest units of everyday life and daily work." [1]

2. Richard Overy: The Dictators

Overy discusses the notion that Nazi justice had popular appeal and that it existed because of pressure from below not just because of decisions made on high. The regime tried to show that the victims of the law threatened society with decay and they achieved this by playing on old prejudices.

"...The idea of popular justice against real enemies seems to have been widely believed and endorsed...the castration of paedophiles and the imprisonment of homosexuals and asocials pandered to conventional moral revulsion." [2]

3. William S Shirer: The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich

Shirer describes the activities of the Security Service, the Sicherheitsdienst or SD. The SD was the intelligence branch of the SS formed by Himmler but placed under the control of Reinhard Heydrich. Though it had only 3000 members in the 1930s, it controlled over 100 000 informers whose job was to snoop on ordinary German citizens. Shirer suggests the SD was feared at least as much as the Gestapo.

"...Your son or your father or your wife or your cousin or your best friend or your boss or your secretary might be an informer for Heydrich's organisation;...if you were wise nothing was ever taken for granted." [3]

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Exercise 12.1

Answer the following questions. Place your answer in the space on the right.

1. How is the myth of Nazi repression not matched by the reality?	
2. Why were the organs of Nazi repression so effective before 1939?	
3. Did the Nazis try to hide the brutal nature of their police activities?	
4. For whom were the Concentration Camps designed?	
5. How did denunciations figure in Nazi repression?	
6. Who worked for the Gestapo?	
7. How extensive was the Nazi system of surveillance?	
8. What was Goering's role in police repression?	
9. What made the SS different to other Nazi organs of repression?	
10. What was Heydrich's role in police repression?	

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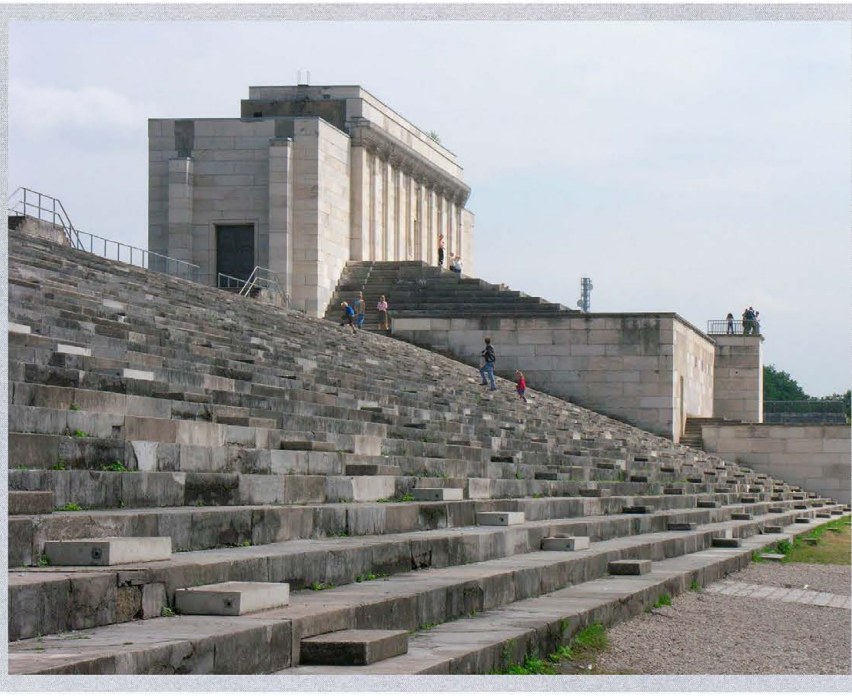
Dachau Concentration Camp



Remains of the Nazi rally grounds at Nuremberg

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Chapter 13:
Opposition to Nazism

In the period 1933-39, there was very little opposition to Nazi rule inside Germany. Opposition to a regime such as National Socialism can take a variety of forms. It might involve:

- organised groups seeking to overthrow the regime either violently or by gradually influencing public opinion;
- pressure groups within and without the party seeking to undermine the system or aiming for change;
- industrial action on the part of workers;
- unrest from within the armed forces;
- foreign attempts to destroy the regime;
- simple day to day grumbling and complaints.

The Nazis faced almost none of this:

- the process of Gleischaltung had neutralised any organised sources of opposition by 1934;
- intra-party opposition had been dealt with on 30 June 1934;
- fear of unemployment and the banning of trade unions had made the workers politically impotent;
- once the SA had been dealt with the army was happy to go along with Hitler's plans for rearmament and expansion;
- foreign governments had neither the will nor the desire to remove Hitler;
- complaining on the part of ordinary Germans was widespread as Gestapo records suggest, but this is hardly the stuff of 'regime change'.

Ineffectiveness of opposition to Nazi rule 1933-39

Opposition to Nazi rule did exist. It would be absurd to suggest that all Germans either meekly or enthusiastically went on along with the actions of the regime. However, opposition did not translate into real resistance. An explanation for the failure of opposition/ resistance to the Nazis will be given below. Let us consider the various groups who did oppose, might oppose or at least had reason to oppose the Nazis, and why this opposition was ineffective.

Hitler had mixed feelings about the **ARMY**. On the one hand he hated the contempt that had been hurled at him from that quarter; many in the army concurred with President Hindenburg's 'Bohemian Corporal' comment about Hitler. He also knew that the army was the only thing that stood between him and total power in the early 1930s. Equally, he knew that his foreign policy goals could only be achieved with the army on side. In fact, Hitler faced very limited opposition from army quarters before 1939. Indeed it was not until the darker periods of the war that he had to fear the army.

- The army had been angry at the rise of the SA and were aghast at Rohm's desire to absorb the army into his organisation. As was explained in Chapter 8, Hitler dealt with this threat by turning on his old SA allies in the Night of the Long Knives. This action satisfied both the army elite and President Hindenburg.

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- The army even accepted murders of their own: Generals von Schleicher and Bredow.
- In August 1934, the army swore an oath of allegiance to Hitler personally.

- As rearmament progressed and German expansion was undertaken, the army was happy to follow Hitler's lead.
- In 1938, Hitler felt confident enough to remove War Minister General von Blomberg and army Commander-in-Chief General von Fritsch. Hitler was unhappy with their attitude to his plans.
  - Blomberg was forced to resign when his young wife's past as a prostitute was made known.
  - Fritsch was accused of homosexual behaviour. Though innocent, Fritsch was forced to resign.
  - Hitler then removed another 16 generals and installed men he believed to be loyal to him: General Keitel and General von Brauchitsch.

Any prospect of army resistance was now over.

The **CHURCH** was equally as ineffective in opposing the Nazis. In fact, both the Catholic and Protestant Churches not only failed to resist the Nazis, but they were willing to go along with the regime. Details about Nazi church policy are given in Chapter 14. There was a small number of heroic religious figures who did stand up to the Nazis:

- Cardinal von Galen, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Munster spoke openly against the Nazi euthanasia policy in 1939.
- Pastor Paul Schneider was arrested in November 1937 after having openly spoken out against the Hitler Youth Movement and Jewish policy. He died at the hands of the SS in July 1939.
- During the war, Father Bernhard Lichtenberg died on his way to Dachau. He had been accused of treason – offering up prayers for the Jews since 1938.
- Martin Niemoller and Dietrich Bonhoffer formed the anti-Nazi Pastors' Emergency League. Niemoller was arrested in 1937 and was to spend the war years in concentration camps. Bonhoffer attempted to work with anti-Nazi people in the army and overseas. He was executed in April 1945.

Religious resistance to Nazism was very limited.

There was little opposition to the Nazis from German **YOUTH**. In fact, German youth constituted Hitler's most fanatical supporters.

- During the war, several groups arose which campaigned against Nazi practices. Most notable of these were the White Rose Group led by Hans and Sophie Scholl.
- However, between 1933 and 1939, the only signs of youth dissent came from groups such as The Swing Kids. These were middle class German youths who preferred to listen to American jazz and swing music, dress in trendy English clothes and preferred jitterbugging to Nazi Youth camps.
  - Their opposition to the Hitler Youth Movement was apolitical rather than an example of hostility to the regime.

In the elections of March 1933, the two parties of the **LEFT**, the SPD and the KPD gained almost 12 million votes to the Nazi total of 17 million. Working class movements had been strong in the 1920s; in 1920 a general strike had brought down the Kapp Putsch (see Chapter 2). Yet opposition from the left was totally impotent and almost non-existent, apart from the valiant efforts of men like Willy Brandt and Carl von Ossietzky.

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- Massive unemployment during the Depression weakened any potential industrial action by workers. The Nazis' swift action in banning trade unions on 2 May 1933 ended worker power.
- The Reichstag Fire Decree effectively destroyed the Communists and the SPD was finally outlawed by 14 July 1933. The process of Gleischaltung (see Chapter 8) ended any possible left wing opposition.

However, the key factor that prevented left wing opposition to the Nazis was the attitude of Stalin in Moscow. The KPD obeyed instructions that came from the Comintern – the Communist International.

- The aim of the Comintern had been to promote communism in countries outside the Soviet Union; it became an arm of Stalin's foreign policy.
- Stalin did not believe that Nazism would last and ordered the communists not to cooperate with the Social Democrat Party against the Nazis.
- This instruction, plus Communist memories of the attacks on them in January 1919, prevented any possible KPD-SPD cooperation. This meant that there was no chance of any effective combined left resistance to the Nazis.
- Communist opponents did engage in spying activities against the government in the 'Red Orchestra' between 1938-42 but this was gravely compromised with the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in August 1939.

The Nazis did face some opposition from CONSERVATIVE elements in Germany. Though these people had no love for Weimar democracy, and hailed Hitler's destruction of the Treaty of Versailles, as the true nature of the regime became known their opposition to the regime developed.

- Before the war, this opposition was led by men like Ulrich von Hassell, the former German Ambassador to Rome, and Carl Goerdeler, former Mayor of Leipzig and member of Hitler's government.
- The former Chief of the General Staff, Ludwig Beck opposed Hitler, believing that the Czech crisis of 1938 could lead to a European war. Plans were made for a possible coup and contacts were made with the British Foreign Office.
- Anglo-French appeasement and Hitler's success at Munich (see Chapter 16) ended any such hopes.

Figure 13.1 explains why there was so little opposition to the Nazis before 1939.

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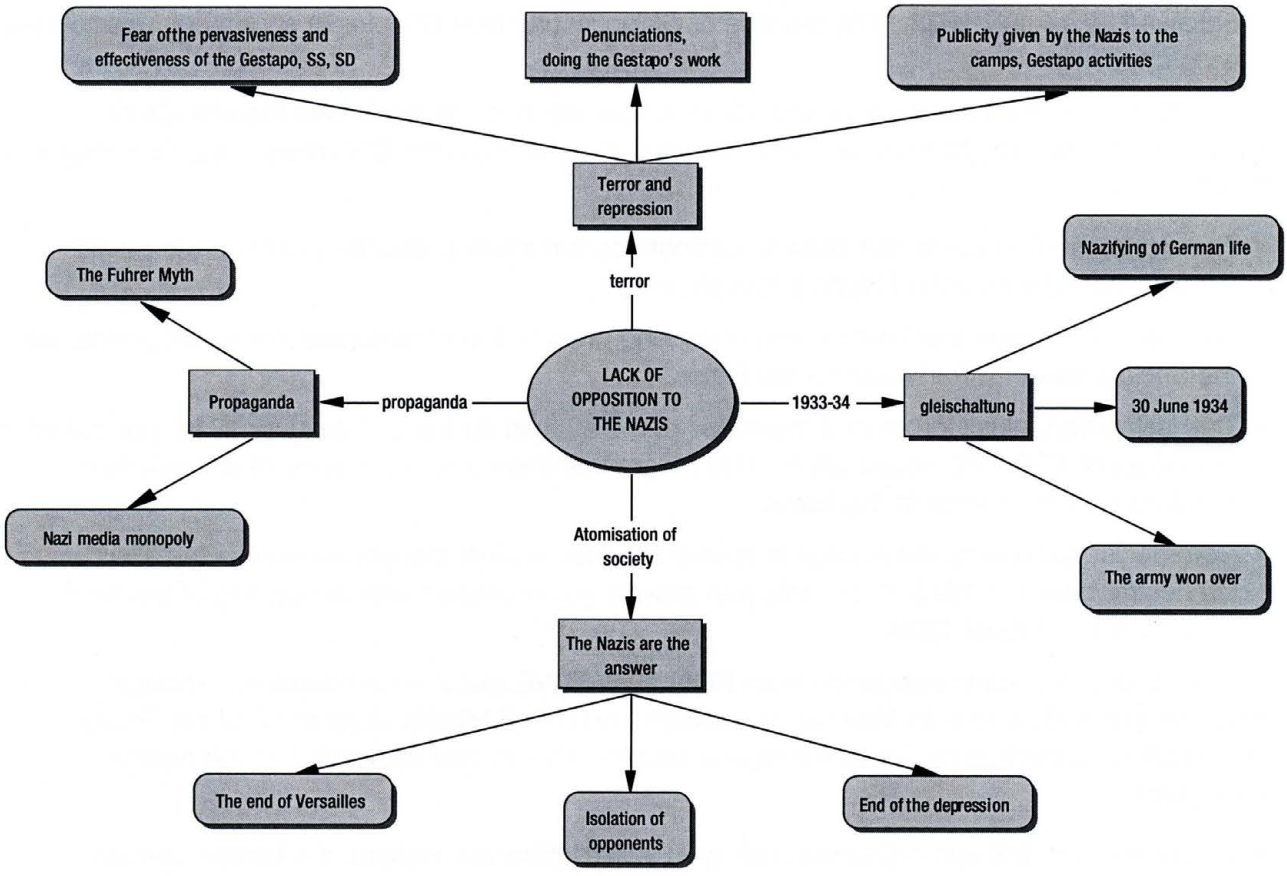
Figure 13.1 Reasons for the lack of opposition to the Nazis.



