

Ch. 3 - Germany in the Inter-war Years, 1920-39

Learning Intentions

In this section, you should understand:

- The German economy, under Weimar and under the Nazis.
- The causes of Hitler's rise to power.
- Hitler's dictatorship.
- Nazi use of propaganda and terror.
- Church-state relations under Hitler.
- Anti-Semitism (and the Holocaust).
- The role of Joseph Goebbels and Leni Riefenstahl.
- Case Study: The Nuremberg Rallies.



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF WEIMAR GERMANY

The Treaty of Versailles

In 1918, the Weimar Republic was established in Germany. It faced many problems. Germany was defeated in the First World War (1914-18) - some accused the Weimar government of **stabbing the army in the back** and the government had to sign the harsh **Treaty of Versailles** imposed by the victorious Allies (Britain, France and the US):

- Germany lost territory.
- The armed forces were reduced.
- Germany had to agree a **war guilt clause**.
- Germany had to pay **reparations of £6.6 billion**.



The German Economy in the 1920s

After World War I, the German economy suffered from **high unemployment** as soldiers were demobilised. It also suffered from the reparations plan of the victorious Allies of the war. The Weimar Government printed money to pay for war debts and reparations. This contributed to increased **inflation** from 1919 to 1922.

Ruhr Invasion and the Collapse of the Mark

The biggest problems came when the German government could not pay reparations in 1922. As a result, French and Belgian troops invaded the **Ruhr industrial region** in January 1923 to confiscate raw materials and goods. This led to passive resistance by the Germans, the deaths of German workers, the collapse in the value of the German mark and to very rapid inflation (hyperinflation). In 1922, one dollar could buy 500 marks; by November 1923, one dollar could buy 4 trillion marks - the mark had become worthless.

The German middle class was ruined; the value of their savings and pensions collapsed and workers were made poorer. They had to bring suitcases or carts to work to take home paper money. Some lost work, but the industrialists and landowners gained; they could easily pay off loans, and as their property grew in value, some made huge fortunes.

Prosperity

A new government took decisive action to rescue the German economy. They called off the Ruhr strikes and created a **new currency** called the **Rentenmark**; they negotiated with the US to provide special loans and cut the reparations payments under the **Dawes Plan**.

By 1928, the German economy had reached pre-war levels. The government used the loans for housing and public works, so unemployment fell to 8 per cent by 1928. As one historian wrote, *'Iron and steel, coal, chemicals and electrical goods had all reached or beaten the 1913 production figures.'* By 1929, Germany was the leading industrial country on the continent. As a result of the economic recovery, political parties such as Hitler's Nazi Party and the Communist Party saw their support fall.

But the German economic recovery was too dependent on **US loans**. This weakness was exposed by the economic crisis caused by the **Wall Street Crash (1929)** and **the Great Depression**. The economic policies of the Weimer government worsened the depression. The Weimar government cut spending and increased taxes which increased unemployment. This led to the rise of Hitler and the downfall of the Weimar Republic.



THE NAZI STATE IN PEACE - ORIGINS ORIGINS AND GROWTH

What Caused the Rise to Power of Hitler and the Nazis?

1. The Wall Street Crash and German Economic and Social Problems

German economic growth in the second half of the 1920s was due largely to American loans. But, in 1929 the value of shares in the New York Stock Exchange on Wall Street collapsed. This led to an **economic depression** in America. When American banks and companies called in loans from Germany, Germany too faced economic depression.

Businesses went bankrupt, factories and mines closed and workers were laid off. In 1929, there were already 1.5 million unemployed in Germany. This rose rapidly over the next few years. By January 1932 there were 6 million unemployed, but many more were on short-time working.

The economic crisis led to poverty and hunger. Many middle-class families suffered. Some had to sell their houses, others could not afford to rent. They moved to makeshift shanty towns on the edge of cities. Many had to rely on soup kitchens for food. Some unemployment. joined the Red Front (Communists) or Hitler's **Storm Troopers (SA)**. One worker explained how he became a Nazi. In the Depression, *'Hunger was the daily companion of the German working man. All people looked for better times. As for me, like many another, I lost all I possessed so, in early 1930, I joined the Nazi Party.'*

KEY CONCEPT DEPRESSION

Depression is a term used to describe when an economy is doing badly; industrial production declines, factories and businesses close and there is widespread

KEY CONCEPT INFLATION

Inflation is an increase in the prices of products, usually a large increase.



What Caused the Rise to Power of Hitler and the Nazis?

2. The Failure of the Weimar Republic

Already the **reputation of the Weimar Republic** was damaged among some Germans because of the Treaty of Versailles and the notion that the Weimar Republic **had stabbed the army in the back**. For this they were called the **November criminals**. The ruling classes of the old Imperial Germany who were still in power also weakened the Republic. The judges, generals, civil servants and teachers all favoured a more **authoritarian** government and they used their positions of influence to undermine the Weimar Republic.

The actions of the Weimar government worsened the economic crisis. The **Chancellor (Prime Minister), Brüning**, cut back on government spending. He reduced wages, pensions and unemployment benefit. This earned him the nickname **Hunger Chancellor** and increased dissatisfaction and disorder in the streets.

Brüning made two further mistakes. He used **President Hindenburg's** power to **rule by decree** to bring in some of his unpopular measures. This showed the failure of democracy. Brüning also called a general election for June 1930. Instead of gaining a majority, the results of the election showed a swing to **extremism** - to an increase in the popularity of Hitler and the Nazi Party, and of the Communists.

