

# Germany

## German Political System before WW1

- Germany was a great power
- Power and authority lay with the Kaiser, his ministers and the army
- The Reichstag (German parliament) was largely ignored

## Impact of WW1 on Germany

- By 1918, Germany was facing defeat
- In 1918, 300,000 Germans died from malnutrition
  - British Royal Navy blockaded supplies
- German economy was in ruins
- The Kaiser and army commanders began to involve members of the Reichstag in decision-making
  - They were attempting to shift blame
- Waves of untrust followed Germany's defeat in November 1918
  - This ultimately led to the Kaiser abdicating on 9 November 1918

# What is the Weimar Republic?

- The new government that ruled Germany after its emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm II,
- It was declared in the town of Weimar in February 1919, hence its name
- It had a:
  - President that led the country
  - Parliament that made the laws.

## Weimar Constitution

- The new Weimar Republic needed a new constitution (i.e. the highest law of the land) and it was approved by a majority of the Reichstag (the German parliament) in July 1919
- It introduced significant changes:
  - All Germans over the age of 20 could vote, including for the first time, women
  - Party representation would be determined by proportional representation
  - Article 48
- The political structure of the Weimar Government

## Proportional Representation

Thanks to the Weimar Constitution, the Weimar Republic operated under a system known as proportional representation where people voted for a party rather than specific candidates and parties gained seats based on the number of votes won.

The Weimar Constitution required that all laws be approved by the Reichstag

### **Why was this the biggest weaknesses of the Weimar Republic?**

Proportional representation made it hard for any political party to get a majority during elections. Hence coalition governments were formed.

- **For example**, Friedrich' Ebert's Social Democratic Party won the most votes and gained the most seats in the Reichstag following the January 1919 elections and he became President. However, he did not have enough seats to form a government on his own and had to form a coalition with the Catholic Centre Party and the German Democratic Party

As laws needed to be approved by the Reichstag as well, governments had to balance the interests of the various parties that made up its coalitions or risk the collapse of their governments. This made the passing of laws challenging and governments weak and often short-lived.

## **Article 48**

Allowed the country to be directly ruled by the President without needing to consult the Reichstag during times of crisis.

### **Why was this the biggest weaknesses of the Weimar Republic?**

In the hands of a President dedicated to the preservation of democracy, Article 48 could be viewed as a powerful tool in protecting democracy. However, under a president with a different view towards democracy, it could be misused and exploited to bring it down instead, as was the case in the 1930s.

🔗📖 As the Weimar Constitution had weaknesses such as proportional

representation and Article 48 that undermined the ability of the Weimar Republic's governments to operate well and how ultimately Article 48 played a key role in the Republic's collapse, it is the biggest weakness of the Weimar collapse

## Unpopularity of the Republic due to the Treaty of Versailles

Majority of Germans believed the Germany army ended WW1 undefeated.

- They were not told if the war continued that Germany would be invaded.

They thus expected a negotiated treaty where they were treated as equals/fairly

- They thus saw the Treaty of Versailles as a diktat
- Ebert (the German Chancellor at that time) was reluctant to sign the treaty but had no choice but to do so.

In the minds of many Germans

- Ebert and the other politicians were to blame for the Treaty
  - They were branded the "November Criminals"
- Believed in the *Dolchstoss*/"stabbed in the back" theory and also blamed socialist and liberal politicians for the Treaty.

### **Why was this the biggest weaknesses of the Weimar Republic**

It meant that whatever government that came to power in the Weimar Republic would struggle to gain support from the German people.

# Threat to the Republic from the Left-Wing

## The Spartacist Uprising, 1919

One such group were the Spartacists: communists with similar beliefs as the Russian bolsheviks.

- They wanted Germany to be ruled by Soviets where the state owned all industries

Early in 1919, the Spartacists staged a revolt

- They were joined by rebel soldiers and sailors
- They set up soviets in many towns
- They were opposed by other groups of Germans like the Freikorps (an anti-communist band of WW1 veterans)
- Ebert used the army and the Freikorps to put down the rebellion

Ebert again used the army and the Freikorps to crush other communist uprisings in 1919 and 1920.

### **Weakness**

- The need for the Weimar Republic to use the Freikorps to put down the communist rebellions was a sign of its inability to maintain control of the country on its own
- This weakness emboldened and encouraged other groups to challenge its power.

# Threat to the Republic from the

# Right Wing (e.g. the Kapp Putsch, 1920)

The German right-wing during the Weimar Republic consisted of people from all classes of society such as:

- Poor workers and farmers
- Wealthy aristocrats
- Former soldiers (including the Freikorps)

## **March 1920, Kapp Putsch**

- Wolfgang Kapp led 5,000 Freikorps into Berlin
- He planned to overthrow the Weimar Republic and install a more authoritarian system
- The German army refused to act
- Germany's trade unions declared a general strike and civil servants refused to cooperate with Kapp
  - This forced Kapp to give up
  - Kapp was hunted down after he fled the country but died while awaiting trial
  - Besides Kapp, no other rebels were punished.

## **Weaknesses**

- The need for the Weimar Republic to rely on the trade unions to stop the Kapp Putsch was a sign of its inability to maintain control of the country on its own. This weakness emboldened and encouraged other groups to challenge its power.
- Right-wing largely escaped punishment and thus continued their political violence.