What do historians have to say about "Opposition to Nazism"?

1. Ian Kershaw: The Nazi Dictatorship

Kershaw suggests that part of the explanation for the failure of organised opposition to the Nazis between 1933 and 1939 was due to the split on the left, the enthusiasm of the right to bury the republic and people's readiness to accept authoritarian government. This had its origin before 1933.

"...The ineffectiveness and failure of German resistance to Nazism had its roots in the strife-torn political climate of the Weimar Republic." [1]

2. Richard Evans: The Third Reich in Power

Evans refers to the atomisation of German society. It did not matter that there were in fact very few Gestapo agents as long as people believed they were there. Even worse, the Nazis had managed to create distrust between ordinary people. Germans lived with the constant fear of denunciation. This was enough to prevent the rise of opposition groups.

"...Knowledge of the ever-present danger of denunciation for an incautious word or expression spoken in a public place was important in spreading general fear and anxiety among the population." [2]

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3. Richard Overy: The Dictators

Overy refers to the existence of 'soft terror', the existence of the denunciation process which acted as a means for stunting opposition in Germany (and the Soviet Union). The public was thus assisting the authorities in self-policing. This allowed the regime to keep control with limited resources, but it also had an added significance:

"...it exposes the extent to which (German society) perceived repression not as a smouldering blanket of regime terror, but as something necessary or even desirable in itself." [3]

1 Kershaw, I, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, Arnold, London, 2000, p 216
2 Evans, R, *The Third Reich in Power*, Penguin, London, 2005, p 104
3 Overy, R, *The Dictators: Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia*, Penguin, London, 2005, p 214

Exercise 13.1

Carefully study the statements on the left. Circle the correct either THIS IS TRUE or THIS IS FALSE to indicate if you agree with the idea expressed in the statement.

German Youth was generally keen on Nazism and supported Hitler	1	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
The army supported the murder of SA leaders and Generals von Schleicher and von Bredow	2	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
Church opposition to Nazi policies was rigorous and effective	3	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
KPD-SPD divisions proved disastrous in creating effective left-wing opposition to the Nazis	4	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
The removal of Blomberg and Fritsch had little impact on Hitler's control of the army	5	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
Pastor Niemoller was a consistent supporter of the Nazis	6	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
The Swing Kids were essentially apolitical in their opposition to Nazism	7	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
Some of Germany's conservative elites actively conspired against Hitler	8	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
The Comintern encouraged the KPD to work with the SPD against the Nazis	9	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE
The lack of organised opposition to the Nazis did not imply universal support for the regime	10	THIS IS TRUE/ THIS IS FALSE

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For an understanding of how life might have affected ordinary people during the Third Reich, the film The Swing Kids makes valuable viewing. Produced in 1993, it is directed by Thomas Carter and stars Christian Bale, Robert Sean Leonard and Kenneth Branagh as the menacing Gestapo officer. Though not flawless, it highlights some interesting aspects of German life in Nazi Germany, particularly the scenes dealing with the Hitler Youth Movement. The music/ dance sequences are also quite something.

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Chapter 14:
Social and cultural life in the Nazi state

The role of the Hitler Youth

The development of young people played a key part in Nazi thinking.

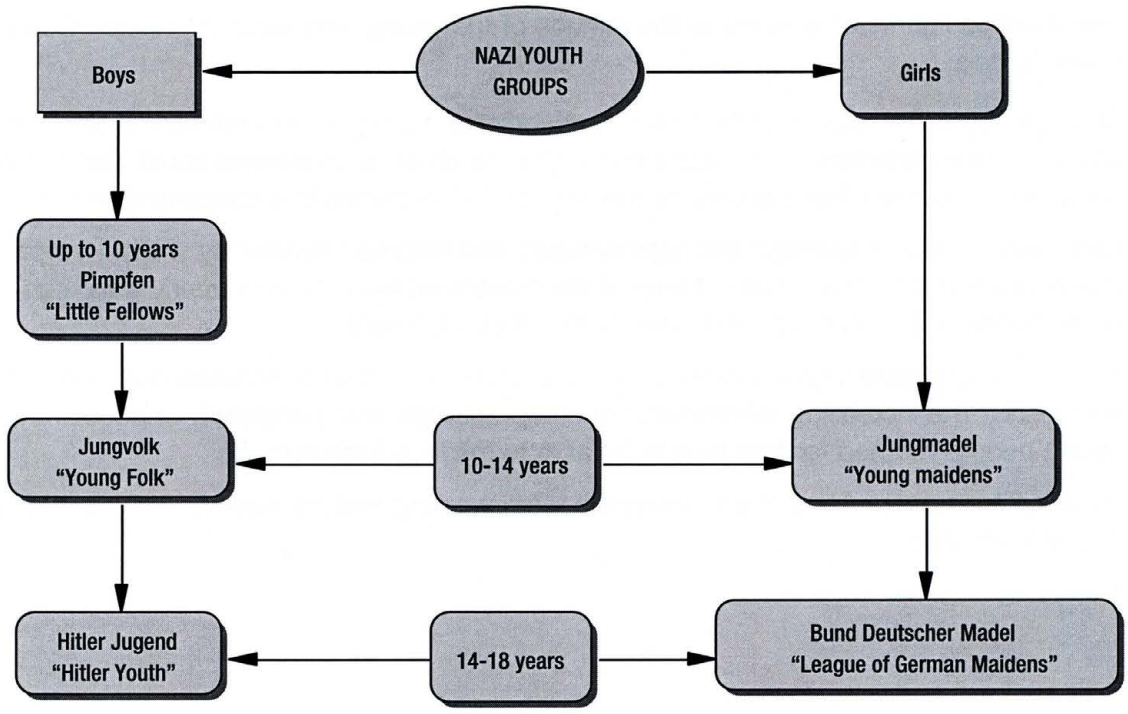
- Hitler believed that he was the first leader of what would be 'a thousand year Reich'. If this dream was to be realised, it was important to ensure a continuous flow of dedicated, fanatical followers to the Nazi cause. This would be achieved by filling the minds of the young with love of the Fuhrer.
- Hitler's new Germany was to be racially pure. What better way to achieve racial purity than to inculcate such notions in the minds of the young?
- There was also the need to develop fit and well trained soldiers for Hitler's military adventures and mothers whose children would become those soldiers.

The very first Hitler Youth group came in 1922 under Gustav Lenk. Young recruits were filled with the notions of racial purity and patriotism. This organisation collapsed when Hitler was in prison.

- A new 'Hitler Jugend' was created in 1926 under Kurt Gruber.
- In 1928 Baldur von Schirach became head of the National Socialist Students' League.
- In 1931 von Schirach took control of all Youth organisations which by now included different set-ups for various age groups and a girls' organisation, the Bund Deutscher Madel (BDM) or League of German Maidens.

Nazi Youth groups were carefully organised. Figure 14.1 shows how this organisation occurred.

Figure 14.1 Nazi Youth Groups



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There was great emphasis on good health and physical fitness. The young were constantly challenged to extend themselves, engage in outdoor activities and become good team members.

- Hence there was much camping, hiking, team games, swimming, boxing, drill and military exercises.
- Girls were expected to be as physically involved as the boys. The reasons for this go back to the Nazis' original aims for the young: strong, healthy bodies will produce young women capable of bearing many children and young men ready to serve in the army.

The young were not encouraged to think for themselves. There was much political indoctrination: future members of Hitler's 'master race' were trained to obey and accept the word of the Fuhrer, not question and see faults. Indoctrination was achieved:

- unsubtly through lengthy speeches and harangues from Youth leaders;
- or more subtly through the whole paraphernalia of Nazi iconography: the flags, rallies, the marching, the uniforms, the ever present swastika and image of the Fuhrer.

Hitler Youth activities often interrupted normal schooling and were given priority. School standards fell in the 1930s as the Nazis sought to impose their ideology on all levels of education.

- Kindergarten children would learn about noble SS warriors slaying evil Jewish dragons.
- High school History would be presented in the correct pro-German manner.
- University Science students would study 'German Physics'.

After boys had been through the Youth Movements, they were expected to engage in a period of military or labour service. Girls would engage in domestic service and were encouraged to marry early.

In 1933, 2.29 million young Germans aged between 10 and 18 were members of the various Nazi youth organisations; by early 1939, the figure was 7.28 million. This is an amazing achievement. However, the total population of young Germans aged 10-18 in early 1939 was 8.8 million. Clearly, even on the eve of war, 1.6 million young Germans were refusing to be members of the Hitler Youth, even though such membership had been compulsory since 1936. In fact, the Hitler Youth Movement was not the all-consuming success the Nazis would have liked it to be, either in terms of membership figures or in terms of the attitude of the young who were members. Several factors account for this:

- Outraged by some aspect of the Hitler Youth groups, some parents refused to allow their children to be members. This was a brave thing to do as such actions could lead to children being removed from their parents, or the parents being placed in a concentration camp.
- Many young people resented the regimentation and enforced conformity which was part and parcel of life in the Hitler Youth. Many of the movement leaders were poorly educated, some were thuggish SA types, and this bred further disillusionment.
- Not all young people wanted to engage in the strenuous physical activities demanded of members. The increasing militarisation of camp activities was particularly unpopular. Many young people yearned for free time to be able to follow private pursuits.
- By age fifteen, many Hitler Youth members were working and so resented having to attend evening activities.

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What do the historians have to say about the "role of Hitler Youth"?

1. Michael Burleigh: The Third Reich

Burleigh is willing to show the health and fun benefits of Hitler Youth membership. However, he also highlights what were seen even at the time as the drawbacks: lessening parental control over the young, the expense that membership involved, the exposure of young people to a 'not inconsiderable number of paedophiles and perverts among older Hitler Youth leaders',[1] a decline in manners and respect for traditional values, brutish behaviour and academic decline.

"...In sum, children appeared to have become more brutal, fitter and stupider than they (their parents) were." [2]

2. Richard Evans: The Third Reich in Power

Evans draws a picture of the Hitler Youth as an organisation specifically aimed at preventing any free thinking. He shows that the songs the young had to sing had to be Nazi songs; books to be read were Nazi books. The young would be fully indoctrinated into developing a love and respect for Germanic gods and heroes, Hitler and his fellow-fighters and purity of the blood. Increasingly, military style activities became more and more important.

"...The indoctrination which young Germans received through the Hitler Youth was ceaseless...it was an emphatically top-down organisation, run...according to the leadership principle, by the Reich Youth Leadership under Schirach." [3]

1 Burleigh, M, The Third Reich: A New History, Pan Books, London, 2001, p 236
2 ibid, p 236
3 Evans, R, The Third Reich in Power, Penguin, London, 2005, pp 273-4

Women

During the years of the Weimar Republic, women had made significant strides. The constitution gave them the vote, long before many other European countries. They were allowed to play a greater role in the professions, industry and the arts. The Depression placed limits on these opportunities; the Nazis tried to end them.

In the 'table talk' conversations which are often included in the major biographies, Hitler makes clear his beliefs about the second class status of women. He did not believe that intelligence in a woman was an important thing; he preferred to be surrounded by docile members of the opposite sex. When accused of having been Hitler's mistress, the filmmaker, Leni Riefenstahl, said it never happened because Hitler preferred soft cow-like women like Eva Braun. Hitler believed that a woman's world was a smaller one, restricted to her husband, children and home.

Hitler was not exactly a misogynist, he simply believed that women had a secondary, if important role, to play in Nazi society.

- Nazi thinking saw women as inferior to men and to be controlled by them.
- The primary purpose of a woman was to have as many children for the Reich as she was capable of having.
- The Nazis had dreams of creating an eastern empire of 250 million racially pure Aryans. This future race would be borne from women imbued with Nazi ideas and who had developed healthy bodies fit for childbearing.

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Nazi policies towards women

Between 1933 and 1939, Nazi policies towards women were very much in tune with Hitler's general outlook. Nazi propaganda promoted the slogan known as the 'three Ks" – Kinder, Kirche and Kuche (children, church and kitchen) – to clarify where women should spend their time.

- As early as 1933, the Law for the Encouragement of Marriage made clear what was expected of women. Newly married couples were given a loan of 1000 marks. For each child produced, the couple was allowed to keep 250 marks and not have to repay the loan.
  - Such loans were only for the racially pure and demanding medical examinations were required to attain one.
- Further encouragement for having children included tax relief and reductions in mortgage payments.
- Motherhood was actively encouraged with the introduction of the Motherhood Cross, given to those women who had the most children. This award was handed out symbolically on the birthday of Hitler's mother.
- During the war, the Nazis even established 'Lebensborn' – this was a place an unmarried woman could go to meet a racially pure SS man for the purpose of becoming pregnant.
- Those women who were considered 'racially undesirable' were sterilised. By the end of 1934, almost 28 000 such women had been sterilised.
- Jewish women were victimised:
  - Aryan men were pressured to divorce Jewish wives.
  - Children from mixed Aryan-Jewish marriages were often taken from their Jewish parent.
  - In 1939, abortion was outlawed – but not for Jewish women.
- Laws were introduced to remove married women from the civil service. Gradually, women were barred from being doctors, lawyers, judges and were denied almost any real political role at all. Attempts were also made to limit the number of women studying at university.
- There was also a range of petty restrictions placed on women to encourage the homemaking/ childbearing role:
  - Make-up and the wearing of trousers were frowned upon.
  - Hair should be put in plaits or a bun, not dyed or permed.
  - Slimming was discouraged and women encouraged to develop child-bearing hips.