What Caused the Rise to Power of Hitler and the Nazis?

3. Hitler's Leadership of the Nazis

Hitler and the Nazis' rise to power was also due to Hitler's ability as a political leader.

Nazi Tactics and Policies: In 1923 Hitler organised the **Munich Putsch** (rising) which was a failure. After this he decided to change tactics. He now believed that the use of force was not the best way to achieve power. He intended to use democracy to destroy democracy. *'If outvoting them takes longer than outshooting them, then at least the result will be guaranteed by their own constitution.'*

He began the **reorganisation** of his party. He established branches throughout Germany and appointed regional leaders (or gauleiters). The **SA (Brownshirts)** or **stormtroopers** were a paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party. The **SS (Blackshirts)** were Hitler's bodyguards. Other branch organisations were also formed such as the **Hitler Youth** and the **Women's League**.

He shaped his **policies** to make them attractive to many different groups:

- He appealed to **nationalists** through his attack on the Treaty of Versailles - 'the disgrace of Versailles' - and the 'November criminals'. He also promised to unite German-speaking people in a Greater Germany.
- Hitler was very strongly **anti-Communist** and this pleased the middle class, the industrialists and the farmers. They feared a Communist state and workers' soviets, as in Russia. Hitler was able to use the violence of the SA and SS against the socialists and Communists.
- The support of **industrialists and business leaders** was important because they helped finance his elections.
- The support for the Nazi Party came mostly from the lower middle class - small merchants, farmers, craftsmen, white-collar workers and civil servants.

What Caused the Rise to Power of Hitler and the Nazis?

3. Hitler's Leadership of the Nazis

Nazi Propaganda Techniques: Hitler used very effective propaganda techniques to get across his message. Hitler was an outstanding speaker - a Hitler speech was superb theatre. Hitler himself said, *'To be a leader means to be able to move the masses.'* He reduced his policies to simple slogans, 'Its [Nazi propaganda] intellectual level must be adjusted to the most limited intelligence,' he said. *'When you lie, tell big lies.'*

The use of **uniforms, salutes and mass rallies** gave an impression of strength. They made good use of films and gramophone records (of Nazi speeches), the talker spouting forth from loudspeakers on trucks. One German explained how the Nazis fought the elections in his state. *'Hitler himself spoke at sixteen major rallies. Columns of SS troops shouted slogans and marched the villages and towns from morning to night. In every market square an SA band or Nazi minstrels played marches for hours on end.'*

Albert Speer, later Hitler's chief architect, explained how the Nazis appealed to him after listening to Hitler in 1931:

'Here, it seemed to me, was hope. Here were new ideals, a new understanding, The perils of Communism could be checked, Hitler persuaded us, and instead of hopeless unemployment, Germany could move towards economic recovery. The sight of discipline in a time of chaos, the impression of energy in an atmosphere of universal hopelessness, seems to have won [my mother] over too.'

What Caused the Rise to Power of Hitler and the Nazis?

4. Right-wing Plotting

By 1932 the Nazi Party was the **largest** in the Reichstag. Many conservative politicians believed that Hitler must be part of any government. The Nazis lost seats and votes between the elections in July and November 1932 (from 230 seats to 196 seats). Former Chancellor and leading conservative politician, **Von Papen**, now believed that Hitler was in a weaker position and that the conservatives could control him. *'I have roped him in. In two months we'll have pushed Hitler into a corner so hard that he'll be squeaking.'* In these circumstances, Von Papen persuaded President Hindenburg to appoint Hitler as Chancellor in January 1933. Von Papen was Vice-Chancellor and, besides Hitler, there were only two other Nazis in the cabinet. But Hitler only accepted the position provided he was allowed call a general election. Little did they know it but Hitler had outwitted them.



**THE NAZI STATE IN PEACE - HITLER IN
HITLER POWER**

How did Hitler Establish Dictatorship?

Hitler had come to power by largely constitutional (legal) means. But he was already planning to establish a **totalitarian state** where all aspects of life - political, social, economic and religious - would be controlled by the state.

Hitler's first step was to call a **general election** for March 1933. This became a huge propaganda campaign for the Nazis. Goebbels wrote in his diary: *'Now it will be very easy to carry on the fight as we can call on all the resources of the state. Radio and press are at our disposal. We shall stage a masterpiece of propaganda.'* This was accompanied by street violence as the **SA** clashed with the Communists. Over 400,000 SA were enlisted in the police so they now could use legal terror.

Two weeks before the election, a Dutch Communist, **van der Lubbe**, set fire to the Reichstag. Hitler exploited this by talking about the *'Communist threat'*. In the election, the Nazis increased their seats to 288 and, with the help of the Nationalist Party, Hitler had a parliamentary majority. He passed the **Enabling Law** which allowed him to **rule by decree**. Weimar democracy was at an end.



KEY PERSONALITY: ADOLF HITLER

Hitler was born in **Austria** in 1889, the son of a customs official.

In Vienna he developed his **hatred** of the Jews, Communists and democracy. It was here also that he dreamt of a Greater Germany. He went to Munich and joined the German army in the First World War. He took part in 47 battles, mostly as a messenger. He was wounded twice and was also awarded the Iron Cross on two separate occasions.

After the war, he joined the German Workers' Party, soon becoming its leader and changing its name to the **National Socialist German Workers' Party**. The Party's Twenty-five Point programme emphasised anti-Semitism, extreme nationalism, racial superiority and leadership. Hitler felt the Weimar Republic was about to collapse, so he organised the **Munich Putsch**, which failed miserably.