# Occupation of the Ruhr and Hyperinflation

## The Occupation of the Ruhr

- In January 1923, Germany failed to make one of its reparation payments
- In response, France and Belgium occupied the Ruhr (Germany's most important and valuable industrial region) and forcibly took what was owed to them in the form of raw materials and goods
- The German government continued to print banknotes, causing them to become worthless as hyperinflation set in
- Prices of daily needs rose rapidly
  - E.g. The price of a loaf of bread in 1923 could have bought a house in 1921
- Personal savings were wiped out
- Unemployment was widespread

## Hyperinflation

- It affected the middle-class most harshly
- Gave the Weimar Republic's opponents another problem to blame on it
  - Many tied it to the Treaty of Versailles
    - Enhanced resentment towards "November Criminals"

## Resolution

- Gustav Stresemann (new Chancellor) negotiated the reorganisation of reparations (Dawes Plan, 1924 and Young Plan, 1929)
- In November 1925, he replaced the German mark with the Rentenmark
- These measures reduced German debt and ended hyperinflation

## Why was this the biggest weakness of the Weimar Republic

- It undermined support for the Weimar Republic among the German middle-class
- The hardships it brought about made the Germans lose confidence in the Weimar Republic's ability to cope with future economic crises

# Appeal of Hitler and the Nazi Party

## Background

Whilst the Weimar Republic was struggling to run Germany, a right-wing movement was slowly building in Bavaria (in South Germany)

One of the key groups was the **German Workers' Party** (*Deutsche Arbeiterpartei/DAP*) founded by Anton Drexler in January 1919.

Adolf Hitler (then an army intelligence officer aka a spy) was sent to



investigate the DAP.

- He found he agreed with their ideas
- In September 1919, he joined the DAP

Hitler was an excellent speaker and began to build a personal following.

- He argued that the party needed more nationalist policies to get more support

In February 1920, the DAP was renamed into the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazis)

At the same time, they set out the Nazis' main beliefs in the 25-point programme.

Nazi's main beliefs in the 25-point programme:

- Abolition of the Treaty of Versailles
- Anschluss (union) between Germany and Austria
- Only "true" Germans to be allowed to live in Germany.
  - Jews in particular to be excluded
- Generous provision for old-age pensioners
- Nationalisation of large industries and businesses
- Creation of a strong central government

## Hitler becomes Leader of the Nazi Party

In July 1921, Hitler overthrew Drexler and becomes leader of the Nazi party

- Appointed allies to key roles

- E.g. Hermann Goering was put in charge of the Stormtroopers (Sturmabteilung/SA/Brownshirts)

### **Who were the Brownshirts?**

- Ex-soldiers who were members of the Nazi party
- Started as an informal group that provided security at Nazi events
- Hitler transformed them into a private army with uniforms and a command structure
- Hitler used them against rivals both within and outside the party.

By November 1923, there were around 50,000 members of the Nazi Party.

- Many of these were from the thousands of Germans who turned up to hear Hitler speak at Nazi meetings
  - Many were impressed by Hitler and the energy and commitment of the Nazis

On November 1923, Hitler launched the Munich Putsch

- Why?
  - By then the Weimar Republic had experienced years of problems
  - Hitler was popular and well known in Munich
  - He had support of important figures e.g. Erich Ludendorff
- What happened?
  - Hitler and his followers marched on the city of Munich
  - He expected the local government, police and troops to support him
  - They were instead met by armed police and a battle broke out
  - 16 Nazis and 4 policemen were killed
- Aftermath
  - Nazi Party was banned
  - Key Nazi leaders escaped harsh punishment

- Ludendorff faced no punishment
  - Was elected to the Reichstag in 1924
- Hitler escaped but was arrested 2 days later
  - Was allowed by the judge and used his trial to make long speeches criticising the Weimar Republic and setting out his ideas
  - The trial was covered extensively and Hitler became a national celebrity
  - Eventually sentenced to 5 years in Landsberg Prison
    - He only served 9 months
    - Conditions for him in the prison were very comfortable
      - He had visitors and access to books
      - He spent the time writing *Mein Kampf*
  - Powerful groups (e.g. judges) held similar views/were influenced by the Nazis
  - After the Munich Putsch, Hitler concluded that the Nazis could not seize power by force
    - They had to work within the democratic system
  - As soon as he was released from prison, Hitler rebuilt the Nazi Party towards the above goal
    - He did so based on the ideas he outlined in *Mein Kampf*
- Key ideas in Mein Kampf
  - Total loyalty to the leader (Fuehrer aka Hitler)
  - Loyalty to Germany, racial purity, equality and state control
  - Aryans (Blond, blue-eyed, tall and of Nordic origin and descent) were the master race
    - All other races, especially the Jews, were inferior
  - War and struggle were essential to the development of a healthy Aryan race

- Germany needed Lebensraum (living space)
  - It would mainly achieved through expansion into Russia and Poland

## Winning Support for the Nazi Party

Hitler was charming and persuasive

- He was a powerful and confident speaker
- He was good at gauging the mood of the audience and appearing to them as sincere
- He focused his speeches on addressing his audience's concerns

He was able to win over many important business owners and industrialists

- Many of them agreed with his anti-communist and anti-trade union views
- They contributed to Nazi Party finances

Hitler created a network of local Nazi Parties

The Nazis targeted propaganda and recruitment efforts at rural communities

- Praised them as “true” Aryan Germans
- Attacked the Weimar Republic for not looking after their interests

These efforts yielded results

- Reichstag elections in May 1924: Nazis won 32 seats
- By 1929, the Nazi Party had 100,000 members

# Nazi Party's Hurdles

- Nazis were less successful in winning support in the towns
  - Most industrial workers supported the SPD or the communists

The Weimar Republic was stable between 1924 - 1929

- Loans and investments from the US had helped stabilize the economy
  - Plenty of jobs
- Government provided generous welfare benefits e.g. old age pensions and housing

In 1928, despite their hard work, the Nazi Party was still a small minority party

- It had support from <3% of the population
- It also did not have much electoral success i.e. gaining seats in the Reichstag

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# Impact of The Great Depression

## Background

- In 1923 - 1929, the Weimar Republic enjoyed a golden age
- However, in October 1929, the US economy crashed. As a result..
  - US bankers and businessmen asked German banks to repay their loans and removed their investments in Germany
  - This results in economic collapse in Germany
    - Businesses went bankrupt
    - Unemployment skyrocketed

By 1932, unemployment was at 6 million or 40% of the population.