What do the historians have to say about "Women"?

1. Richard Overy: The Dictators

Overy shows how Nazi propaganda tried to influence society's perception of the role of women. Women were presented as 'the mother and helper' but young girls were also portrayed as engaging in healthy, physical activities; the body had to be prepared for childbearing. A woman could do her national service by breeding children.

"...The new woman idealised in a hundred propaganda posters, a contented and competent helpmate for her man, but above all, a model of heroic fecundity." [4]

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2. The work of Claudia Koonz, including "Mothers in the Fatherland, Women, the Family and Nazi Politics"

Koonz is an American feminist historian who has argued that far from being relegated to secondary status in Nazi Germany, women actually enthusiastically endorsed the regime. They had been keen supporters before 1933, and were happy with the division of life into the male public sphere and the female private sphere. More controversially, Koonz suggests German women made war and genocide possible.

"...Whilst Nazi men launched their racially-charged war of conquest in the east, Nazi women were equally busy creating their own domestic Lebensraum in the form of a private retreat from the outside world." [5]

4 Overy, R, The Dictators: Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia, Penguin, London, 2005, p 248
5 Sibbe, M, "Women in the Nazi State", in History Today, November 1993, p 39

Religion

For many in Germany, Nazism was not just a political movement, but a kind of religion and so conflict with traditional Christianity was inevitable. Superficially, Nazism looked very similar to a religion:

- it had its own messiah – Hitler
- it had its own Bible – Mein Kampf
- it had its own iconography – the swastika, the flags, the insignia
- it had its own intolerant dogma and preachers
- it presented an answer to the issues of life and being.

Hitler viewed Christianity with contempt, noting its Jewish origins and berating it for its compassionate weakness. Notions of Christian love and forgiveness did not fit in with the Nazi belief in struggle and the survival of the fittest. However, he was aware of the hold that the Christian churches had on many German people and so he dealt carefully with the church.

In July 1933, the Nazis signed a Concordat with the Vatican. A concordat is an agreement that the Pope signs with a secular, non-religious body. The main terms of the Concordat were:

- The Nazi government promised to respect the rights of the Catholic Church.
- The Catholic Church promised to keep out of politics.

However, the Nazis did not keep their word. Within a few years, Catholic schools were being closed down, Catholic youth groups were removed as the Hitler Youth Movement took over and Catholic clergy who spoke out against the Nazis were persecuted. In 1937, the Pope eventually spoke up against the Nazi regime, accusing it of breaking the Concordat. In retaliation to such moves, the Nazis staged 'show trials' in which priests were put on trial for trumped up charges of immorality. Monasteries were closed down and their assets seized.

The Nazis sought to organise German protestants by forming the Evangelical Reich Church under 'Bishop' Ludwig Mueller. Mueller's church sought to challenge traditional theology by removing the Jewish Old Testament from the Bible and attacking the works of the Jew St Paul. Professor Ernst Bergmann went further, presenting his 'Twenty Five Points of the German Religion' in 1934. Some of these points included ideas such as:

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- Christ was a Nordic martyr put to death by the Jews.
- Hitler was the new Messiah whose purpose was to save the world from the power of the Jews.
- The swastika was now the symbol of German Christianity.

Opponents of the Reich Church formed the Confessional Church. This organisation spoke out against the regime and some of its members, Martin Niemoller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, courageously stood up to the Nazis (see Chapter 13). However, overall the Church did little to oppose Nazism. The new Pope from 1939, Pius XII, refused to comment on Nazi atrocities though he was fully aware of them, having been a resident in Germany for several years.

What do the historians have to say about "Religion"?

1. Michael Burleigh: The Third Reich

Burleigh describes how the Nazis sought to remove Jewish elements from Christianity. The gospels were rewritten and Christ's ethnicity changed. The fact that Christ was a carpenter clearly meant he was not Jewish – how many Jewish carpenters are there? Christ's actions against the Pharisees and moneylenders were presented in an anti-semitic way. However, Burleigh suggests this was only the first stage of Hitler's plan.

"...Few German Christians grasped that this was preparatory, once the Jews had gone, to eradicating Christianity itself." [6]

2. Richard Evans: The Third Reich in Power

Evans shows that the Nazis had been extremely successful in reducing the influence and power of religion by 1939. Goebbels' propaganda machine worked hard to discredit the church and efforts were made to remove any religious instruction at all from schools. Threats of imprisonment and Gestapo activity drove the church out of public life. Any criticisms made of the regime came from those very few brave individuals who put conscience before personal safety.

(Like its Protestant counterpart the Catholic Church) "...had been intimidated and harassed until it began to scale down its criticisms of the regime for fear that even worse might follow." [7]

6 Burleigh, M, The Third Reich: A New History, Pan Books, London, 2001, p 259
7 Evans, R, The Third Reich in Power, Penguin, London, 2005, p 247

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Exercise 14.1

Answer the following questions. Place your answers in the spaces provided on the right.

1 Why was youth policy of importance to the Nazis?	
2 What values did the Hitler Youth Movement emphasise?	
3 What was expected of young girls?	
4 What was not required of Hitler Youth members?	
5 Did the Nazis achieve their aims in Youth policy?	
6 How did Hitler view the status of women?	
7 What was the purpose of women in Nazis Germany?	
8 What were the three Ks?	
9 What was the Law for the Encouragement of Marriage?	
10 What was the Nazi attitude to women working?	
11 What was the Concordat?	
12 What was the 'Nazi Church' called?	
13 How was Christ presented?	
14 How extensive was Church opposition to the Nazis?	
15 What was the ultimate aim of Nazi church policy?	

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Chapter 15:
Nazi racial policy – anti-Semitism and practice to 1939

Introduction

Anti-Semitism is the irrational and often violent hatred of Jews and things Jewish. It was by no means restricted to Germany.

The roots of anti-Semitism are deep and can be found in the Christian belief in Jewish responsibility for the death of Christ, the evolution of Jewish separateness and the ease with which Jews could be targeted as scapegoats for society's ills.

Hostility to Jews had existed in nearly all countries since the expulsion of the Jews from Palestine in the 1st century AD. Clubs in the United States banned Jewish membership and Jews became targets of the Ku Klux Klan; Jews suffered persecution in Russia under the tsars and the communists; they had been expelled from England in the 13th century. Ironically, arguably the best place for Jews to live in the 19th and early 20th century was Germany where they had successfully assimilated, become successful and had even often changed their names to become more Germanic. Many Jewish men fought willingly for Germany during World War I.

However, anti-Semitism was rife in early 20th century Europe, including Germany. A popular book of the time was 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion' which purported to prove that the Jews were involved in a worldwide conspiracy to take over the world. Pseudo-scientific ideas were popular at this time which tried to argue that race inequality was a fact. In such thinking, members of the Aryan race were deemed superior to all others, while the Jewish were placed at the bottom of the racial heap. After World War I, Jews were lumped together with socialists and democrats as comprising 'the November Criminals' responsible for 'stabbing the German army in the back' (see Chapter 1).

These ideas, plus Hitler's personal experiences in Vienna before 1914, where he became exposed to anti-Semitic propaganda, helped to shape his racist obsessions. It would require a psychologist to adequately explain why Hitler harboured such a fanatical hatred for the Jews. What is possible, however, is to highlight some of the key Nazi beliefs regarding race, and the Jews in particular. These ideas are summarised in Figure 15.1.

The debate about Nazi racial policy

It is beyond the scope of this book to discuss in detail the events of the holocaust; the HSC takes the story only as far as 1939. However, it is impossible to properly discuss Nazi policy towards the Jews between 1933 and 1939 without alluding to what happened after 1939.

Historical debate about the Jews is concerned mainly with the idea of long-term intent on the part of the Nazis.

- One group of historians who are often referred to as 'intentionalists', argue that it was Hitler's long-term aim all along to wipe out the Jewish race. Evidence to support this view includes:
  - early Nazi propaganda and Hitler's Mein Kampf written in 1924;
  - right from the start, the regime targeted the Jews and steadily increased the pressure against the Jewish people;

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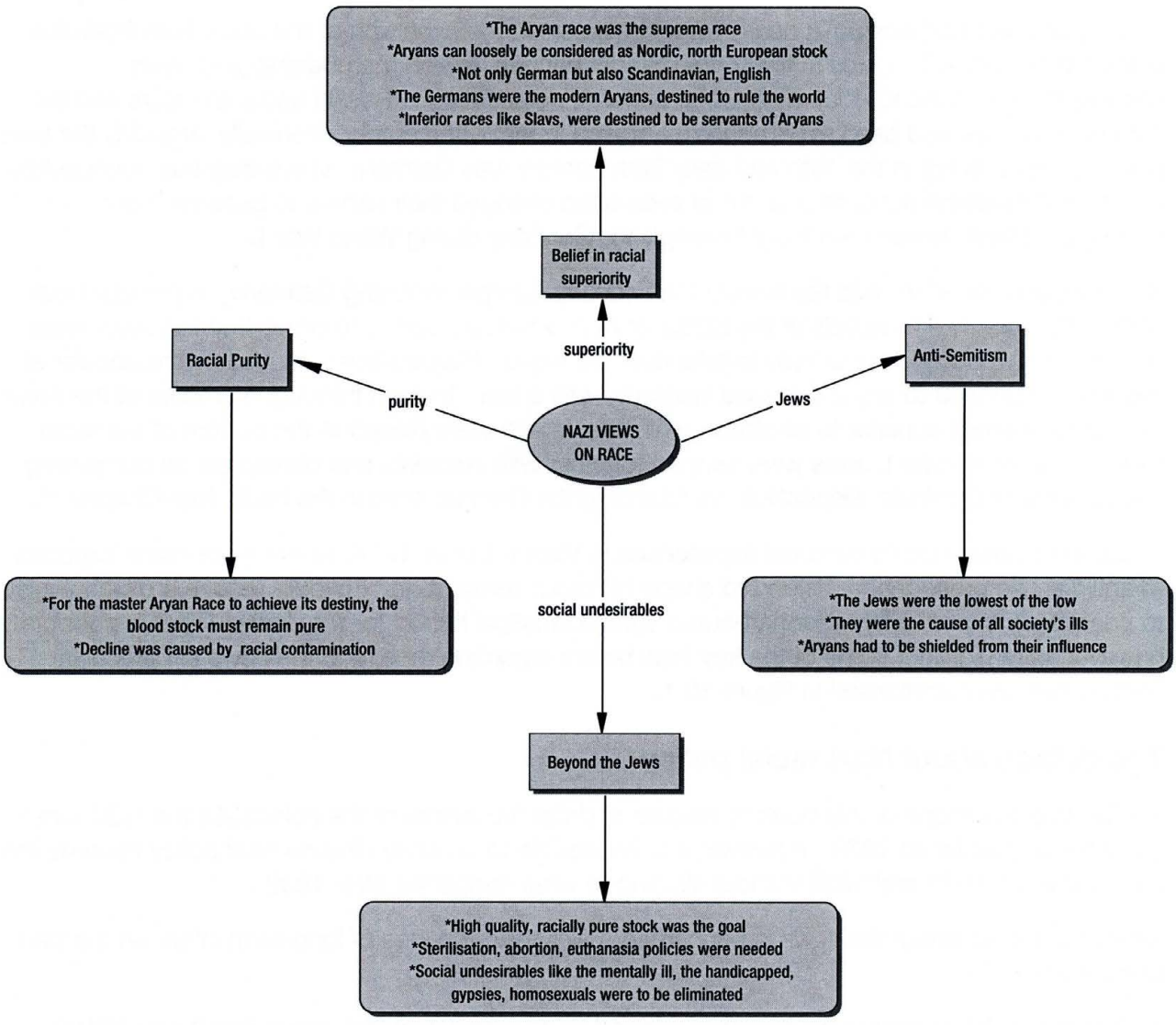
- Hitler's January 1939 warning to the Jews about their fate if 'they plunged Europe into war'.

- Another group of historians, often referred to as 'structuralists', argue that the fate of the Jews was due to the steady radicalisation of the regime. It was the regime's structure that led to the holocaust, not the pursuit of a long-term blueprint. Evidence to support this view includes:
  - the lack of specific direction given by Hitler to policy-making;
  - rivalry between various Nazi leaders who were trying to 'work towards the Fuhrer' and second guess his desires;
  - what to do with the millions of Jews under Nazi control in territory occupied by German forces after 1939.

Figure 15.1 Summary of Nazi racial thinking.



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Nazi racial policy and practice to 1939

The Nazis attacked the Jews as soon as they came into power. Early policies against the Jews were often quite general in nature:

- Nazi propaganda constantly targeted the Jews and made them scapegoats for all of Germany's past and present ills including defeat in 1918, the Treaty of Versailles and the Depression;
- Jews could be physically attacked and no action would be taken against those carrying out the attacks.

A series of petty regulations aimed at Jews were introduced across the country. The minor restrictions were not life-threatening; rather they were demeaning, humiliating and sought to make life difficult for Jews. These included such things as:

- excluding Jews from using public buses, parks and swimming pools;
- putting up signs which indicated that certain entrances and areas were not available for Jewish people;
- one sign of the time read 'Guard dog: Jews enter at their own risk';
- Jewish school students were ridiculed and humiliated as their racial inferiority was explained for the benefit of their Aryan peers.

On 1 April 1933, the Nazis called for a national boycott of all Jewish businesses. SA guards were placed outside Jewish shops, intimidating people not to enter the premises. The national boycott day was symbolic of what was to come.

By mid-1935, formal legislation had succeeded in excluding Jewish people from a range of activities. These included:

- in April 1933 there were mass sackings of Jews from the Civil Service following the Law for the Restoration of the Civil Service;
- in the same month university restrictions were placed on Jews;
- Jews were formally denied marriage loans in July 1933, not surprising as the purpose of marriage loans was to stimulate the birth rate;
- in September 1933 Jews were denied entry into the legal system;
- by October 1934, Jews had been effectively excluded from the media and the arts.