He spent some time in jail where he dictated ***Mein Kampf*** (My Struggle). When he came out of jail, he reorganised the Party but Hitler had to wait for the Great Depression before he gained significant popularity. After his Party became the largest in the Reichstag, he was invited by **President Hindenburg** to become Chancellor in January 1933.



KEY PERSONALITY: ADOLF HITLER

Over the next few years he established a **totalitarian state** under his control and that of the Nazi Party. His campaign against the Jews became a significant feature of his state. He also promoted an aggressive foreign policy in breaking the Treaty of Versailles and expanding Germany's borders. However, this caused the Second World War.

Even though his armies were initially successful, conquering most of mainland Europe, he experienced defeat in the Battle of Britain, North Africa and, most important of all, in Russia. As the Russians advanced from the east and the Americans and British from the west, Hitler committed **suicide** in his bunker in Berlin rather than be captured by the Russians.



Nazi 'Co-ordination'

Hitler extended his power further by a policy of co-ordination - by limiting or destroying the power of groups and institutions which were opposed to the Nazis:

- He **outlawed** the **Communists** and the **SPD (Social Democrats)** and seized their property.
- The Nazis were the **only political party** allowed in Germany.
- He **abolished** the **elected State assemblies (parliaments)** and appointed Nazi governors instead.
- Trade unions were abolished and replaced by the **German Labour Front**.
- The **press** was put under Nazi control.



The SA and the Night of the Long Knives

Next, Hitler eliminated opposition within his own party organisation in the **Night of the Long Knives**. By 1934 the **SA**, under the leadership of **Ernest Röhm**, had grown to over 2 million members. Röhm planned a **people's army** where the German army would merge with the SA with Röhm at its head. The army generals were opposed to this and Hitler needed the regular army for his plans. Hitler decided to use the SS to kill the leadership of the SA (including Röhm). Up to 400 people were killed, mostly from the SA but also some old scores were settled. The **SS under Himmler** became the most important of all Nazi organisations.



Der Führer

Hitler's next step, on the **death of President Hindenburg** in 1934, was to combine the offices of the Chancellor and the President. He was now called **Führer (Leader)**. *'The Führer unites in himself all the sovereign authority of the Reich.'* He was now head of the armed forces and all the members had to swear a new **oath** to him, *'the Führer of the German Reich and People.'* In little over 18 months Hitler had established a Nazi dictatorship.

The Totalitarian State - Propaganda and Terror

The Nazis now proceeded to introduce what Goebbels called *'the national revolution'*. This resulted in Germany becoming a **totalitarian state**. Two methods were used - **propaganda and terror**.

Nazi Propaganda: Propaganda played a key role in Nazi control of Germany.

'Hitler's dictatorship differed in one fundamental point from all its predecessors in history... Through technical devices like radio and the loudspeaker, eighty million people were deprived of independent thought. It was thereby possible to subject them to the will of one man.'

Albert Speer

Goebbels as Minister of Propaganda

Hitler appointed **Goebbels** as **Minister of Enlightenment and Propaganda**. Goebbels was totally loyal to Hitler and he used every means at his disposal to ensure the loyalty of the German people to Hitler. The **Ministry of Propaganda** was divided into sections called chambers such as the Chamber of Archives, the Press Chamber, the Radio Chamber. In this way all media were used to influence public opinion. Goebbels believed that, *'If you tell a big lie often enough, people will believe it.'*

Newspapers and Books

The Nazis also controlled the publication of **newspapers and books**. In 1933, Goebbels organised a **book burning** to destroy any books with anti-Nazi - unGerman - ideas. In the case of newspapers, Goebbels created only one official German News Bureau. He held a daily press conference for editors and they were instructed on what view they should take on various issues. Jewish editors were fired and any anti-Nazi newspapers were closed down.



Radio and Cinema

Goebbels also used the newer mass media of **radio and cinema**. *'I consider,'* he said, *'radio to be the most modern and most crucial instrument that exists for influencing the masses.'* People were encouraged to buy a **People's Radio** - a small black wireless or radio which could only receive Nazi radio stations. By 1939 there were four times more radios in Germany than in 1933. Loudspeakers were placed in streets and bars for those who were not within reach of a radio. He also used short-wave radio stations to broadcast to areas outside Germany.

Riefenstahl and Cinema

Goebbels also knew how effective **cinema and film** were. Newsreels were used to boast about Germany's greatness and the achievements of Hitler. Germany's most famous film maker - **Leni Riefenstahl** - produced many very influential propaganda films. ***The Triumph of the Will*** (1934) was based on the **Nuremberg Rally** and **Olympia** told the story of the **1936 Berlin Olympics**. Film was also used as a powerful weapon in anti-semitism. **The Eternal Jew** and **Jud Suss** were two films used to target Jews and to get across Nazi racialist ideas.