- Most of society was affected

Many small businesses went bankrupt

Between 1929 - 1932: The income of the average Germany fell by 40%

- This led to hunger and illness
- Many Germans could not pay rent
  - Many were evicted from their homes
- Makeshift shelters and slums appeared in most cities.
- When the crisis struck in October 1929, Germany was ruled by a coalition government led by the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
  - They wanted to increase welfare for the unemployed
  - Their coalition partners refused
  - The coalition government collapsed in 1930
- President Hindenburg used Article 48 to appoint Heinrich Brüning as the new chancellor
  - Cut spending on welfare
  - Cut wages of civil servants and most government employees
  - Could not get Reichstag approval
  - Had to get Hindenburg to use emergency powers to get it passed
- From this point, the Weimar Republic effectively failed

- The parties were so divided it was impossible to form a coalition with a majority in the Reichstag
- Hindenberg ruled by decree as he was forced to use Article 48 to...
  - Decide who became chancellor
  - Pass laws

## The Rise in Communism

Many workers began to feel that the Weimar Republic was not managing the economic crisis well and failed them

- The political parties
  - Seemed to care more about their own positions
  - Were unable to gain a majority in the Reichstag and get welfare measures passed

Hindenburg ruled the country by decree and supported Brüning.

- This had a devastating impact on millions of ordinary Germans
- To the extent, Brüning became called the “hunger chancellor”

Some have turned towards the Nazi Party.

Most have turned towards the German Communist Party  
(Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands / KPD)

- They had rebuilt their organisation during the 1920s.
  - They had local party branches, a youth party movement and a very effective publicity machine.

Between 1929 - 1932, ~1 million workers turned towards the KPD.

- Reichstag representation rose from 10% to 15%.

The rise of communists frightened many Germans

- Business leaders
  - Feared the communists would seize control of their businesses
  - They were also concerned about the growing strength of the trade unions
- Middle Class
  - Communists were hostile to their class
- Landowners
  - Feared the communists would seize their land, kill and imprison them.
- All of which were what the communists did in the USSR when they came to power.

Many Germans turned to the Nazi Party

- Because they seemed willing and able to take control of the situation and face the communists

## Growth in Support for the Nazis

While the communists gained supporters from the economic crisis, the Nazis gained even more

- By 1933, membership rose to >800,000
- In the 1930 elections, the Nazi got 107 seats

This was due to a number of factors

1. The Hitler Factor



1. He was a powerful and persuasive speaker
  2. His profile was raised by his failed presidential campaign against Hindenburg in 1932.
  3. He was able to spread his message to millions of people
    1. He used film, radio and print
    2. He travelled by plane on a hectic tour of rallies across Germany
  4. He appeared to be a dynamic man of the moment / the leader of a modern party with modern ideas
2. Use of Propaganda
1. Joseph Goebbels, who was in charge of Nazi propaganda by 1929, exploited the effects of the Depression
    1. Leaflets, newspapers and radio broadcasts
      1. Blamed...
        1. The problems on the TOV, particularly the reparations
        2. The Weimar politicians for being too selfish and divided to do what is needed to get people back to work
      2. Promised...
        1. Rebuild the German military which would create millions of jobs
        2. Sympathy and support for workers (in the Nazi 25 points)
      3. Offered...
        1. Culprits to blame for the problems, particularly the Jews.
  2. Hitler promised...
    1. to end ineffective democratic coalition governments
    2. to restore the glory days of the Kaiser and authoritarian rule

3. Return to traditional German values
4. Fight the communists (in elections, in the Reichstag, and on the streets, etc.)
3. These appealed to Germans as they addressed their fears
  1. Large numbers of Germans gave Nazis their support
    1. Wealthy industrialists provided funds
    2. They, middle class and rural Germans started voting for the Nazis
3. The SA and the SS
  1. At the time, there were frequent street battles
    1. Large unruly groups of unemployed workers gathered on street corners
    2. In contrast, the SA and SS gave the impression of discipline and order
      1. The SA were better organised than the communists
        1. They often had the support of the police and the army
        2. Attacked Nazi opponents
    3. Many felt the country needed order
      1. Hence, they welcomed...
        1. The impression that the SA and SS portrayed
        2. The SA's willingness to fight the communists

## Hitler becomes Chancellor

## Remaining Barriers to Hitler and the

# Nazis

- Between 1929 and 1932, the Nazis' support and representation in the Reichstag had increased massively
- However, President Hindenburg remained a barrier to Hitler and the Nazis' ascent to power
  - He was a national hero and well respected by the people because he was the senior commander in WW1
  - He did not really like democracy but served as President (1925-1932) to serve as a force of stability for the sake of the country
    - He was even convinced to stand for elections again in 1932 even though he wanted to retire and **won** it
    - This was a problem for the Nazis because he disliked Hitler, believing he would destabilize Germany.