In September 1935 two new laws were announced at the annual Nuremberg Rally and came to be known together as the Nuremberg Laws. These laws were the:

1. The Reich Citizenship Act:

Jews were no longer German citizens and thus lost all the rights that citizenship bestowed upon a person. They could no longer vote, join the armed forces or fly the swastika emblem. They also lost whatever protection citizenship might still hold.

2. The Blood Protection Act:

This law was aimed at maintaining the purity of German blood. German citizens and Jews were not allowed to marry or engage in sexual relations. At the rally, Goering talked of protecting German women and girls, and of preserving 'the Germanic and Nordic purity of the race'.

During the late 1930s, Jewish businesses were steadily Aryanised which was a way of saying they were bought out by non-Jewish people at prices far below what they were worth. In 1938 a

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regulation was introduced which forced all male Jews to take the name 'Israel' and all female Jews to take the name 'Sarah'. This would make their growing marginalisation from the rest of German society all the more easy. Even the church joined in the anti-Semitism of the time. The Catholic Church banned clergy with Jewish origins even if they had been baptised. From 1939, anyone hoping to enter the priesthood had to provide proof of an Aryan background.

Kristallnacht (Crystal Night) and after: November 1938 – September 1939

On 7 November 1938 a minor German diplomat called Ernst vom Rath was shot in Paris by a young Jew, Herschel Grynszpan. This incident was to spark the largest anti-Jewish actions of the Nazi regime up to this point.

After a brief meeting with Hitler, Goebbels informed other Nazi leaders that the Fuhrer had decided that the 'spontaneous' anti-Jewish riots, which had broken out because of the shooting, should not be discouraged. Those at the meeting took this to mean that they should immediately initiate their own anti-Jewish demonstrations. What followed that night was a nationwide attack on the Jewish community.

This night became known as Kristallnacht (Crystal Night) or the Night of Broken Glass. All over Germany, Jews were attacked, synagogues were burned to the ground and Jewish homes and shops were smashed and set alight. In the aftermath of Kristallnacht, thousands of Jews were marched into concentration camps and the Jews were forced to pay for the damage that they had 'caused' on that night. Any remaining Jewish businesses were Aryanised at rock bottom prices.

Anybody who had not been sure about Nazi intentions towards the Jews could no longer be in any doubt. Those Jews, who could, left the country. On 30 January 1939, in a speech to the Reichstag, Hitler gave the Jews an ominous warning.

"...If the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations into a world war, then the result will...(be) the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe." [1]

Nazi racial policy took some mixed turns at this point of German history.

- On one level it became more radical. Gypsies and other 'untermenschen' (sub-humans), homosexuals and Jehovah's witnesses became targets and were herded into concentration camps with the Jews.
- The policy of euthanasia was implemented. This was the policy of gassing the handicapped or people who were mentally ill. Despite heroic objections from people like Cardinal von Galen, over a quarter of a million had been killed by 1945.
- Non-Aryans were placed into new categories such as Mischlinge. A Mischlinge was a person having only one Jewish grandparent, or if they had two Jewish grandparents but they were not practising Jews or married to a Jew. The Mischlinge escaped the worst Nazi oppression in 1939.

1 Quoted in Webb, K, *People and Events*, McGraw-Hill, Sydney 1997, p 107

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What do the historians have to say about "Nazi racial policy"?

1. William S Shirer: The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich

Shirer provides details about how life gradually became more difficult for Jewish people. He shows that by 1936, Jews often could not get even the necessities of life. They were denied food in grocery shops and pharmacies would not sell them medicines. Taunting signs were put up such as a road sign near Ludwigshafen which stated, "Drive Carefully! Sharp Curve! Jews 75 Miles an Hour".

"...the Jews had been excluded either by law or by Nazi terror – the latter often preceded the former – from public and private employment to such an extent that at least one half of them were without means of livelihood." [2]

2. S H Roberts: The House that Hitler Built

Roberts travelled around Germany in the 1930s and saw at first hand what was happening to Jewish people. In 1937 he wrote a book called 'The House that Hitler Built'. He comments on a visit to a Hitler Youth camp where young boys gazed admiringly at pornographic anti-Semitic propaganda in the Nazi newspaper 'Der Sturmer'. He said that he came across few Germans who were shocked by or who opposed Nazi anti-Semitic measures.

"...I expected many to argue that it was an unwelcome necessity, forced upon them by propaganda or by pressure of events, but this was not the case...I met nobody in Germany who adopted an apologetic attitude." [3]

3. Michael Burleigh: The Third Reich

Burleigh makes an interesting point about Hitler's speech of January 1939. Hitler was presenting a potential scenario; he was prophesising, saying that things would just happen. Between 1939 and 1941, many different options existed and circumstances might dictate different courses of action. There is no direct link between his speech and the horrendous events to come and the Nazi assault on the Jews.

"...And yet, when that assault was happening, this speech was frequently referred to by Hitler...as the prior notice that it would – not could – happen, like some sort of anchor or reference point in a tempest." [4]

2 Shirer, WS, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, Pan, London, 1964, p 290-1
3 Quoted in Webb, K, ibid, p 104
4 Burleigh, M, *The Third Reich: A New History*, Pan Books, London, 2001, p 341

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Exercise 15.1

Match the term below with the explanation given. Write you answer in the space provided.

Policy of killing handicapped and mentally ill people	
Also known as the Night of Broken Glass	
Process of buying up Jewish businesses at rock-bottom prices	
An irrational hatred of Jewish people	
A non-practising Jew with two Jewish grandparents	
Symbolic action taken against Jews on 1 April 1934	
One of the 1935 Nuremberg Laws	
Those considered sub-human in Nazi thinking	

Blood Protection Act; Aryanisation; untermenschen; euthanasia; anti-Semitism; mischlinge; national boycott; Kristallnacht

Exercise 15.2

Place in the correct chronological order the events given in the box below.

1st event	
2nd event	
3rd event	
4th event	
5th event	
6th event	
7th event	
8th event	

The Nuremberg Laws	Hitler's pre-war warning to the Jews
Writing of Mein Kampf	National boycott of Jewish businesses
Law for the Restoration of the Civil Service	Kristallnacht
Creation of the Mischlinge category	Ernst vom Rath is shot in Paris

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ESSAYS 3
Nazism in power

The purpose of this section is to provide some ideas for the type of questions which could be asked on the second section of the syllabus: Nazism in power. These outlines are not presented as the 'be all and end all' responses to these questions. To provide a sense of reality to this section, what follows is a 'first draft response' to each question, ie what were the first ideas that came into the author's head as he thought about each question?

Essay No 1:

"Assess the importance of propaganda in the maintenance of Nazi power between 1933 and 1939."

This question is asking the student to make a judgment about the role of propaganda in the Nazis' ability to hold on to power. There are several pitfalls to avoid:

- Students must not make the mistake of dismissing propaganda out of hand. They cannot open the essay by saying: 'Propaganda had nothing to do with the Nazi hold on power. It was due to the use of terror and repression; the German people were too afraid to oppose the Nazis' – and then proceed to write an essay on the SS, the Gestapo and the Camps.
  - The focus of the question is on propaganda. You must discuss this issue. If you do not do this, you are liable to get a very low mark, even if your other material is quite good.
  - You do not have to spend the entire essay dealing with propaganda, but it must be dealt with fully.

There is a variety of lines of argument that a student might pursue.

1. Propaganda is the fundamental factor explaining the maintenance of Nazi power. Though repression lurked in the background, the German people had been convinced of the benefits of the regime by Goebbels' genius. Hitler had become Germany's most popular leader in History.

2. Propaganda had very little to do with the Nazi hold in power. Show how propaganda was in fact ineffective and that the German people were not taken in. Develop this argument fully, and then you can argue that the Nazi hold on power was in fact due to other factors, eg fear, success in ending the Depression, foreign policy successes. Ensure about half of your response deals with propaganda.

3. You might argue that propaganda was a major factor in maintaining Nazi power. Show how this was the case, eg develop a line about the Fuhrer Myth. However, you believe that it is simplistic to argue propaganda alone was responsible. Other factors such as fear and socio-economic policy were also important. Ensure about half of your response deals with propaganda.

Propaganda was a key element in the maintenance of Nazi power between 1933 and 1939. The Nazi media monopoly and Goebbels' genius in utilising this monopoly convinced the mass of the German people of the benefits of Nazi rule. Doubts some Germans had about the regime were silenced by Goebbels' development of the Fuhrer Myth. However, of even greater importance was the apparent Nazi success in dealing with the Depression, and the perception of the pervasiveness of Nazi terror.

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- Introduce Goebbels and explain the nature of the Nazi media monopoly. Explain how he managed to silence all alternative views to the Nazi one and sought to brainwash the public.
  - Refer to the control Goebbels had over the press, cinema, the arts, education etc.
  - Introduce some of the themes Goebbels developed such as the success in eliminating the communist threat, socio-economic benefits introduced by the regime, pride in Germany's foreign successes.
  - Place emphasis on Goebbels' development of the Fuhrer Myth; explain what it was, how it operated; refer to Ian Kershaw's work.
- However, of even greater importance was the material improvement in the well being of the German people.
  - Refer to the apparent rapidity with which Germany overcame the depression and what this meant to a people who had suffered since 1918.
  - Show how the various sectors of the German population benefited from Nazi socio-economic policy.
  - You might argue that youth and women were particularly supportive of Nazi policies and show why this might be.
- The most important factor was of course the existence of Nazi terror. Small though the organs of repression were, German people accepted that there was a constant threat of arrest and imprisonment. This was enough to ensure the maintenance of Nazi power:
  - You might talk about the limited resources of the organs of terror, eg the Gestapo and refer to Gellateley's work.
  - Talk about the impact of denunciations and the German people's willingness to do the Gestapo's work for them.
  - Link these points to the atomisation of society that occurred under Nazi rule.
- Your conclusion needs to link these points together. Make your judgment about the importance of propaganda but then qualify with your points about Nazi socio-economic policy and terror.

Essay No 2:

"To what extent was Germany a totalitarian society in the period 1933-1939?"

The main error to avoid with this question is for students to dive in and write all they know about Nazi Germany. This has been a common fault when students have attempted this question. A detailed narrative on Nazi Germany which almost accidentally refers to some of the elements of a totalitarian society will achieve only a good narrative score: 15/25.

This question (like all Germany questions) invites a variety of responses. Some of these include:

1. Argue that Germany between 1933 and 1939 was most definitely a totalitarian society. Establish your criteria and then support your argument based on the criteria you have set.
2. Argue that Germany between 1933 and 1939 was most definitely not a totalitarian state. Establish your criteria and then support this argument based on the criteria you have set.
3. You might argue that superficially Germany had the trappings of a totalitarian state. However, on deeper analysis the evidence would suggest that such a description is inappropriate.
4. This is one question where a historiographical line of argument might work. Explain the origins of the term totalitarian and show how at first historians were keen to link Nazi Germany and Soviet

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Russia to totalitarianism in a Cold War environment. Then explain the impact of later research on this debate. Free of ideological bias, most historians would not accept the idea that Nazi Germany was a totalitarian state.

5. You might pursue a line that attempts to suggest that Germany was an authoritarian state in the early 1930s and was moving progressively closer to a totalitarian system by 1939. This is much harder and you need to know your detail to succeed with this line of argument.

For the purposes of this section, let us consider argument number 3.

Superficially, Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1939 had the appearance of a totalitarian state. This was certainly the view that early historians of the period presented. However, more recent research has suggested that the simple totalitarian model is not appropriate when analysing Germany at this time. The problem in trying to attach the totalitarian label to Nazi Germany is the desire of previous writers to establish similarity between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia.

- Establish the criteria for a totalitarian state:
  - a charismatic dictator, power in the hands of a single party;
  - the existence of a party ideology;
  - the practice of state terror and party control of all media;
  - party control of the nation's institutions;
  - party control of all aspects of life.

(At this point the student has two clear choices: either to examine each criterion in turn, or to examine the superficial angle first, then the qualifications to that angle. For the purposes of this exercise, the second method will be followed.)

Superficially, Germany certainly gave the appearance of a totalitarian society:

- Hitler was the charismatic dictator, his power was unquestioned and after 30 June 1934, he faced no threat to his position from within or without the party;
- the process of Gleischaltung, including the decree of 14 July 1933 banning all political parties except the Nazi Party, ensured that political power was in the hands of one ruling party;
- the Nazis used various organs of repression to terrorise the people into accepting the regime; refer to the SA, SS, SD, Gestapo and the Camps;
- Goebbels had full control of the media;
- by the end of 1934 the Nazis had effectively Nazified German institutions ranging from youth groups to trade unions to the arts;
- the individual lives of people were controlled by the party, eg what they could read or see, how they were educated; the Nuremburg Laws dictated even with whom they could sleep;
- this was the view of Germany presented by early writers on Hitler such as Alan Bullock and Hannah Arendt.

- However, on closer examination, the reality of Nazi Germany does not really match up to these criteria.
  - Research by 'structuralist' historians since the late 1960s has suggested that the Nazi regime was not a centralised, monolithic system totally dominated by Hitler.
  - The regime was riven by divisions and rivalries which made it extremely chaotic, confused and inefficient.

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- Hitler was a lazy dictator with poor work habits who exhibited a strong reluctance to make decisions;
- Nazi ideology was confused and incoherent and lacked any consistency beyond its emphasis on race;
- the organs of terror were very real but their real effectiveness was limited by their lack of manpower and resources, and their bureaucratic inefficiency;
- the party worked very much in partnership with existing institutions such as the civil service, the army and the foreign service rather than totally dominating them.