KEY PERSONALITY: JOSEPH GOEBBELS

Goebbels was born in the Rhineland in Germany in 1897, the son of a manual worker in a strict Catholic family. He was rejected by the German army in the First World War because of a **club foot and a limp**, a rejection which affected him for the rest of his life. Instead he studied philosophy, history and literature in a number of German universities. He joined the **Nazi Party** in 1922 and became editor of one of the Nazi newspapers. He developed an **intense loyalty** to Hitler: *'Adolf Hitler, I love you'*, he wrote in his diary. Hitler rewarded him by making him, first, a regional leader (gauleiter) and later Propaganda leader of the Nazi Party in 1929. He showed outstanding ability by organising Hitler's two campaigns for the Presidency and the general elections of 1930-32, which brought the Nazis to power. He was a **master of propaganda** so when he was appointed **Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda**, he used the full resources of the state to bring all the means of communication (media) under Nazi control. His role was crucial in developing and maintaining Nazi power in the totalitarian state. During the Second World War, he had the difficult task of maintaining morale, particularly when the war went against the Germans.

As the Russians closed in on Hitler at the end of the war, Goebbels remained loyal to the end. After Hitler's suicide; Goebbels, his wife and six children also committed **suicide**. In his final testament, he wrote, *'I express an unalterable resolution not to leave the Reich capital, even if it falls, but rather, at the side of the Führer, to end a life which will have no further value to me if I cannot spend it in the service of the Führer, and by his side.'*



Rallies and Parades

Goebbels also used huge **gatherings** to influence public opinion - marches, parades, torchlight processions and rallies. They created a feeling of order, strength and togetherness. The **Berlin Olympics in 1936** became one huge propaganda exercise for Nazi Germany. A new 100,000 seater stadium was built and the latest technology was used in running the Games. But the **Nuremberg Rally** held in August or September was the highlight of each year. Hitler knew the importance of the rally as it sent thousands of Nazis home to all corners of Germany fired with new enthusiasm.

Cult of Personality

Central to all Goebbels' propaganda was the **Cult of the Leader**. He was following Hitler's belief, '*The most important part of Fascism is absolute trust in a wise and able leader.*' Slogans such as '*Ein Reich, Ein Volk, Ein Führer*' (One Country, One People, One Leader) were used to get across the worship of Hitler. Goebbels created the image of Hitler through carefully staged photographs, portraits, posters and meetings. He was idolised by the youth and by women.



KEY PERSONALITY: LENI RIEFENSTAHL

A German film actress and director, Leni Riefenstahl was born in Berlin in 1902. She began her career as a **ballet dancer** but after an injury to her knee, she became a film actress in the mid-1920s. In 1931, she founded her own **film company** and won awards for *The Blue Light*, a film which she wrote, directed and starred in.

Hitler asked her to produce a film documentary of the 1934 Nuremberg Rally, called the *Triumph of the Will*. She also filmed the *1936 Berlin Olympics in Olympia*, which she divided into two parts. She was the first to use many of today's film-making techniques. In 1939, the International Olympic Committee honoured her for directing and producing that film.

After the Second World War, she was **cleared** of being a **Nazi**. She always claimed that she only directed films and was not a follower of Hitler's ideas. She said that in 1934, *'Nobody knew what was going to happen.'* *'All they have written about me is nothing. I had no position and no love story with Hitler.'* However, *Triumph of the Will* destroyed her career as a film director after the Second World War because of its association with the Nazis.

In her later life, she became well-known as a **still photographer**, particularly photographing the Nuba tribe in Sudan. She also got recognition as an **underwater photographer**. However, her life is still **controversial**; a proposal to make a film of her *Memoirs* was condemned by Jews in America. She died in 2003 at the age of 101.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What role did Goebbels play in Nazi propaganda?
2. How were each of the following used in propaganda:
 - a. newspapers and books
 - b. radio and cinema
 - c. parades and marches
 - d. the 1936 Olympics
 - e. the Nuremberg Rallies
 - f. the Cult of Personality?
3. What role did Leni Riefenstahl play in Nazi propaganda?

EXAM QUESTION

What contribution did Joseph Goebbels and/ or Leni Riefenstahl make to Nazi propaganda?
(2008)



Education as Propaganda: The Youth

Hitler paid particular attention to young people. **The Law Concerning the Hitler Youth** said; *'It is on the youth that the future of the German nation depends... Germany's youth is to be educated physically, mentally and morally, in the spirit of National Socialism, to serve the nation and the racial community.'*

The Nazis believed that **the whole purpose of education is to create Nazis**. All school subjects were used to get across Nazi ideas. A Nazi maths book had the following problem, *'The Jews are aliens in Germany. In 1933 there were 66,060,000 people living in the German Reich. 499,862 of these were Jews. What is the percentage of aliens in Germany?'*

Boys and girls were educated differently. **Boys** were geared towards military service and **girls** towards housekeeping. Children were taught to love their Führer and Hitler was often photographed with children. On Hitler's birthday, they put flowers beside his photograph at home and in school. In these ways, children were **indoctrinated** (brainwashed/moulded) into Nazi ideas.

Outside school, children were encouraged to join **Nazi youth organisations**. This became compulsory after 1936. **Boys** joined the **Hitler Youth** and **girls** joined the **League of German Maidens**. At younger ages, boys learned camping and hiking, but in older organisations they were taught Nazi ideas and military discipline. Girls, on the other hand, were encouraged to care for their health and prepare for motherhood.



Education as Propaganda: The Youth

The 'Swingers' - Youth Opposition: However, not all young people followed Nazi ideas. Some were **swingers** who listened to American and English music. Others formed their own groups such as the **Navajos** and the **Edelweiss Pirates**. They disrupted Hitler Youth patrols and were severely punished if caught. Their anti-Nazi activity in the Second World War resulted in public hangings of some of them.