## Hitler's Rise to Chancellor

In June 1932, Hindenburg appoints Franz von Papen as chancellor

- Hindenburg had wanted a chancellor who had the support of the Reichstag
  - Allow him to take measures without having to call elections and deal with disputes

In July 1932, Hindenburg calls elections hoping von Papen would get enough support in the new Reichstag to create a functioning government

- The plan failed
  - The nazis became the single largest party in the Reichstag with 230 seats (but still not a majority)

- Hitler demanded to be chancellor
  - von Papen was still able to form a government

In November 1932, Hindenburg called another election

- The Nazis remained the largest party in the Reichstag, but their vote share fell by >2 million and they lost 38 seats

In December 1932, Hindenburg appointed Kurt von Schleicher as Chancellor

- He was a former army general and an old army friend of Hindenburg
- He tried and failed to get Nazi support and was forced to resign.

Throughout 1933, a desperate Hindenburg and von Papen met with industrialists, army leaders and politicians in a bid to create a new functional government

Ultimately, on 30 January 1933, they offered Hitler the post of Chancellor

- von Papen was to be vice-chancellor and there would only be a few other Nazis in senior positions in the new Cabinet
- Despite these limits, public opinion was mixed on the appointment
- They were confident they could control Hitler
  - They believed they could work with Nazi opponents to curb his influence and, if need be, unseat him.
  - They were more concerned with the support of Nazis to restore stability and creating a functional government.

## The Nazi Party's Rise to Power - Summary

There are three key factors leading to the Nazi Party's rise to power:

1. Weaknesses of the Weimar Republic
2. Economic Challenges in Germany
3. Appeal of the Nazi Party

Factors	Examples	Explanations	Link
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Factors	Examples	Explanations	Link
Weaknesses of the Weimar Republic	- Weak constitution of the Weimar Republic. Unpopularity of the Weimar Republic with the German people.	This led to the Nazi Party's rise to power because... the Weimar Republic was formed based on the Weimar Constitution, subjecting the government to the weaknesses of the constitution. The people were unhappy with the government for accepting the Treaty of Versailles which they thought punished Germany unfairly. It became an unpopular government faced with opposition from both the left and right wing.	This drove people to support the Nazis who seemed to be a strong political party and were strongly opposed to the Treaty of Versailles.

Factors	Examples	Explanations	Link
Economic Challenges in Germany	The Great Depression. High unemployment rate in the early 1930s.	This led to the Nazi Party's rise to power because... the Great Depression led to economic collapse in Germany and unemployment skyrocketed. The economic crisis hit the middle-class the hardest and many workers felt that the crisis had not been well-managed by the government. This caused them to turn away from democracy and look towards other forms of government.	This provided a favourable climate for Hitler's Nazi Party to rise to power.

Factors	Examples	Explanations	Link
Appeal of Hitler and the Nazi Party	- Fear of Communism. Hitler's charisma and oratorical skills. The SA and the SS. Success of Nazi political campaigns	This led to the Nazi Party's rise to power because... business leaders and farmers looked to the Nazi Party to oppose the Communists. In addition, Hitler was a powerful speaker and the Nazis seemed to be the answer to various problems faced by the German people. Nazi political campaigns were also clever and effective in winning the support of the Germans, with heavy use of propaganda	All these led to a surge in support for the Nazis, allowing them to rise to power.



# Consolidation of Nazi Rule in Germany

## Background

### Challenges to Hitler as Chancellor

- The Socialist SPD and Communist KPD
  - Were ideologically opposed to Hitler and the Nazis
- The Nazi Party lacked a majority in Reichstag
  - Needed majority to pass laws on its own
- von Papen and the Elites
  - Loyal to Hindenburg
- von Schleicher and the Army
  - Loyal to Hindenburg
- Hindenburg
  - Held more loyalty and respect among the German people

### Determination to Establish a Dictatorship

- Sought to have the Nazi party gain a 2/3 majority in the Reichstag
  - This would allow him to change the constitution and thus grant him dictatorial powers.
- To that end, he called for elections in 1933
  - By this time, the Nazis had control of police, radio stations and

most newspapers

- Held massive rallies
- Spent a fortune on the Nazi campaign
- Dismissed officials who opposed Hitler
  - Opponents (e.g. SPD and KPD) had their campaigns disrupted by the SA and SS...
    - Use uniformed followers to break up meetings of other parties and beat up opponents (SA and SS)
    - Extreme Nazi violence throughout the election campaign, especially against the communists.

## Reichstag Fire

On 27 February 1933, the Reichstag building was burnt down.

- This was in the middle of the campaigning for the 1933 elections
  - Many Germans thought the Nazis were responsible
    - The fire was almost certainly started by the Nazis but the Germans did not know this then
- Hitler claimed that it was started by a lone and mentally unwell communist, Marinus van der Lubbe
  - Hitler declared that it was the start of a communist uprising
  - He thus persuaded Hindenburg to pass an emergency law, the Decree for the Protection of People and State

## The Decree for the Protection of People and State

- Gave Hitler sweeping powers
- Removed freedoms promised by the Weimar Republic

- Right to a free trial
- Free press
- The police, SA and SS arrested 4k communists on the night of the fire alone.
- Opposition party meetings, newspapers and radio broadcasts banned.
  - This made it difficult for the opposition to campaign in the 1933 elections
- As a result, the Nazis gained 288 seats
  - With the support of a further 52 DNVP (Deutschnationale Volkspartei / German National People's Party) delegates, they had a majority (52%) in the Reichstag

## The Enabling Act

Hitler now had a majority

- But not quite the 2/3 majority needed to change the constitution

Hence, he wanted to introduce a new measure called the Enabling Act

- This was aimed to allow him to make and pass laws without consulting the Reichstag

When the Enabling Act came up for a vote, the Nazis employed the following 4 methods to ensure it passed....