- Nazi Germany had the appearance of a totalitarian state and many people were fooled into believing it was the epitome of centralised, organised efficiency. The reality is that it was a confused regime, led by an arguably weak dictator, based on an incoherent ideology and reliant on existing institutional structures.

Essay No 3:

"Explain the impact of Nazism on the lives of the young and women between 1933 and 1939."

The danger with this question is to fall into the narrative trap. Nazi Germany is an interesting if disturbing topic and students' knowledge of factual detail is often considerable. However, it is argument that pushes an answer into the upper ranges of the marking criteria. The text type in this question is 'explain'; this means that students must refer to cause and effect. It is not enough simply to 'write all you know about the young and women'.

Structurally this question will work better if the issues of the young and women are dealt with separately. You do not have to write exactly 50% on each, but it is important not to spend a disproportionate amount of time on one of the issues at the expense of the other.

Nazism had clearly defined roles for both young people and women. The young were to be indoctrinated, regimented and trained to ensure the future survival of the regime. Women were to be conditioned and prepared for their crucial role of breeding. The regime moved very quickly to enforce various laws and regulations to achieve these aims. The lives of women and the young were transformed by Nazism, though the Nazis were not completely successful in achieving what they wanted with these two groups.

- Hitler believed the Third Reich would last 1000 years. The young would guarantee this and so they had to be manipulated and controlled.
  - They had to be nurtured to provide fit, healthy bodies to maintain racial purity and secure the rule of the master race.
  - Their minds had to be filled with the correct ideas of devotion to their Fuhrer and the Fatherland.
  - Boys had to be groomed for their future as soldiers, girls as future mothers.
- The various sections of the Hitler Youth Movements were organised to these ends – you might provide some factual detail here on how this was done:
  - emphasis on exercise, sport, endurance, teamwork, aggression (examples);
  - an avoidance of intellectual pursuits or critical thinking (examples);
  - growing emphasis on military style discipline and training;
  - girls encouraged to develop healthy bodies to make them ready to be mothers of the master race.

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- Nazi success in their aims was considerable but not overwhelming.
  - Most young people enjoyed the advantages that the Hitler Youth offered.
  - The young offered little opposition to the regime and German military success early in WWII arguably owed something to Youth policies.
  - However, there were pockets of dissent: refer to the Swing Kids, resentment of some young people to the military style discipline and the intrusion on their time.
- The role for women was clearly marked out by the regime.
  - Women existed to have racially pure babies, be wives and look after the home.
  - They were deemed inferior to men and not meant to play public roles.
  - Their place was in the home and not at work.
- A carrot and stick approach was used to encourage women to accept these roles.
  - Propaganda extolled the idealism of motherhood.
  - Marriage loans and welfare benefits were introduced to encourage breeding.
  - Single women, childless couples suffered discrimination.
  - Women were gradually excluded from various professions – provide examples, university education was made difficult to obtain.
  - Attempts were made to control female behaviour, eg criticism of dieting, make-up, wearing trousers.
- Nazi success in achieving their aims was considerable though not total.
  - Many women were forced out of their jobs and into their homes.
  - There is evidence that many women gladly accepted the role mapped out for them by the regime.
  - Politically Nazi Germany was very much a male preserve.
  - However, the economy still needed female labour which increased in number during the war despite the ideological objections.
  - The German birth rate in the 1930s was not greatly different to similar societies of that time.
  - Some feminist writers have argued that women actively supported the regime.
- The Nazis had clear objectives set out for the young and women. These related to racial purity and the future survival of the regime. They were largely successful in achieving these aims though by the late 1930s it was clear that not all young people or women had gone along with what was expected of them.

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Chapter 16: Nature of Nazi foreign policy

Aims of Nazi foreign policy

An understanding of the purpose of Nazi foreign policy requires a distinction to be made between 'ends' and 'means'. This will be covered more fully in Chapter 17 in which the impact of ideology on Nazi Foreign Policy to September 1939 will be dealt with.

- Hitler's ultimate ambition lay in two areas: territorial expansion and race. These two key elements provide the essence of what Nazism was really about.
  - Hitler's obsession with race meant he sought racial purity and (some historians would argue) a desire to rid the world of the Jewish race.
  - Linked to this was his pursuit of lebensraum – living space. Hitler believed that the Reich was destined to expand into the rich corn and oil lands of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.
  - Here Germany's future population of 250 million would live while the local Slav populations became the servants of the master race.

Everything about Nazism was geared towards the ultimate achievement of these long-term aims.

However, Hitler realised that these goals would not be achieved immediately. Consequently, it would be necessary to work towards his short-term goals first, ie he needed to, at first, take smaller steps. These smaller steps would constitute the 'means' required to obtain the longer-term aims.

These short-term goals included the following:

- The hated Treaty of Versailles had to be undone. Hitler sought to 'revise' the Treaty in Germany's favour and eventually rip it up altogether. This process of revisionism involved several elements:
  - the cancellation of reparation payments; this had effectively been achieved at the Lausanne Conference of 1932;
  - Germany's right to military equality with its neighbours; this involved the rejection of the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles which had restricted Germany's army to 100 000, denied it conscription, an air force, submarines and imposed other restrictions (see Chapter 2);
  - the recovery of territory taken from Germany in 1919, eg the land that had been lost to Poland in the east, the remilitarisation of the Rhineland and Anschluss (union) with Austria.

All these things would restore Germany's national pride, end the humiliation of the Weimar years and restore Germany's 'rightful place in Europe'.

- Revisionism was only the first stage in Hitler's foreign policy. The next stage was the creation of a GrossDeutschland, the bringing together of all German speaking people into the Reich. In 1919, many German speaking people had been separated from Germany and Hitler sought their return.
  - German speaking Austria was not allowed to unite with Germany.
  - The Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia contained three million Germans.

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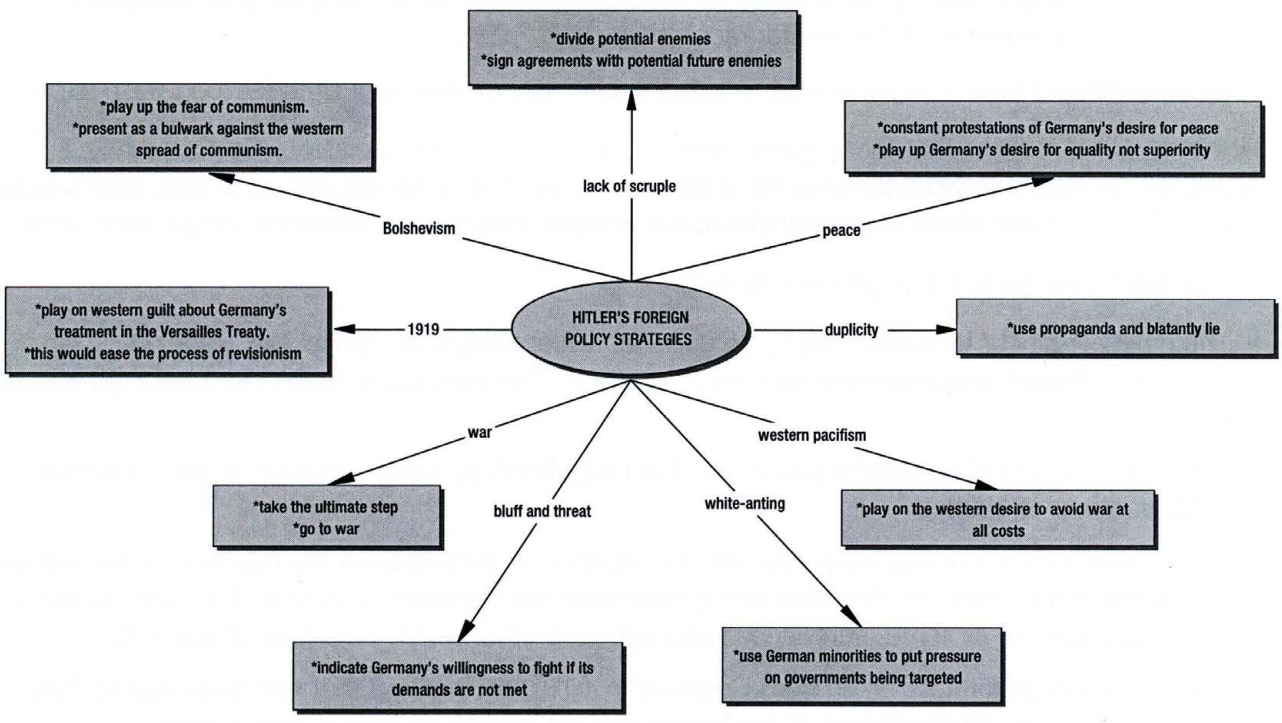
- Germans had been forced to live in the new state of Poland and the creation of the Polish Corridor had separated East Prussia from the rest of Germany.

Creation of a GrossDeutschland would also assist Germany in achieving another short-term aim, or 'means', and that was economic self-sufficiency.

- Hitler had also made it clear in Mein Kampf that he did not believe Germany's traditional enemy, France, would accept German expansion.
  - Hitler believed a reckoning with France was inevitable.
  - Once this had been done, Hitler could then focus on his real goal: lebensraum in the east and the destiny of the master race.

Hitler did not have a carefully worked out blueprint in place when he came to power. He did not plan his foreign policy in advance. The long-term goals were never out of his mind, but the short-term moves were determined by chance and circumstances. Hitler was a supreme opportunist. In pursuit of his foreign policy objectives, Hitler used a wide range of strategies. These are summarised in Figure 16.1 below.

Figure 16.1 Hitler's foreign policy strategies



Hitler's foreign policy: 1933-September 1939

During his early years in power, Hitler frequently gave speeches calling for peace and international cooperation.

- This is not surprising considering Germany's military weakness.
- It gained a favourable response in Britain where many looked on the Nazi regime admiringly.
- Hitler sought cordial relations with Britain and hoped to eventually be given a 'green light' from London for his expansionary plans in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

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In October 1933, Germany pulled out from both the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations:

- Non-membership of the League gave Germany more freedom of action.
- British Prime Minister Macdonald's government was not concerned, believing that it was the French who posed the greater threat to European peace.
- It enabled Hitler to start rearming on the basis of seeking equality only.

In January 1934, Germany and Poland signed a Ten Year Non-Aggression Pact.

- This was a classic example of Nazi dishonesty. The only role Poland had in Hitler's thinking was as a launch pad for his eventual attack on the Soviet Union and for the exploitation of Polish resources and labour.
- It comforted the Poles and showed Hitler in a peaceful light as previous German policy towards Poland had been more belligerent due to the gains that Poland had made in 1919 at Germany's expense.

The Austrian Nazi Party was growing in strength. In July 1934, it tried to seize power and assassinated the Austrian Chancellor, Dolfuss.

- Italian dictator, Mussolini, made it clear he would not accept a Nazi takeover of Austria and placed four divisions on his Austrian border. Britain and France also made their opposition to such a move clear.
- Hitler was not strong enough to push the issue and so denied any knowledge of the incident and abandoned the Austrian Nazis, for the time being.

In January 1935, the Saar province voted to join Germany. The Saar had been placed under League of Nations jurisdiction in 1919 for fifteen years, its future status to be decided in a referendum.

- The people of the Saar voted overwhelmingly to join Germany.
- The Saar vote was clearly honest and so provided Hitler with an easy propaganda victory.

One of Hitler's priorities from the beginning had been German rearmament. In March 1935, he felt strong enough to announce Germany's army was already 240 000 – above the 100 000 limit allowed by Versailles.

- In this month he announced the reintroduction of conscription which would increase the size of the army to 550 000.
- No action was taken to deal with this breach of the Versailles Treaty. However, Britain, France and Italy were concerned that there might be future German actions. They met at Stresa in April 1935 and formed the Stresa Front to keep a check on future German behaviour.

In June 1935 the Anglo-German Naval Agreement was signed. Germany was allowed to build a fleet up to 35% of the level of the British fleet and was allowed to equal Britain's number of submarines.

- This was a successful move by Hitler. It brought Germany closer to Britain and showed that Britain might allow further revisions to the Treaty.
- Britain's unilateral action angered its Stresa Front partners. Thus, the agreement managed to divide future potential allies.

On 7 March 1936, Hitler sent his troops into the demilitarised region of the Rhineland. This was a blatant breach of the Versailles settlement. Hitler was far from certain he would get away with this and his generals had secret orders to retreat if the French moved against them.

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- Britain accepted Hitler's action though it did protest at the manner in which it was done. France's lack of action showed Hitler that the French would not act against him without British support.
- For Hitler the remilitarisation of the Rhineland was a great propaganda triumph and significantly improved Germany's strategic position in the west.

Hitler made other significant foreign policy gains at this time. In 1935, Italy had invaded Abyssinia; preoccupation with Abyssinia had been a factor allowing Hitler to get away with his Rhineland adventure. The League of Nations eventually imposed half-hearted sanctions against Italy.

- The main fallout of the Abyssinia Crisis had been to destroy the Stresa Front; Italy moved into Germany's orbit.
- In late 1936, Italian Foreign Minister Ciano's visit to Germany brought into existence the Rome-Berlin Axis Agreement. In November Germany and Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact which underlined their joint hostility to the Soviet Union.
- In November 1937, Italy joined the Anti-Comintern Pact, forming the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis.

Between 1936 and 1939, Spain suffered a bloody and bitter Civil War. Germany and Italy both intervened on the side of the Nationalist/ Fascist forces of Franco.