PROPAGANDA: OLYMPIA AND THE BERLIN OLYMPICS, 1936

Hitler was persuaded by Goebbels that the Berlin Olympics could be used for propaganda. Goebbels controlled all German press reports on the Games. They were also the first to be broadcast on television. The Nazis removed anti-Semitic signs. They also used posters and magazines to link Nazi Germany and Ancient Greece. The Games were the first to use the torch relay from Olympia, Greece. The Nazis promoted their view of the German 'Aryan' race blond, blue-eyed and muscular. This fitted Goebbels' view of sport 'to strengthen the character of the German people... in the struggle for its existence.' Riefenstahl's documentary, Olympia, glorified German organisation, perfect athletic bodies and the links to Ancient Greece. But it also showed Jesse Owens' four victories.

The Police State and the Use of Terror

As well as propaganda, Hitler used a variety of organisations to create a **police state**. The most important of these was the **SS** led by **Himmler**. The main job of the SS was to destroy opposition to Hitler and to carry out Nazi racial policies.

Of all Hitler's organisations, the **Gestapo** (Secret State Police) were the most feared by ordinary Germans. They were led by **Reinhard Heydrich** who was ruthless with all opposition. They had wide powers of arrest and they used torture to gain confessions and information.

The **police and courts** also maintained Hitler's totalitarian state. Nobody could get a **fair trial** since justice had to serve the Nazi state. Between 1934 and 1939 over 500 were tried and executed for political opposition. By 1939, over 16,000 were in jail for political offences. Many of these were held in the **new concentration camps** such as **Dachau**, near Munich. Prisoners were forced to do hard labour and punishments such as beatings were severe. The camps held **undesirables** such as Communists, intellectuals, trade unionists, tramps and Jews. During the Second World War, six of the concentration camps became **extermination camps**.



How did Hitler deal with the Economy?

Hitler was faced with two economic challenges when he came to power - one was to reduce unemployment caused by the Great Depression, the second was to develop self-sufficiency in raw materials (**autarky**).

Reducing Unemployment

The rising unemployment caused the discontent which brought Hitler to power. Now he needed to solve the problem. The government spent money on **public works**, the most important being 7,000 kilometres of motorways (**autobahn**). Many workers were recruited from the unemployed so the unemployment figures fell from 6 million in 1932 to 2.5 million in 1936. Further declines in unemployment occurred with the introduction of **conscription** (compulsory military training) and the **growth of heavy industry** as Germany rearmed.

The rearmament was based on the **Four Year Plan**, introduced by Hitler in 1936. It led to huge increases in coal, iron and steel production. By 1939, unemployment was down to 200,000. Germany was much more successful than the US which reduced unemployment from 13 million (1933) to 8 million (1939) and Britain which still had 10 per cent unemployment in 1939.



How did Hitler deal with the Economy?

Self-sufficiency

The Plan also sought to develop **self-sufficiency** (**autarky**) in food and raw materials to prepare Germany for war. The food policy was not fully successful. There was a decline in grain and potatoes, and some foodstuffs had to be imported. In the case of raw materials there was a recycling of products and the development of synthetic products such as wool. But Germany still needed imports of oil, copper and rubber. Hitler's policy of self-sufficiency was only partly successful. Eventually Hitler would have to conquer lands in Eastern Europe to provide living space (**Lebensraum**) and supplies.

Who Benefited from Nazi Economic Policies?

The Workers

Workers benefited from the increase in jobs. Wages also increased but so did working hours. The Nazis tried to help workers by setting up two other organisations. **Beauty through Joy** aimed to improve working conditions, while the **Strength through Joy** movement was used to improve leisure time. Cheaper holidays, coach tours, concerts and cheaper sports facilities were provided. The Strength through Joy movement also encouraged the development of the **People's Car - the Volkswagen** - which ordinary Germans could own.

The Nazis and 'Big Business'

Big business gained most from German economic growth. Production came into the hands of fewer capitalists. By 1937, 70 per cent of German production was in the hands of **cartels** (monopolies). Even though the industries were owned by private individuals and companies, the overall aims of economic policy were decided by the Nazis: rearmament and self-sufficiency.



CHURCH STATE RELATIONS IN NAZI GERMANY

Religion in Germany

The German population was about two-thirds Protestant and one-third Catholic. Protestants were found mainly in the north of Germany, while Catholics lived in the south and west. Hitler hated the **Jewish-Christ creed**. He **condemned Christianity** for defending the weak and the lowly. But he could not openly attack it since most Germans were either Protestant or Catholic. He did not want to make martyrs of the priests. Instead he intended to use indirect methods to undermine the churches.

When he came to power, relations between the Nazis and the Catholic and Protestant churches seemed good. In his first speech as Chancellor, Hitler said he would respect the churches. '*Christianity*', he said, '*is the unshakeable foundation of the moral and ethical life of our people.*' In return, the churches thought Hitler would be better than the Weimar Republic in maintaining family values, and defeating the 'evils of Bolshevism' (communism).



The Nazis and the Catholic Church

Hitler, a former Catholic, was suspicious of the Catholic Church in Germany because it owed its allegiance to an **outside power** - the Pope. Before Hitler came to power, Catholics also supported the Centre Party, and Catholic clergy criticised the Nazis so that Catholics were less in favour of the Nazi Party than Protestants. Hitler saw the Catholic Church as a major obstacle to creating his totalitarian state so he was determined to control it.

Concordat

For the moment, however, both sides wanted peace, so Hitler and the Church signed a **Concordat** (July 1933) soon after he came to power. Hitler promised to respect the rights of the Catholic Church - including the rights to Catholic education - if the priests stayed out of politics. This helped Hitler gain international prestige.