1. Used SA and SS to intimidate the Reichstag
2. Banned (and arrested) communist delegates from coming to the Reichstag so they could not vote
3. Persuaded the Central Party to vote for the Act by giving vague promises e.g. not to interfere in Catholic Church/schools

#### 4. Using the votes of his allies

When the Enabling Act came up for a vote, only the SPD voted against it

- The Communists (KPD) were in prison
- The Catholic Centre Party cooperated with the Nazis
- Many delegates did not vote
  - They were injured or intimidated by the SA and SS
- The Enabling Act was passed on 24 March.

With the passing of the Enabling Act, Hitler was not effectively a **dictator**

- For the **next four years**, if he wanted a new law he could pass it without needing to consult the Reichstag or President Hindenburg
- This effectively ended democracy in Germany.

## Gleichschaltung (Coordination)

- A response to how the civil service, judiciary, the army and other groups had undermined the Weimar Republic
- To prevent this and consolidate his power, Hitler introduced the Gleichschaltung (Coordination) process
  - This involved bringing all aspects of the Nazi under Nazi control
- In April 1933, Hitler passed a law which...
  - Banned Jews from civil service
  - Almost impossible to be promoted if not part of the Nazi Party
  - All local councils and state assemblies had to have a Nazi majority
    - Over 400 locally elected council members and 70 locally elected mayors lost their positions

- By July 1933, Hitler passed another law which...
  - Banned all other political parties
  - Germany became a **one-party state**

## The End of Democracy in Germany

- Other factors that signaled the end of democracy in Germany
  - Trade unions taken over by the Nazis
  - Press, radio and cinema placed under total Nazi control
  - Opponents arrested, imprisoned or killed
  - Concentration camps and forced labour camps were opened
  - SS and Gestapo (secret police) struck terror into many Nazi opponents
  - Many fled the country e.g. Albert Einstein and the writer, Thomas Mann

## The Night of the Long Knives

- By 1934, Hitler began to see the SA, particularly its leader, Ernst Röhm, as a threat
  - Röhm was an ally of Hitler
    - Hitler had asked him to lead SA in 1930
  - But by 1933, there was growing tension between them
    - Not given an important role in the new government
- Sources of tension
  - SA was ~3 million strong
    - All of whom were fiercely loyal to Rohm

- They supported his calls to tax industrialists and landowners to help the unemployed
  - However, these very groups helped Hitler come to power
    - (awkward)
- Army commanders also suspicious of Rohm
  - They thought the SA was a disreputable force (aka thugs)
  - Unsettled by Rohm's talk of making the SA into a second German army
- On the weekend of 29-30 June 1934 (the main event)
  - Hitler called the leaders of the SA to a special conference
  - Squads of SS men arrested Rohm and other SA leaders both at the conference and throughout Germany
    - Hitler accused Rohm of plotting to overthrow and murder him
    - Rohm and ~400 were executed.
  - Hitler also targeted his old rivals
    - E.g. von Papen is placed under house arrest
      - Hitler offers him a post as an ambassador to Austria and he accepts, probably a decision that saved his life
- Aftermath
  - No public protests - this demonstrated Hitler's power and the people's fear
  - SA was disbanded shortly afterwards
  - Many of its members were absorbed into the army and SS

## The Army and the Oath of Allegiance

- On 2 August 1934, shortly after the Night of Long Knives,

Hindenburg died.

### **Why was Hindenburg's Death Important?**

With his death, the only figure who could rival Hitler's power was gone. In response, Hitler merged the offices of President, Chancellor and the commander in chief of the armed forces and became the Fuehrer (Supreme Leader)

- To further consolidate his power, the oath that all German soldiers swore, was changed to become an oath of personal loyalty to Hitler
  - The army agreed to stay out of politics and to serve him
  - In return, Hitler introduced pro-military policies..
    - He spent vast sums on rearmament
    - Reintroduced conscription
    - Generally made plans to make Germany a great military power again.

## **Life under Nazi Rule (1933 - 1938)**

### **Nazi Economic Policies**

### **Economic Recovery - Germany's**

# Finances

- In 1933...
  - Worst of the Great Depression had passed
  - ~5 million unemployed

## The Nazis acted with energy and commitment

- Organised Germany finances
- In March 1933, Hitler appointed Hjalmar Schacht as president of the Reichsbank
  - In August '34, he became Economics Minister
- Under him...
  - Germany engaged in deficit financing i.e. borrowing from the public through loans
- Impact: This stabilised German finances and provided funds for other programmes

# Economic Recovery - Unemployment


- Reorganised German finances to facilitate a huge work creation programme
  - The **Reich Labour Service** sent men on public works projects and conservation programmes
  - E.g.
    - Built a network of autobahns (highways)
    - Built/extended railways
    - Worked in major house-building programmes



- Built new public buildings e.g. the Reich Chancellery
- Impact: These measures were **effective** and unemployment **declined**.

## Rearmament and the Move to a War Economy

- 1935: Reintroduction of conscription
- 1936: Four-year plan under Goering
  - Ready Germany for war in 4 years
  - Priority give to rearmament and **autarky**

 **\*\*Autarky -\*\*** Germany to be in self-sufficient as possible in terms of food and industrial production

- Economy to be managed through regulations controlling most aspects of labour, prices and raw materials
  - E.g. industries had to meet targets.
- **Impact**
  - Conscription and rearmament created jobs
    - E.g.
      - Conscription gave the unemployed jobs as soldiers
      - Rearmament led to an expansion of industry which created jobs
      - Luftwaffe (new German air force) provided opportunities for engineers and designers
  - Boosted Hitler's popularity by renewing German national pride
    - Germans felt they were finally escaping the humiliation of WW1 and ToV

- They were a great power again.