- The Germans used the war to try out their new weaponry, seen most clearly in the systematic bombing of the northern Spanish town of Guernica by the German Luftwaffe (air force) in April 1937.
- Italian and German troops fought on the side of Franco who was eventually victorious in early 1939.
- The Spanish Civil War brought Italy and Germany even closer together.

By early 1938, Austrian Nazis had been pressuring for the incorporation of Austria into the German Reich. The events that followed provide a classic example of Hitler taking advantage of a situation that he had neither planned nor anticipated.

- The Austrian Chancellor, Schuschnigg, tried to pre-empt a Nazi takeover by calling a referendum to decide Austria's future. Hitler feared possible defeat in such a referendum.
- By 11 March German pressure on Schuschnigg led to his resignation and the appointment as Austrian Chancellor of the Nazi, Seyss-Inquart. He immediately 'invited' Germany to occupy the country. Within days Hitler had announced the formal union of Germany and Austria (Anschluss).
- Britain took no action beyond a harsh note, while the French government was in such disarray it could do nothing.

Hitler's next area of interest was Czechoslovakia. Along Czechoslovakia's western frontier lay the region of the Sudetenland. The Sudetenland had been given to the new Czech state in 1919 but it contained three million Germans. The local Nazi Party had been agitating for incorporation into the Reich.

- The issue came to a head in September 1938 when Hitler made clear his intention to take the Sudetenland. Czechoslovakia had agreements with France and the Soviet Union, and there was a real possibility that war might break out.
- British Prime Minister Chamberlain desperately hoped to avoid war. He met Hitler at Berchtesgaden, where he had a friendly meeting, and at Bad Godesberg, from which he returned convinced war was inevitable.
- Following Mussolini's intervention, a conference was called in Munich in late September.

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- The conference was attended by Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain and French Prime Minister Daladier.
- Neither the Czechs nor the Soviet Union was invited.
- The Sudetenland was transferred to Germany; Czechoslovakia was informed that if it did not accept the decision, it would have to fight Germany alone.
- When Chamberlain returned to England, he was feted as a peacemaker.
- Chamberlain made much of his 'scrap of paper', a declaration signed personally by he and Hitler in which both leaders stated their desire to never to go war again.

On 15 March 1939, Hitler ripped up the Munich Agreement when he invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia.

- The western half was incorporated into Germany while the eastern section, Slovakia, became a Nazi puppet-state.
- This was the first time Hitler had taken what was clearly non-German territory.
- On 23 March German troops seized the Lithuanian territory of Memel which had been taken from Germany in 1919.
- The British and the French now ended their policy of 'appeasement' which had been pursued in the belief that German demands had been fair and reasonable.

Hitler's next target was clearly Poland. Pressure was placed on Poland throughout 1939 to allow a road to be built across the Polish Corridor to East Prussia and for the previously German port of Danzig to be returned to Germany. Stories appeared in the German press about the mistreatment of Germans in Polish territory.

- In late March, Britain and France gave Poland a guarantee that if it was attacked, they would defend it. In April Britain gave similar guarantees to Greece, Romania and Turkey.
- Hitler viewed the guarantees with contempt. He ordered his generals to draw up plans for an invasion of Poland by 1 September.
- On 22 May 1939, Hitler and Mussolini signed a military alliance which became known as the 'Pact of Steel'.

Hitler was determined to attack Poland. He was not concerned about Britain and France, but what would the Soviet Union do? Britain and France, and the Soviet Union had been involved in negotiations throughout 1939; they got nowhere. Stalin believed that the western powers were not serious about forming an anti-Nazi alliance with the Soviet Union. In classic opportunist style, Hitler offered Stalin an attractive non-aggression pact. Hitler and Stalin distrusted and detested each other. However, opportunism ruled: Hitler wanted a quick war in Poland; Stalin wanted no war at all.

- German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop flew to Moscow and on 23 August, he and Soviet Foreign Minister, Molotov, signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact.
  - Hitler could now invade Poland, certain in the knowledge that he would face no challenge from the Soviet Union.
- The Pact contained a Secret Protocol which would later allow Stalin to move into eastern Poland, and in 1940 to move into the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

On 1 September 1939 Germany invaded Poland. On 3 September Britain, and later France, declared war on Germany.

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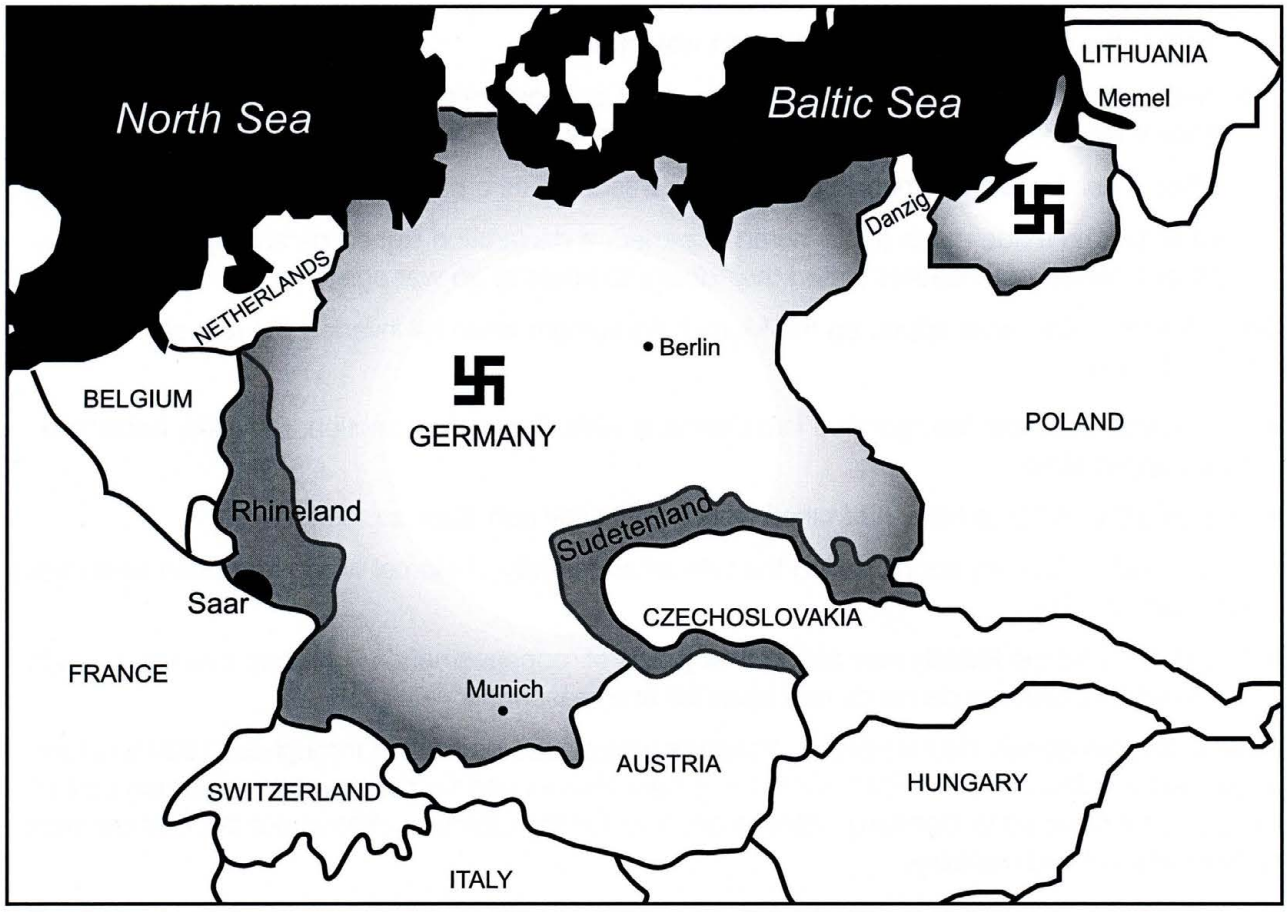
Figure 16.2 German expansion between 1933 and 1939



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What do the historians have to say about 'the nature of Nazi foreign policy'?

1. Ian Kershaw: Hitler 1936-45 – Nemesis

Kershaw shows that by mid-1939 Hitler had utterly convinced himself of his genius. His continual success was evidence of the triumph of his will. Surrounded by adulation and yes-men, it would seem that Hitler had started to believe in the Fuhrer Cult which had been built around him. Any limitations that Hitler might have felt about himself were now gone and this affected his foreign policy ambitions. Hitler felt that he had been denied the war he wanted because of the Munich Conference; he would not be denied his war over Poland.

"...This led him to a calamitous over-estimation of his own abilities, coupled with an extreme-denigration of those – particularly the military – who argued more rationally for greater caution." [1]

2. Alan Bullock: Hitler – A Study in tyranny

Bullock shows how Hitler was willing to make nonsense of his previous foreign policy actions if the situation demanded it and if an opportunity presented itself. Also, Hitler was willing to pay a high price to seize his opportunity, presumably in the belief that any price paid would be taken back at a later stage. Such was the case with allowing Foreign Minister Ribbentrop to obtain a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union in August 1939.

"...Ribbentrop had been prepared to risk straining Germany's relations with the Italians and the Japanese, to make nonsense of the Anti-Comintern Pact...and to grant sweeping concessions to the Russians in Eastern Europe." [2]

3. H Mau / H Krausnick: German History 1933-45

Mau and Krausnick highlight the use Hitler made of local German minorities in areas he intended taking. The Sudeten Germans had their own Nazi Party, led by Konrad Henlein. Buoyed by the ease with which he took Austria, Hitler sought to use the local Germans in the Sudetenland. Henlein was summoned to Berlin for instructions. The Sudetens were instructed to make life difficult for the Czech government, even to the point of causing bloody confrontations.

"...The restraint of the Sudeten Party was dropped...Clearly the object was now to create a situation in Czechoslovakia which would serve as an excuse for German intervention to protect the Sudeten Germans." [3]

1 Kershaw, Ian, *Hitler: 1936-45 Nemesis*, Penguin, London, 2000, p 229
2 Bullock, A, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1952, p 531
3 Mau, H and Krausnick, H, *German History 1933-45*, Oswald Wolff, London, 1959, pp 86, 88

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Exercise 16.1

Match the foreign policy action of Hitler listed in the box below, with the strategy listed. Write the correct answer in the space provided on the right.

Displaying a clear willingness to fight to achieve a foreign policy end	1
Protestations of peaceful intent	2
Signing an agreement with a country Hitler has every intention invading	3
Willingness to retreat if Germany's weak position demanded such a move	4
Pressuring weak governments to agree to Nazi demands	5
Classic act of Hitler's opportunism	6
The ultimate step of war	7
Dividing future potential enemies	8
An example of revisionism	9
Apparent anti-communist intentions	10

German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact	Anschluss with Austria
Behaviour after Dolfuss' assassination	Remilitarisation of the Rhineland
The Sept 1938 Czechoslovak crisis	Anti-Comintern Pact
Invasion of Poland	Hitler's early foreign policy speeches
Anglo-German Naval Agreement	Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact

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Chapter 17:
Impact of ideology on Nazi foreign policy to September 1939

Was Hitler so different?

The impact of Nazi ideology on Germany's foreign policy between 1933 and September 1939 was substantial. However, historians have debated the extent to which Nazi foreign policy was not so new, but rather a continuation of traditional German aims.

- Before 1914, a feature of German foreign policy had been the 'Drang Nach Osten' – the march to the east. Were the ideas behind the Berlin-Baghdad railway and the Pan-German League far removed from Hitler's later ambitions?
- In March 1918, Germany imposed upon the young Bolshevik state the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. This treaty was very harsh on Russia and it took, be it temporarily, similar expanses of land that Hitler would later take, equally temporarily.
- Gustav Stresemann had been keen to reassert German influence in Eastern Europe in the 1920s. His unwillingness to link the 1925 Locarno Agreement to Eastern Europe suggests that he had hoped for frontier revisions there.
- Research by Fritz Fischer in the 1960s which argued the case for German responsibility for the outbreak of WWI due to its aggressive intentions, suggests further similarity in the foreign policy aims of Imperial Germany and Nazi Germany.

Taking a slightly different tack, AJP Taylor caused something of storm in the early 1960s when his book 'The Origins of the Second World War' was published. Taylor took a different line from other historians since 1945. The traditional view had been that Hitler was an evil genius who systematically took Europe to war. Taylor's view was that Hitler in fact was no different than other German leaders. In Taylor's eyes:

- Hitler sought to undo the Treaty of Versailles;
- Hitler sought to restore Germany to its rightful place in Europe;
- Hitler had no long-term plan of foreign expansion but rather was an opportunist ready to seize the opportunity as it arose.

If Taylor is right, then the role of ideology in Nazi foreign policy would seem to be negligible. Alan Bullock presents an alternative line of argument. Indeed, Hitler was an opportunist who acted in response to circumstances, but he was only able to do this because he had his long-term goals clearly in mind. Hitler could allow himself to be inconsistent because he always knew where he was headed in the long-term. If Bullock is right, then the case for the role of ideology is heightened.

Nazi ideology

The argument which will be presented here is that ideology played a major role in Nazi foreign policy. It is 'the intentionalist view, with a bit of Taylor and Bullock thrown in'.[1]

1 The author acknowledges that there is a range of thinking on this issue. There is Taylor's 'Hitler was just another German leader'. Then there is the thinking of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial and Education Centre in Jerusalem' which argues that Hitler's ultimate aim was the elimination of world Jewry, for which the elimination of European Jewry was merely a tactical step.

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The main themes of Nazi ideology are dealt with in some detail in Chapter 6.

The argument against the role of ideology suggests that Mein Kampf cannot be taken seriously, any more than Hitler's other ravings when he was younger.