Yet within months, Hitler and the Nazis began openly controlling some Catholic organisations. Even though the Catholic Church complained privately to the Nazis, publicly they declared their support for them in the hope of stopping the anti-Catholic attacks.

KEY CONCEPT REICHSKIRCHE

Hitler wanted to unite all Protestant churches in one German national church, called the Reichskirche. This was his plan to control the Protestant religions.



Further Attacks

Instead, the Nazis continued their **attacks**:

- Three Catholic lay leaders were killed on the Night of the Long Knives.
- Pressure was put on Catholic youth organisations to join the Hitler Youth.
- There was a campaign to close Catholic schools and replace them with non-religious schools teaching Nazi ideas.
- Catholic priests and monks were put on trial for sexual immorality and currency smuggling. These trials became part of a huge **anti-Catholic propaganda** campaign led by Goebbels to undermine the influence of the Church.

The Nazis defended their actions by saying they were not attacks on the Catholic Church, but against churchmen involved in politics.



Papal Letter

The Pope, Pius XI, responded in 1937 with an encyclical, ***With Burning Anxiety***. This was smuggled into Germany and read at masses. The Pope criticised the Nazis' treatment of the Catholic Church and urged Catholics to resist. The Nazis responded with further attacks on Catholics. By 1939, the power and influence of the Catholic Church in Germany were severely limited.

In spite of these attacks, Catholics blamed them on Nazi officials rather than on Hitler himself, who was able to hide his real intentions of wiping out the influence of the Catholic Church in Germany.

Euthanasia

A further clash between the Nazis and the Catholic Church occurred during the Second World War. The Nazis began a programme of **euthanasia** (the killing of disabled or psychiatric patients). When word of this leaked out, one of the leading Catholic Churchmen, **Bishop Galen**, preached a strongly critical sermon in which he condemned the execution of mentally ill people. His views were reported around Germany and even abroad. Whether for this reason or others, the euthanasia programme stopped soon after.



The Nazis and the Protestant Churches

The Protestant population was divided into many different Protestant churches. Hitler wanted to unite them in one national church. He wanted to abolish 28 regional churches and create one **National Reich Church (Reichskirche)** under Nazi control. He used the **German Christians** (a National Socialist group within the Evangelical Protestant Church) to try to achieve this.

National Church

Soon after Hitler came to power, a **National Church** was established and the Nazi nominee, Ludwig Müller, was elected as Reich Bishop. Müller and his fellow German Christians introduced Nazi ideas into the Church. The clergy had to be loyal Nazis and support the superiority of the Aryan race; anti-Semitism became a feature of their preaching. 'Adolf Hitler is the new messiah' was one of the beliefs of the new Church. Pastors wore SA or SS uniforms and swastikas were hung in churches. Hitler also ordered that a copy of Mein Kampf be placed on the altar of each church.



Opposition in the Protestant Churches

But opposition also built up within the Protestant churches, led by **Pastor Martin Niemöller** and **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**. They were supported by 7,000 pastors, about 40 per cent of the evangelical clergy. They objected to 'Nazified Christianity'. They wanted to conduct their religion according to the Bible and not state direction, and they objected to excluding christianised Jews. This opposition founded its own Church - the **Confessing Church**, which split the evangelical churches.

Hitler set up the **Ministry of Church Affairs** in 1935. This used repressive measures against the Confessing Church. Pastors were banned, and Niemöller and about 700 other pastors were arrested. Niemöller was later sent to concentration camps until 1945.

As Hitler's power grew stronger during the 1930s, he put more pressure on the churches. They were spied upon by the **Gestapo** which had a special section to deal with them. All Confessing Church seminaries were banned, and state-funded religious schools were closed by 1939. In all, from 1933 to 1945, more than 6,000 clergymen were jailed or executed. But Hitler's actions failed to create a unified Protestant Church or to stop the opposition.



First they Came – by Pastor Martin Niemöller

*First they came for the Communists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Communist
Then they came for the Socialists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Socialist
Then they came for the trade unionists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a trade unionist
Then they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Jew
Then they came for me
And there was no one left
To speak out for me*



Conclusion

Overall, Hitler succeeded in weakening and controlling the Churches, but he failed to crush them. The Churches as organisations did not provide effective opposition to Hitler; only individuals provided effective opposition.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How and why did the Nazis attack the Catholic Church?
2. How did the Catholic Church respond?
3. What was the disagreement about euthanasia?
4. What was the National Church?
5. How effective was opposition to Hitler in the Protestant churches?

EXAM QUESTION

How did Church-state relations develop under Mussolini and Hitler? (2014)

THE NAZIS AND THE JEWS: ANTI-SEMITISM AND THE HOLOCAUST

Nazi Racialism

Hatred of the Jews (**anti-Semitism**) was a very important part of Hitler's ideas. This hatred formed part of his thinking on race. He said the Germans were the **master race** or **Herrenvolk**, of Aryan descent. They were depicted as blond, blue-eyed, tall and strong. As a master race, the Germans were superior to other races. They produced the great civilisations in history - the great artists, writers, thinkers and sportspeople. Hitler wanted to protect the **purity** of the German race from the *untermenschen* (subhumans), the Jews and Slavs.