## Living Standards in Nazi Germany

- Big businesses benefitted
  - No longer had to worry about trade unions and strikes
  - Companies like Siemens, Mercedes and Volkswagen made massive profits due to government contracts
  - As a result, managers' income rose
    - This rise was much faster than the average worker
- Farmers remained poor
  - During the Great Depression, many farmers took loans from banks to survive
  - The Nazis introduced the **Reich Entailed Farm Law** which prevented banks from taking the lands of indebted farmers
  - However, this just meant that the state took on the debt and ownership of the land
- Middle classes saw a mixed picture
  - Many were pleased at the crushing of the communists
  - Owners of businesses connected to rearmament benefitted from government contracts
  - Owners of small businesses continued to struggle
  - **Impact**
    - Whether one's living standards improved or declined under Nazi rule depended on which class you belonged to.

## Working Conditions in Nazi

# Germany

Lower unemployment brought about by Nazi policies

- Boosted their support among workers

## Propaganda

- Praised workers
- Associated Hitler with them e.g. calling him Germany's "First Worker"

## Other measures also sought to win their loyalty

- **Strength Through Joy (Kraft durch Freude / KdF)**
  - Gave workers cheap theatre and cinema tickets
  - Organised events e.g. courses, trips, sports
  - Offered discounted cruises on luxury liners
  - By 1939, >50 million Germans had been on a KdF holiday
- **Beauty of Labour (Schönheit der Arbeit)**
  - Improved working conditions
    - Introduced washing facilities and low-cost canteens
  - **Programme to help workers buy a Volkswagen Beetle**
    - Became symbolic of a prosperous new Germany
    - But no worker ever received one by 1939 when the war ended all car production

## Impact

Workers lost...

- Their main political party i.e. the SPD
- Their trade unions

- Bred resentment

All workers had to join the German Labour Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront/DAF) which...

- Prevented strikes for better pay and conditions

Wages remained comparatively low

- Though prices of goods were also kept low

**By the late 1930s, many workers' living standards were still lower than before the Great Depression**

# Nazi Social Policies

## Role of Women in Nazi Germany

In the Weimar Republic, women...

- Had the right to vote
- Equal in areas of marriage and civic matters

## Hitler's Beliefs of Women's Roles

Hitler believed a woman's role is:

- To be a good mother
- To look after children

- To marry young
- To stay at home while the husband works
- To produce as many babies as possible

To force women to adhere to this belief, the Nazi regime...

- Introduced policies that excluded women from politics and academics
  - Women were not allowed to vote
  - They were discouraged from pursuing university studies.
- Funneled girls into the **League of German Girls (Bund Deutscher Madel/BDM)** where they received vigorous training in domestic tasks
- Introduced policies that limited employment opportunities for women
  - E.g. discrimination against women applicants for jobs was encouraged
- Pushed his beliefs via mass media - posters, radio broadcasts, news
- In order to boost population, incentives were given :
  - 1933 - Law for the Encouragement of Marriage (provided 1000 marks loan for newly married couples)
  - August 12th - Motherhood Cross

## Reaction of German Women

Most women actually agreed with Hitler's views even though it meant that women's rights were restricted. E.g.

- Women employed as teachers, lawyers, doctors and civil servants were sacked
- Married women could not wear make-up / trousers
- No dyeing of hair color / perms

- Wear flat shoes
- No slimming/dieting - bad for child birth
- No smoking - un-German behaviour

## Impact

- Boost in birth rate and pregnancies outside marriage
- During WW2...
  - Roles of women had to change, despite Nazi reluctance
  - Female workers employed in arms industries because the supply of unemployed men needed for factory work had dried up
  - However, stereotype of women's role was mostly maintained e.g. no German women allowed in the armed forces

## Youth - Education and the Hitler Youth

- Hitler was especially keen to win over the minds of young people
- Education was carefully controlled
  - Teachers were tightly regulated
    - Teachers had to join the National Socialist Teachers' League
    - Made to attend training courses stressing Nazi ideology and physical education
  - Curriculum was changed to reflect a greater emphasis on Nazi values
  - E.g.
    - Infusing Nazi ideas in subjects such as history and biology
    - Production of Nazi textbooks

- Introduction of Race Studies as a new subject
- Lessons taught included :
  - Germany army betrayed in WWI
  - Jews responsible for problems
  - Germans belonged to Aryans race
  - Other races were sub-human
- A sample from Nazi Math textbook :
  - “The Jews are aliens in Germany. In 1933, there were 66,060,000 citizens in German Reich. 499,862 were Jews. What was the % of aliens in Germany?”
- In addition to the school system, German youths were indoctrinated with Nazi ideology through Hitler Youth movements
  - Hitler Youth - a paramilitary organisation of the Nazi Party that groomed German youths to be future Nazi leaders
  - Divided into different sections according to age and gender
    - Little Fellow (6 - 10)
    - German Young People (10 to 14)
    - Hitler Youth (14 to 18)
    - Young Maidens (up to 14)
    - League of Girls (Bund Deutscher Madel / BDM) (14 to 18/21)
  - Membership:
    - 1923: 1,000
    - 1933: 2.3 million
    - Originally, youths were only encouraged to join
      - Those who did not join found it difficult to get in the University or to find jobs after leaving school
      - Compulsory by 1936 for all Aryan Germans
        - Many managed to avoid membership, especailly after they left school

- Various rival youth groups were set up that the Nazis failed to suppress
- It organised...
  - Camps
  - Sports
  - Physical training
    - Older boys did a lot of physical exercises to prepare for military service in the German Army
  - All of which was backed up by indoctrination in anti-Semitism and Nazi ideology

## Impact

- Inspired in many German youths...
  - Complete loyalty to Hitler and the Nazis
  - Alienation from parents to a certain extent
- A minority anti-Hitler group developed

## Persecution of Minorities

Anyone not belonging to the Aryan race were persecuted

- They persecuted members of other races and minority groups (e.g. Roma/gypsies), homosexuals and the mentally ill

They also persecuted any group thought to be a challenge to Nazi ideas

E.g.