- The ranting that can be found in Mein Kampf was written in 1924 when Hitler was in prison. In the years immediately after prison, the Nazi Party was in the wilderness.
- When Hitler did gain power, he behaved much as other statesmen, dealing with problems as they arose and taking opportunities if they presented themselves.

However, such a view that totally dismisses the thinking of Mein Kampf fails to recognise the similarity of the ideas in the turgid pages of Hitler's book and what came to happen in the 1930s. Ideology played the key role in Nazi foreign policy both in setting the long-term goals and suggesting the short-term strategies. As stated in Chapter 16, the twin long-term aims of Nazi foreign policy were the achievement of lebensraum in the east and settlement of the Jewish problem. Whether or not this meant the holocaust was inevitable does not detract from the fact that expansion and race were at the root of Nazi foreign policy.

- Hitler always accepted the Social Darwinist view that nations prosper at the expense of others: "Right abides in strength alone".
  - Life is a struggle and if Germany ever felt a need to take from another nation, it was justified in so behaving.
  - 'Strength is always mistress over weakness'.
  - Germany should not be limited by an appeal to scruples. The 'sole earthly criterion of whether an enterprise is right or wrong is its success".
- On the very first page of Mein Kampf, Hitler states that 'Kindred blood should belong to a common empire'. Here is his aim of drawing together all German speaking people into a GrossDeutschland.
- He recognised that the implacable enemy to German ambitions was France which would have to be dealt with. However, he made it clear that war with France was not an end in itself but merely a means to an end: a free hand in Eastern Europe.
  - This free hand would eventually see a German Empire in the east comprising 250 million people.
  - Hitler predicted Germany's frontiers would run from the Atlantic to the Black Sea.
- Hitler's belief in Aryan superiority as the highest human type yet evolved was clear.
  - The earliest civilisations had prospered both as a result of the taming of animals by man, and the employment of inferior races as slaves.
  - This of course was to be the fate of Slavs in a future German empire.

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What do the historians have to say about 'Impact of ideology on Nazi foreign policy to September 1939'?

1. Winston Churchill: The Gathering Storm

Writing after the war, Winston Churchill was clear on the importance of Mein Kampf in understanding Hitler's foreign policy. He argued that if there was ever a book that needed to have been read, Mein Kampf was that book. Hitler had made clear his intentions from creating a National Socialist state to world conquest.

"...All was there – the programme for German resurrection...the rightful position of German at the summit of the world. Here was the new Koran of faith and war: turgid, verbose, shapeless, but pregnant with its message." [1]

2. PMH Bell: The Origins of the Second World War in Europe

Bell points out that western statesmen believed that there had to be a distinction between ideology and practical politics. They dealt with Hitler as a realist. The mistake they made was that he was more; opportunist he might be, but for him ideology provided direction whereas his peers sought only to turn the next corner.

Bell argues that to deny the role of ideology in Nazi foreign policy is to suggest that Hitler was motivated by purely materialist interests or by impersonal forces. However, to argue this is to reduce Hitler to a mere puppet. Bell says these explanations raise difficulties as they leave:

"...unexplained the large and important areas of consistency between Hitler's writings, talk and actions, and in particular those areas where ideology carried the day against the obvious appeal of opportunism and material interest." [2]

3. Richard Evans: The Third Reich in Power

Evans suggests that the desire for lebensraum had less to do with ideology and more to do with economic necessity. He refers to a speech given to army, SA, and SS leaders in February 1934 in which Hitler argued that living space for Germany's surplus population would be needed because the economic recovery would have run out of steam by 1942. Hitler had spoken to military leaders in a similar vein in February 1933 arguing:

"...it was pointless trying to boost exports; the only way to a long-term, secure recovery of the German economy was through the conquest of 'living-space' in the East, and preparations for this now had to take priority over everything else." [3]

1 Churchill, WS, *The Gathering Storm*, Cassell, London, 1948, p 50
2 Bell, PMH, *The Origins of the Second World War*, Pearson, London, 1997, p 84
3 Evans, R, *The Third Reich in Power*, Penguin, London, 2005, p 346

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Notes

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ESSAYS 4
Nazi foreign policy

The purpose of this section is to provide some ideas for the type of questions which could be asked on the second section of the syllabus: Nazi foreign policy. These outlines are not presented as the 'be all and end all' responses to these questions. To provide a sense of reality to this section, what follows is a 'first draft response' to each question, ie what were the first ideas that came into the author's head as he thought about each question?

Essay No 1:

"Assess the importance of ideology in Nazi foreign policy between 1933 and September 1939."

This question is asking the student to make a judgment about the role of ideology in Nazi foreign policy. Superficially, this appears to be a straightforward question. However, it is a question that contains dangers.

1. Above all, students need to avoid the temptation to provide a straight narrative of Nazi foreign policy from Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933 to the invasion of Poland in September 1939. A 'good story' such as this will earn a mark of no more than 15/25.

2. Equally dangerous is the risk of providing a detailed explanation of the 'ins and outs' of Nazi ideology and not relating this to what actually happened.

3. Students need to establish a line of argument. There are several which might be considered for this question:

   a. Ideology was clearly the essence of Nazi foreign policy. Hitler had been guided by his ideological convictions long before he gained power. Once in power, he was in a position to implement his ideology which he endeavoured to do at every opportunity.

   b. Alternatively, students might argue that ideology had little to do with the exercise of Nazi foreign policy. Hitler was an opportunist who reacted to circumstances. This is evident in the apparent lack of consistency in his foreign policy to September 1939.

   c. Hitler's foreign policy was guided by internal considerations. The need for constant affirmation from his people, an understanding of the propaganda value of foreign policy success and concerns over a failing economy were what determined the course of foreign policy to September 1939.

   d. Hitler was a typical German leader. He was guided by what appeared to be in the German national interest. In this sense, he followed the same sort of policies that other leaders of the pre-Nazi era had followed.

   e. Hitler's long-term goals were clearly ideological. He was driven by a desire for lebensraum, a belief in the importance of race and a Social Darwinist belief in international relations. However, his short-term foreign policy behaviour revealed Hitler to be an opportunist willing to accept ideological heresy and inconsistency in pursuit of his long-term goals.

For the purpose of this section, the following answer will pursue the line of argument suggested in 'e'.

Hitler never deviated from his long-term ideological goals. He accepted Social Darwinist behaviour both in domestic and foreign politics and firmly believed that nations succeeded only at the expense of others. He sought Lebensraum in the east for the German people and saw race as a

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key determinant of Germany's future success or failure. However, in pursuit of these long-term goals, Hitler was very much the opportunist, reacting to circumstance and willing to consider any foreign policy action if it would eventually assist in the achievement of his long-term aims.

Introduce Hitler's ideological aims as presented in Mein Kampf, his propaganda and his speeches.

- Explain the nature of Social Darwinism and how Hitler perceived the conduct of foreign affairs.
- Explain the importance of lebensraum, how it related to his future vision of Germany, the attractions of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.
- Relate this to the issue of race: the need for a future 250 millions Aryans to have living space and to be served by racial inferiors.
- The Jew presented a threat to racial purity and Aryan supremacy and would have to be dealt with.

Explain that Hitler saw short-term aims as the 'means' to achieve his 'ends':

- Explain the nature of revisionism and what it involved.
- Explain Hitler's desire to achieve a GrossDeutschland.
- Consider Hitler's belief that a reckoning with France was inevitable but that he hoped to avoid conflict with Britain.

Move on to the narrative of Nazi foreign policy and place it in the context of his ideology. Do this by showing that Hitler was willing to use a wide variety of methods in foreign policy, and that he was, in pursuit of short-term goals, very much an opportunist:

- Protestations of a desire for peace and a lack of territorial ambitions to allay concern about his future conduct.
- A willingness to do deals with any nation even if he had no intention of honouring these arrangements in the long-term, eg the 1934 German-Poland Non-Aggression Pact.
- Show his opportunism and his willingness to react to the situation: retreat from Austria in 1934, grabbing the opportunity in Austria in 1938, taking the risk in the Rhineland during the Abyssinian Crisis, forcing the issue over the Sudetenland in September 1938, forcing the pace in 1939.
- Explain the Nazi-Soviet Pact in terms of ideological inconsistency and sheer opportunism.

You might allude to what happened after September 1939 to strengthen the idea of Hitler's long-term ideological intent:

- Operation Barborossa and the invasion of the Soviet Union;
- the events of the Holocaust.

Be sure to include some historiographical evidence in this essay. You might consider:

- the views of intentionalist historians who argue the ideological line;
- the views of structuralist historians who maintain the later radicalism of Nazi policies came out of the nature of the regime;
- the AJP Taylor line that Hitler was just another German leader who acted in an opportunist manner
- the Bullock line which ties together the intentionalist and opportunist arguments;
- the Richard Evans argument about the importance of domestic economic factors driving foreign policy.

Nazi foreign policy was clearly ideological in nature. Though Hitler was a supreme opportunist who was willing to entertain inconsistency, and who was willing to use any means to achieve his short-term aims, he never lost sight of his long-term goals.

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Timeline

1918	- September: Ludendorff gives up power
	- November: Mutiny in Kiel/ Soldiers' and Workers' Council Appear/ Kaiser abdicates/ Germany declared a republic
	- Germany signs the armistice on 11 November
1919	- Army and Freikorps defeat the attempted Spartacist Revolution Weimar Constitution introduced 28 June: Germany signs the Treaty of Versailles
1920	- Kapp Putsch
1922	- Assassination of Rathenau Germany announces it cannot pay a reparations instalment
1923	- The French invade the Ruhr Hyper-inflation August: Stresemann becomes Chancellor November: Hitler's Beer Hall Putsch
1924	- Hitler sentenced to five years in prison The Dawes Plan
1925	- The Locarno Agreement Hindenburg becomes President Hitler released from prison
1926	- Germany joins the League of Nations Beginning of the Agricultural Depression
1928	- Publication of "All Quiet on the Western Front" Nazi Party gains 12 seat in the election
1929	- October: death of Stresemann October: Wall St Crash
1930	- Unemployment tops three million Muller resigns/ Bruning appointed Chancellor Nazi Party gains 107 seats in the election
1931	- Collapse of the Danat Bank
1932	- Hindenburg reelected President, defeating Hitler in the election May: Bruning loses the chancellorship. Von Papen takes over July: Nazis gain 230 seats and 37% of the vote in elections November: Nazi support drops to 196 seats and 33% in elections December: Von Papen loses the chancellorship. General von Schleicher takes over
1933	- January: Following a back-room deal, Hitler is appointed Chancellor February: Reichstag Fire March: Enabling Act May: Banning of the Trade Unions July: the Nazi Party becomes the only legal party July: Concordat signed with the Vatican October: Germany leaves the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference
1934	- January: German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact signed April: boycott of Jewish businesses 30 June: Operation Hummingbird July: failed Nazi coup in Austria August: death of Hindenburg. Hitler combines the offices of Chancellor and President
1935	- January: The Saar region votes to rejoin Germany March: Reintroduction of conscription announced June: Anglo-German Naval Agreement September: The Nuremberg Laws announced

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1936	- March: The Remilitarisation of the Rhineland The Berlin Olympic Games November: Germany and Japan sign the Anti-Comintern Pact
1936-39	- German forces actively involved in the Spanish Civil War on the side of Franco
1937	- November: Italy joins the Anti-Comintern Pact
1938	- March: Anschluss achieved as German troops invade Austria September: Czechoslovakia forced to surrender the Sudetenland to Germany at the Munich Conference November: Kristalnacht
1939	- January: Hitler's Reichstag speech warning Jews of the consequences of a European war March: Germany invades the rest of Czechoslovakia and later retakes Memel May: Germany and Italy sign The Pact of Steel August: Nazi-Soviet Pact 1 September: Germany invades Poland 3 September: Britain and France declare war on Germany.