Hitler and the Nazis reserved their greatest hatred and fear for the Jews. In ***Mein Kampf***, Hitler said, 'The Jew is and remains a parasite, a sponger, who, like a germ, spreads over wider and wider areas.' The Jews were regarded as the source of all evil. They were blamed for Germany's loss in the First World War and the Great Depression. They were associated with Communism because Karl Marx, the father of Communism, was Jewish. Nazi propaganda portrayed the Jews as rich, even though a quarter of Berlin's Jews were in poverty. But they were easy targets as a greater proportion of German bankers, lawyers, doctors and dentists were Jewish.

Nazi newspapers spread wild **stories** about the Jews. They were accused of slaughtering children and *'the blood of the slaughtered child is used by young married Jewish couples, by pregnant Jewesses, for circumcision and so forth.'*



KEY CONCEPT HOLOCAUST

This is the word used to describe the Nazis' attempt to exterminate the Jews during the Second World War. It resulted in the death of about 6 million Jews.

KEY CONCEPT HERRENVOLK

This was the Nazi idea of the Germans as a master race, superior to all other races.

KEY CONCEPT ANTI-SEMITISM

The hatred for, and persecution of, the Jews. This hatred was based on religious and economic factors. Anti- Semitism became an important part of Nazi racial views.



Persecution Begins

When Hitler and the Nazis came to power in 1933, they did not have a clear plan on how they would deal with the Jews. They began by excluding them from positions of social and political influence. They were barred from the civil service, universities and newspapers. Hitler ordered a boycott of Jewish shops, lawyers and doctors. There were also random attacks by the SA on Jews in the streets or on their businesses.

Systematic Persecution

However, for the first couple of years in power, Hitler moved slowly against the Jews because of the fear of upsetting world opinion and because of his need for foreign loans. But by 1935 his position at home was secure. Persecution of the Jews became more systematic. Jews were banned from other areas of German life. They were excluded from parks, swimming pools, restaurants and public buildings. In September 1935, Hitler announced the **Nuremberg Laws**. Jews were forbidden to marry Aryans, and sexual relations between **Jews and citizens of German or kindred blood were forbidden**. Jews were also deprived of German citizenship.



Kristallnacht: The Night of the Crystal Glass

During the Berlin Olympics in 1936, the Nazis reduced the persecution of the Jews and got rid of some of the anti-Jewish signs. But this was short-term.

The worst oppression came on the **Night of the Crystal Glass (Kristallnacht)** in November 1938. The killing of a minor official The overcrowded conditions and the thin bodies in a Nazi concentration camp. in the German embassy in Paris by a Polish Jew was used as an excuse for widespread attacks on Jews by the SA. Jewish shops and synagogues were destroyed, over 100 Jews were killed and others were sent to concentration camps. Hitler imposed a fine on the Jewish community to pay for the damage.



The Holocaust

By 1939, nearly half of Germany's Jews had emigrated including the great scientist, **Einstein**. They were lucky to escape from the systematic repression and killing of the Second World War. During the war, 300,000 German Jews were joined by about 6 million more from the countries of Nazi-occupied Europe. Jews from these countries were sent to concentration camps in Germany and Poland.

From 1942, the Nazis went ahead with the **Final Solution** or extermination of the Jews. The most systematic killing was carried on in **Auschwitz** but there were other large camps at **Treblinka** and **Chelmo**. In all, six camps in Poland were involved in the scheme of **genocide** (extermination of a race or people).

Jews arrived by train and were separated into those fit for work and those unfit. The unfit were **gassed** in chambers designed like large shower rooms. The commandant of Auschwitz, Hoess, said, *'We tried to fool the victims into thinking they were going through a delousing process. Sometimes they realised our intentions and we had riots.'* The others were used as **slave labour** until they died. Jews were also used for live experiments such as operations without anaesthetic. In all about 6 million Jews were killed during the war, over 4 million of those during the Final Solution. After the war many of those responsible for the Holocaust were put on trial in Nuremberg. They claimed they were *'only obeying orders'*.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did Hitler and the Nazis hate the Jews?
2. How did the Nazis persecute the Jews in the 1930s.
3. What happened to the Jews during World War II (The Holocaust)?

CASE STUDY **THE NUREMBERG RALLIES**

Introduction

Mass (large scale) rallies were an integral part of **Nazi organisation and propaganda**. The most important of these was the annual party rally held in Nuremberg in southern Germany each August or September. The medieval city of Nuremberg was chosen by Hitler because of its **links** with German history - it was regarded as the unofficial capital of the Holy Roman Empire and some Imperial Diets (parliaments) were held there. Hitler said it was 'the most German of German cities'.

Nuremberg was also a strong **Nazi base** - Julius Streicher, a close Party colleague of Hitler, published his anti-Semitic newspaper, Der Sturmer, there and through his control of the local organisation, he made Nuremberg into the 'holy city' of the Nazi movement. Another factor which helped Nuremberg was its central location with seven railway lines converging there.



SOURCE 1 DEUTSCHLAND UBER ALLES

'During the present week the ancient city of Nuremberg in Bavaria, will witness stirring scenes. The annual Congress of the National Socialist Party is being held there, and many thousands of enthusiastic delegates will take part in the ceremonies. Whatever may be said or thought about the Nazis, nobody can deny that they are good showmen, and that Dr Josef Goebbels is the supreme showman of them all. He has dramatised and stage-managed the Nazi movement almost from the very start. Realising that the German people love a good spectacle he has left nothing undone to provide them with spectacular fare, and during the last three years he has been advancing from strength to strength.'