- 1/3 of Roma in Germany in 1939 were killed



They further sought to ‘improve’ the Aryan race through eugenics and euthanasia

- Over 300,000 men and women were sterilised between 1934 and 1935.
- A “euthanasia programme” of the disabled and mentally ill (even Aryans) began in 1939
  - 5,000 disabled babies killed between 1939-1945
  - 72,000 mentally ill patients killed between 1939 - 1941
    - Stopped when there was a public outcry

## Hitler and the Jews

Hitler hated the Jews

- In his years of poverty in Vienna before WW1, he obsessed over the fact that Jews ran many of the most successful businesses
- He blamed Jewish businessmen and bankers for Germany’s defeat in WW1
  - He believed they forced the German surrender

Once in power, the Nazis began a campaign of anti-semitic persecution

- Many forced out of their jobs
  - They were banned from civil service and a variety of public services (e.g. teaching, broadcasting)
  - As the government took control of the legal and journalistic professions and universities, where many Jews worked, they lost their jobs
- Many Jews also owned small businesses
  - Lost contracts

- Businesses closed due to intimidation
- Nazi propaganda bombarded Germans with anti-Jewish messages
- Segregation was encouraged
  - In schools, Jewish children were segregated and humiliated
  - Many shops hung “Jews Not Welcome” signs
- SS and SA targeted Jews
  - Jews were arrested and beaten up
  - Jewish shops had slogans painted over their windows (e.g. marked with the Star of David)
  - People were discouraged from buying their goods
- Many left Germany but most stayed
  - They had nowhere else to go

### **The Nuremberg Laws**

- Passed in 1935
- Jews were stripped of their German citizenship
- Forbidden to marry pure-blooded Germans

### **Kristallnacht/ the Night of Broken Glass**

- In November 1938, a young Jew killed a German diplomat in Paris
- In response, the Nazis proceeded to launch Kristallnacht
  - Plain-clothed SS are given the addresses of Jewish businesses
    - They smashed them up
  - 91 Jews murdered
  - 100s of synagogues burned
  - 20,000 Jews were taken to concentration camps
  - 1000s more left Germany
- Nazi-controlled media painted it as a spontaneous reaction of ordinary Germans against Jews
  - Most Germans did not believe this

- Many Germans were alarmed and concerned
  - But hardly anyone protested
  - The few who did were brutally murdered

## The Final Solution

- Germany was very successful in the early stages of WW2
  - They captured large areas of Eastern Europe
  - Many Jews lived in these areas
- From 1941 onwards, Jews were subjected to the Final Solution to the Jewish Question
  - Used as slave labour
  - Forced to live in ghettos
  - Systematically killed in death camps
  - **~6 million Jews killed by 1945**
- Historians generally agree that Hitler and SS were responsible for the death camps, though others were responsible too
  - E.g.
    - The genocide would not have been possible without cooperation of the German civil service and police in Germany and occupied lands
    - Others (the German army, major industry leaders and managers) either cooperated with or did nothing to stop the genocide
    - Many historians also believe the German people as a whole also holds some responsibility

# Nazi Political Policies

# The SS (Schutzstaffel)

- To maintain control of Germany, Hitler and the Nazis employed the SS
  - They were highly trained and fiercely loyal to Hitler
  - Destroyed opposition and carried out racial policies
  - Had various subdivisions that assisted in maintaining Nazi control
    - The Sicherheitsdienst (SD)
      - Monitored political opponents
      - Countered attempts to infiltrate the Nazi Party
    - Secret State Police (Geheime Staatspolizei/Gestapo)
      - Could arrest citizens and send them to concentration camp without trial
      - Among the most feared organisations in Nazi Germany
      - By 1939, ~160,000 people were sent to Concentration Camps by the Gestapo
    -
- Such camps were set up to “correct” opponents of the regime
  - Prisoners...
    - Were forced to do hard labour
    - Given limited food
    - Suffered harsh discipline, beatings and random executions
  - Opponents consisted of...
    - Jews
    - Socialists
    - Communists
    - Trade Unionists
    - Churchmen
    - Critics of the Nazi Regime, etc.

- In total, between **1933 and 1939, 1.3 million Germans, 1/2 million Roma, political prisoners, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, as well as WW2 POWs** spent at least some time in such camps
- The concentration camps were not the same as the death camps during WW2
  - However by the late 1930s, deaths in the camps were increasingly common
    - Very few came out of the camps alive.