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Glossary

anti-Semitism	irrational and often violent hatred of Jews and things Jewish
Article 48	Presidential emergency powers
Axis agreement	Grouping of Germany and Italy (and later Japan)
BDM	League of German Maidens
Bolsheviks	Russian communists who gained power, November 1918
Concordat	deal between the Nazis and Catholic Church
Dachau	concentration camp
Dawes Plan	1924 plan to reorganise reparation payments
deficit-financing	government expenditure exceeding taxation
deflation	increasing taxation, lowering government expenditure
demilitarisation	removal of military presence in an area
dolchstosslegender	stab in the back legend
Ebert-Groener Pact	army-SPD agreement to prevent left-wing revolution, November 1918
euthanasia	policy of killing handicapped and mentally ill people
Evangelical Reich Church	Nazi organised church
Freikorps	right wing para-military groups
Fuhrer Myth	Goebbels idealised propaganda vision of Hitler
Gestapo	secret state police
Gleischaltung	Nazi coordination process 1933-34
GrossDeutschland	German state comprising all German speaking people
Hitler Jugend	Hitler Youth
holocaust	systematic extermination of Jews in WWII
hyper-inflation	level of inflation causing money to lose all value
intentionalists	historians who see Nazi actions as the result of deliberate intention
Junker	Prussian landowner
Kampfund	Bavarian right wing grouping
Kapp Putsch	attempted right wing coup, 1920
Kinder, Kirche, Kuche	children, church, kitchen
KPD	German Communist Party
Kristallnacht	Crystal Night, Night of Broken Glass
lebensborn	home for unmarried women to conceive with racially pure SS men
lebensraum	living space
Locarno Pact	1925 agreement guaranteeing West European borders
nationalisation	state takeover of economic assets
Night of the Long Knives	30 June 1934 action against the SA
November Criminals	term describing those blamed for German defeat in 1918
Oranienburg	concentration camp
passive resistance	policy of non-violent, non-cooperation with the French, 1923
polarisation	process of growing support for extremist political parties
propaganda	information aimed at developing acceptance of a point of view
Proportional Representation	voting system giving all parties representation based on their share of the vote
putsch	attempted forceful seizure of power
Red Front Fighters	KPD para-military group
Reichsbanner	SPD para-military group
Reichstag	the German parliament

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Reichswehr	German army in Weimar period
rentenmark	German currency after 1923 inflation
reparations	compensation paid by Germany to the allies
revisionism	policy seeking to change the Treaty of Versailles
SD	intelligence branch of the SS
Spartacists	extreme left-wing group, later KPD
SPD	Social Democrat Party
SS	elite section of the Nazi movement
Stalhelm	right-wing para-military group
Stresa Front	Anti-German grouping of Britain, France and Italy
structuralists	historians who see Nazi actions as the result of the regime's structure
Sturmabteilung	Nazi para-military organisation
Sudetenland	German speaking part of western Czechoslovakia
totalitarianism	system of government in which the state controls all aspects of life
volksgemeinschaft	Nazi idea of a classless People's Community
war guilt	Clause 231 of Treaty of Versailles
Weltanschauung	Hitler's world view
Young Plan	1929 plan to reorganise reparation payments

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Dramatis Personae

Bismarck	German Chancellor (1862) 1871-1890
Blomberg, General	Defence Minister in Hitler's first cabinet
Braun, Eva	Hitler's mistress
Bruning	German Chancellor, March 1930-May 1932
Chamberlain	British Prime Minister, 1937-40
Ciano	Italian Foreign Minister
Clemenceau	French Premier, 1919
Cuno	German Chancellor, 1923
Daladier	French Prime Minister, 1938-40
Dolfuss	Austrian Chancellor, 1934
Duesterberg	Head of the Stalhelm
Ebert	First President of Weimar Republic
Frick, Wilhelm	Interior Minister in Hitler's first cabinet
Goebbels	Minister of Enlightenment and Propaganda
Goering, Hermann	leading Nazi, later head of Luftwaffe
Groener	Army commander after Ludendorff
Heydrich, Reinhard	Head of SD, Himmler's Deputy
Himmler, Heinrich	Head of the SS
Hindenburg, Oskar	son of and advisor to President Hindenburg
Hindenburg, Paul von	German army commander, World War I, President 1925-34
Hitler	Fuhrer of Nazi Party
Hugenberg, Alfred	DNVP leader, media magnate
Keynes	British economist, critical of reparations
Lloyd George	British Prime Minister, 1916-22
Ludendorff	German commander in WWI, later supporter of Hitler
Macdonald, Ramsey	British Prime Minister, 1929-35
Meissner	advisor to President Hindenburg
Molotov	Soviet Foreign Minister, 1939
Muller	German Chancellor, May 1928-March 1930
Mussolini	Italian Dictator
Noske,	Weimar Defence Minister, 1920
Otto Gessler	Defence Minister, 1920-28
Poincare	French Premier, 1923
Rathenau	German Foreign minister, murdered 1922
Ribbentrop	German Foreign Minister, 1939
Riefenstahl, Leni	Film director of the Nazi period
Rohm, Ernst	Head of the SA
Rudolf Hess	Deputy Fuhrer
Scheidemann	SPD Chancellor 1919
Schlageter	German civilian, executed by French, 1923
Schuschnigg	Austrian Chancellor, 1938
Seyss-Inquart	(Nazi) Austrian Chancellor, March 1938
Stalin	Dictator of Soviet Russia
Strasser, Gregor	leading Nazi on left of the party
Stresemann	German Chancellor, 1923, Foreign Minister 1923-29
Thalmann	Head of KPD
Triumph of the Will	Nazi propaganda film
von Papen	German Chancellor, May-December 1932
von Schirach	Head of Hitler Youth Movement
von Schleicher	German Chancellor, December 1932-January 1933
von Schroder	banker, Nazi supporter
von Seekt	Army commander after Groener
Wilson	US President, 1919

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Notes

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Answers to Revision Exercises

Ex 1.1

1st: Outbreak of World War I; 2nd: Ludendorff surrenders power; 3rd: Prince Max becomes Chancellor; 4th: Kaiser abdicates; 5th: Sheidemann declares a republic; 6th: Ebert-Groener Pact; 7th: Spartacists attempt revolution; 8th: Freikorps attack Spartacists

Ex 1.2

1 – Kaiser Wilhelm II; 2 – Ludendorff; 3 – Ebert; 4 – Groener; 5 – Rosa Luxemburg; 6 – Spartacists; 7 – Social Democratic Party; 8 – Freikorps

Ex 1.3

1 – avoid revolution/ shift blame for defeat to politicians; 2 – Ebert-Groener Pact; 3 – stab in the back legend; 4 – a full blown socio-economic revolution; 5 – destroyed the Spartacists, prevented further revolution; 6 – they were murdered; 7 – conservative elites; 8 – remained divided; 9 – suicide clause; 10 – made coalition governments inevitable

Ex 2.1

Paris - Versailles - 28 June, 1919 - invasion - political - economic - military - air force - submarines - tanks - 100 000 - France - Poland - empire - reparations - 231 - starting

Ex 2.2

From the beginning the Republic had to live with the burden of the Treaty of Versailles. It proved to be a major propaganda asset for the nationalist right. Within nine months of Versailles, the Republic faced a major threat in the form of the Kapp Putsch. The army refused to defend its government when called upon. By the end of 1922, politics had polarised, violence dominated political life and the army was becoming a 'state within a state'

Ex 2.3

1 – false; 2 – true; 3 – false; 4 – true; 5 – false; 6 – true; 7 – false; 8 – false; 9 – false; 10 – true

Ex 3.1

Extreme left	Moderate left	Left/ right of centre	Nationalist right	Extreme right
KPD Spartacists	SPD Ebert	Stresemann DVP DDP Centre Party	Hindenburg Ludendorff BVP DNVP Conservative elites The army	Nazi Party

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Ex 3.2

1 – up to 50% of people supporting democracy is promising/ but always more than half the population voted for non-democratic parties; 2 – much less than the early 1920s but the growth of para-military groups did not augur well; 3 – Germany's most honoured man represents the republic but everyone knows he hates democracy; 4 – it implied acceptance of the Versailles Treaty; 5 – it let the democracy function but was operating independent of government control; 6 – end of passive resistance and acceptance of US economic advice and assistance; 7 – its almost total reliance on foreign investment money; 8 – high structural unemployment, agricultural depression from 1926; 9 – Germany had a heavy reliance on trade which protectionism harmed; 10 – the bases of its prosperity were not deeply rooted

Ex 3.3

24 – 29 – prosperity – stability – centre – League of Nations – issues – rights – insurance – conditions – superficial – US – doubtful – non democratic – resented – hated – forgive

Ex 4.1

Lowering taxation and increasing government expenditure/ Increasing taxation and cutting government expenditure/ One of the Germany's leading banks/ Policy of increasing tariffs to protect one's own industries/ Policy aimed at slowing an economy and attracting foreign capital/ Buying and selling shares on the stock market to make a profit/ Position of workers managing only a few days work a fortnight.

Ex 4.2

I am absolutely devastated. I fought in the war and believed that my nation was on the verge of victory only to discover that we had been stabbed in the back by the democratic politicians, socialists and Jews. And then to suffer the humiliation of the hated Treaty of Versailles – we must never rest until Versailles is overturned. Because of the Republic, I saw my country humiliated again in 1923 when the French occupied the fatherland. Thanks to the Republic, my family lost their savings and I had to take on manual work for a while. And now once again our nation is plunged into despair. Who will restore our national pride and give us hope for the future?

Ex 5.1

1st: Muller becomes Chancellor/ 2nd: Death of Stresemann/ 3rd: Wall St Crash/ 4th: Grand coalition faces crisis/ 5th: Resignation of Muller/ 6th:Appointment of Bruning/ 7th: Sept 1930: Nazis gain 107 seats/ 8th: Hindenburg wins second term/ 9th: Resignation of Bruning/ 10th: Appointment of von Papen

Ex 5.2

1 – false; 2 – true; 3 – true; 4 – false; 5 – false; 6 – true; 7 – true; 8 – true; 9 – false; 10 – true

Ex 6.1

1 - place of Hitler's imprisonment in 1924; 2 - leading Nazi on racial matters; 3 - loose grouping of right wing Bavarian political groups; 4 - Right-wing anti-Bruning government coalition; 5 - Hitler's autobiography and statement of political ideas; 6 - leading right wing media figure opposed to the

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young Plan; 7 - failed Nazi attempt to seize power in November 1923; 8 - left-leaning northern Nazi leader; 9 - Nazi para-military group; 10 - former Strasser loyalist who joined Hitler.

Ex 7.1

Von Schleicher/ Hindenburg/ von Papen/ Hitler/ reluctant/ Oskar Hindenburg/ Otto Meissner/ von Schroder/ chancellor/ vice-chancellor/ Frick/ Goering/ 30 January 1933

Ex 8.1

1 – Hitler could play up the communist threat + allowed him to suspend constitutional freedoms; 2 – allowed Nazis to link themselves to Germany's past + gave impression of Hindenburg's support for them; 3 – it gave Hitler supreme power for four years; 4 – coordination, bringing all organisations under Nazi control; 5 – they are banned, workers forced into the Nazi German Labour Front; 6 – they either dissolved themselves or were banned; 7 – to prevent independent thought; 8 – concentration camps, the Gestapo; 9 – they were made powerless, the Reichsrat was ended; 10 – technically yes because laws were passed but Nazi actions were against the spirit of legal process.

Ex 8.2

In early 1934 Hitler faced a real threat from Rohm and the SA. This threat existed because Rohm sought a second revolution and wanted to absorb the regular army into the SA. Hindenburg and the army were outraged at such a suggestion and demanded that Hitler deal with Rohm. Hitler's position was in danger and so he decided to sacrifice Rohm and his long-time SA colleagues. Using SS and army units, Hitler moved against the SA on 30 June 1934. Hitler's position was now unassailable.

Ex 9.1

Bullock/ nothings happens without Hitler/ all successes and failures at his door/ call the regime Hitlerism rather than Nazism
Karl Bracher/ Nazism was chaotic/ this was Hitler's aim/ secured his power, image
Martin Broszat/ Nazism was chaotic/ due to Hitler's weakness/ explains the radicalisation of the regime
Ian Kershaw/ regime chaotic/ Hitler's lack of leadership means subordinates have to show their policies in line with Hitler's thinking/ Hitler's aloofness strengthens the regime

Ex 10.1

1 – false; 2 – false; 3 – true; 4 – false; 5 – true; 6 – false; 7 – true; 8 – true; 9 – true; 10 – false

Ex 10.2

1 – total; 2 – non; 3 – total; 4 – total; 5 – non; 6 – non; 7 – total; 8 – non; 9 – total; 10 – non

Ex 11.1

Goebbels, simple, emotions, intellectual, scapegoats, stereotypes, fatherland, lying, repetition, rally, rational, mass suggestion

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Ex 11.2

The Fuhrer is truly a great man. He is a genius. Thanks to him the depression has come to an end in Germany and I no longer have to fear the scourge of unemployment. After those terrible Weimar Republic years of humiliation and ridicule, he has restored the dignity of the fatherland. I am once again proud to call myself a German and know that my son can look towards the future with hope. I believe the Fuhrer shares the same values as the rest of us. I admire the way in which he has sacrificed himself for the good of Germany.

Ex 12.1

1 – fewer agents and less efficient than popularly thought; 2 – people believed they were constantly being watched and would be caught out; 3 – no, they wanted the people to know the price of opposition; 4 – at first political opponents, then socially unacceptable types; 5 – they played a major role; 6 – mostly career policemen; 7 – very widespread, down to the block warden system; 8 – in charge of Prussian Interior Ministry, and the Gestapo until Himmler took over; 9 – its elite nature; 10 – in charge of the SD and its informer network

Ex 13.1

1 – true; 2 – true; 3 – false; 4 – true; 5 – false; 6 – false; 7 – true; 8 – true; 9 – false; 10 – true

Ex 14.1

1 – secure the regime/ achieve racial purity/ ensure future soldiers and mothers; 2 – fitness, health, teamwork, obedience; 3 – fitness, health, future as a mother; 4 – critical thought; 5 – partially, there was disillusionment and opposition to the regimentation; 6 – separate to men, inferior; 7 – to produce children, look after the home; 8 – Kinder, Kirche and Kuche (children, church and kitchen); 9 – couples given 1000 mark loan/ reduced by 250 marks for each child born; 10 – opposed to it, restricted female working opportunities; 11 – Nazi-Vatican agreement/ church left alone if it ignored politics; 12 – Evangelical Reich Church; 13 – Nordic stock/ a man fighting against Jewish influence; 14 – limited to a few brave individuals; 15 – to get rid of Christianity

Ex 15.1

euthanasia; Kristallnacht; Aryanisation; anti-Semitism; mischlinge; national boycott; Blood Protection Act; untermenschen

Ex 15.2

1st – Writing of Mein Kampf; 2nd – National boycott of Jewish businesses; 3rd – Law for the Restoration of the Civil Service; 4th – The Nuremberg Laws; 5th – Ernst vom Rath is shot in Paris; 6th – Kristallnacht; 7th – Hitler's pre-war warning to the Jews; 8th – Creation of the Mischlinge category

Ex 16.1

1 – The Sept 1938 Czechoslovak crisis; 2 – Hitler's early foreign policy speeches; 3 – German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact; 4 – Behaviour after Dolfuss' assassination; 5 – Anschluss with Austria; 6 – Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact; 7 – Invasion of Poland; 8 – Anglo-German Naval Agreement; 9 – Remilitarisation of the Rhineland; 10 – Anti-Comintern Pact

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