## The Legal System

- Judges
  - Had to belong to the Nazi-approved Nationalist Socialist League for the Maintenance of the Law
    - Created self-imposed control
      - Judges knew what they were expected to do and carried it out
- Courts
  - Trial by jury was abolished
    - Combined with the changes to judges, Nazi opponents rarely faced fair trials.
- Police
  - By 1936,
    - Police forces were controlled by regional governments
      - The regime made sure high-ranking Nazis headed these forces
    - Heinrich Himmler, the leader of the SS, was made the chief

of police Germany

- This effectively made the police a part of the SS

# Propaganda

The Nazis had a very effective propaganda machine

- Minister of Enlightenment and Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels
- It controlled...
  - Magazines
  - Books
  - Music
  - Film
  - Art
  - Radio Broadcasts
  - Posters
  - Portraits
- Sought to brainwash the German people with...
  - Appealing to order
  - Nationalistic sentiments
    - Sense of belonging
    - German expansion
    - Emphasized German power and strength
    - Promoted a vision of success for Germany's future
  - Anti-communist feelings
  - Racist ideas, particularly anti-semitism
    - Superiority of the Aryans
    - Inferiority of the Jews
- Aimed to...
  - Impress Germans and win them over

- E.g.
  - Every year, the Nazis held spectacular rallies, marches and meetings in Nuremberg
  - Invested heavily in the film industry
  - In 1936, the Olympics were held in Berlin
- Remind Germans of the power of the state
  - E.g.
    - Local parties held regular marches at least once a week, often handing out leaflets
    - Hitler Youth also marched regularly
    - Such activities created the impression that the state was everywhere

## Censorship

The Nazi propaganda also imposed heavy censorship by limiting German access to information and ideas

- No books, paintings, or any other art could be produced without Nazi approval
- Heavy censorship of newspapers
- All films had to carry a pro-Nazi message
- Newsreels played along with films proclaimed Nazi achievements
- Cheap radios made available so that all Germans could buy one and listen to aired Nazi propaganda
- Harsh penalties for anyone listening to unauthorised stations
- All restrictions were strictly enforced by the Gestapo and informers
  - The police, Sicherheitsdienst (SD), and Gestapo would arrest any offenders and send them to concentration camps.

# Resistance and Opposition

## Political Opposition

Some socialists and communists remained active who...

- Continued to send reports to their exiled leaders
- Encouraged workers to resist by striking and engaging sabotage
- E.g. in 1936, the Gestapo claimed that it broke up 1,000 opposition meetings

## Military Resistance

Some aristocratic and conservative military officers who opposed the Nazi regime

- They...
  - Many were suspicious of Hitler and Nazism
  - Grew increasingly concerned by Hitler's aggressive foreign policy
- Several officers even went as far as to attempt to assassinate Hitler
  - E.g. the failed July 1944 Bomb Plot

## Refusal to Conform

Some simply refused to accept Nazi ideals

- The most common form of resistance
  - E.g. the Gestapo reported a lot of complaining in public spaces

Key groups who resisted the Nazis were...



- Criticism by Churches
  - Germany was a Christian country
    - Most Germans were Protestants and Roman Catholics
  - The Nazis disliked the churches
    - Feared they had too much influence over the people
      - Did not like the idea that people were more loyal to the churches than to him
    - But could not close them down without undermining their own support
  - Early on, Nazis allowed church autonomy
    - In return, churches accepted alignment of Nazi goals
    - Hitler tried to bring the churches under his control
      - Created a new Reich Church with a Nazi bishop in charge
  - Eventually...
    - Promoted alternative religion that glorified Nazis and Hitler
    - Curbed all Christian activities and education
  - In the end, many clergy criticised the Nazis
  - Many clergy ended up in concentration camps
    - E.g. 400 Catholic priests ended up in the clergy block of the Dachau concentration camp
- Anti-Nazi Youth Groups
  - Some youths rejected the Hitler Youth and formed groups that rejected the Nazis
  - E.g.
    - The White Rose
      - Youths attending University of Munich
      - Secretly distributed leaflets revealing Nazi atrocities
      - They were eventually arrested in 1943.

- The Edelweiss Pirates
  - Made up of working-class teenagers
  - Earliest groups appeared in 1934
    - By 1939, there were ~2,000 members
  - Mocked the Nazis and got in fights with Hitler Youth
  - Nazis persecuted them brutally
    - In 1944, 13 Edelweiss Pirate leaders in Cologne were executed.

## Conclusion

- However, most historians agree that there was limited resistance to Nazi
- This was a result of a combination of factors based on the Nazi's economic, social, political policies:
  - The Nazis took control of many segments of society
  - The Nazis gave advantages to supporters
  - Offered Aryan Germans benefits
  - The Nazis ruthlessly persecuted opponents
  - Germans feared the SS and Gestapo
- Many Germans actually disliked the Nazis but respected Hitler
  - They did not blame him for many unpleasant or unfair things that the Nazis did
  - This did not change until the later stages of WW2 by which point the Nazis had already carried out numerous atrocities

Groups	Beneficials	Not Beneficial
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Groups	Beneficials	Not Beneficial
Communists and other political parties		All other political parties were banned. The communists and other political opponents were jailed, executed or driven out of the country. Control and fear were used to win the support of the people and limit the people's access to information and ideas.
The army	The army's main rival, the SA was purged in the Night of the Long Knives. Many SA members were absorbed into the army. Hitler started rearmament and re-introduced conscription after the Army swore allegiance to him, rebuilding the strength of the Army.	

Groups	Beneficials	Not Beneficial
Farmers	The Reich Entailed Farm Law saved many farmers from losing their land to the banks.	However, many farmers remained poor and their farms became state-owned.
Middle Class	The crackdown on the communists removed one threat to the middle class Owners of businesses related to rearmament benefitted from government contracts	Many small business owners continued to struggle.
Workers	The Reich Labour Service sent men on public works projects and conservation programmes, reducing unemployment while improving standard of living.	

Groups	Beneficials	Not Beneficial
Conscription and rearmament helped to further reduce unemployment, creating jobs in the coal mines, steel and textile mills.	Working and living conditions improved only superficially with new initiatives such as Strength Through Joy and Beauty of Labour	
Women		Women were expected to stay at home and focus on child-rearing. They were excluded from many aspects of life, such as politics, higher education and work.