The Irish Times, 8 September 1936



SOURCE 2 PLAN OF NUREMBERG RALLY GROUNDS

The grounds were designed by Albert Speer. The Nazis began building them during the 1930s after Hitler came to power but they were not completed by 1939.



The First Rallies

The Nazi Party held its first rally in Munich (1923) but the second one - held in Weimar (1926) was delayed because Hitler was jailed after the failed Munich Putsch (1924). It wasn't until 1927 that the rallies were moved to Nuremberg which became their permanent base.

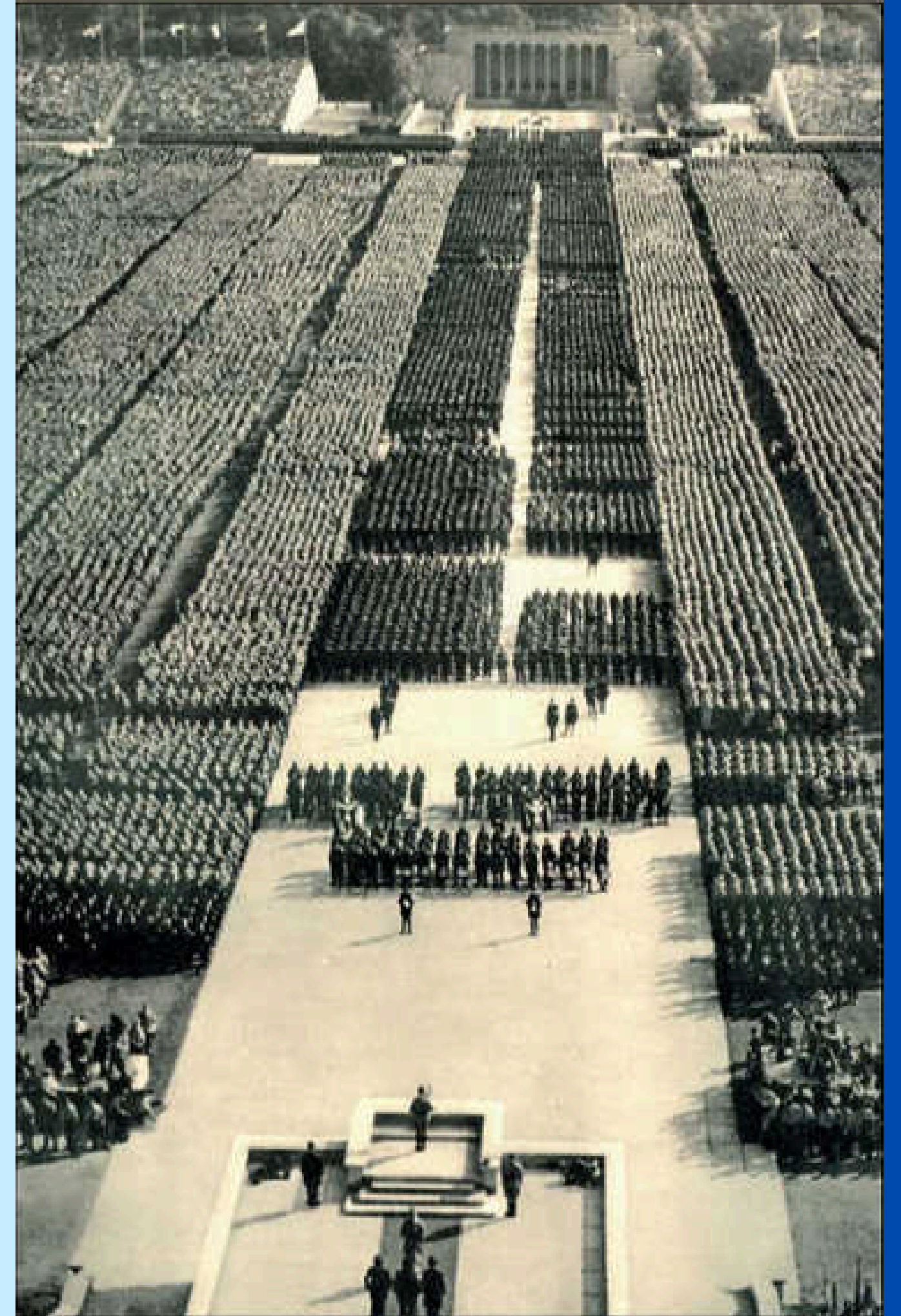
The first of the Party rallies was held there in August 1927. It featured a torchlight procession, the consecration of the flags, and Hitler's speech. The next Rally, held in 1929, was on a much greater scale. This was the last Nuremberg Rally before Hitler came to power in 1933, and it preceded the Wall Street Crash and the beginning of the Great Depression.

Prior to Hitler's coming to power, the rallies were used to show the strength of the Nazi Party and to impress German public opinion. He used the rallies to denounce the Weimar Republic and criticise democracy as weak. In this way, they were instruments of Nazi propaganda.



SOURCE 3 THE FLAG RITUAL AT THE LUITPOLD ARENA

Hitler honours the flag of the Munich Putsch in this ceremony, with the partly built grandstand in the background.



SOURCE 4 – PLANNING

'The participants were already flooding into Nuremberg. Carefully selected months in advance, each had a number, a designated truck, a designated seat in the truck, and a designated cot in the vast tent city near Nuremberg. By the time the ceremonies began on 4 September the thousands of party members had been rehearsed to perfection.'

J Toland, Adolf Hitler

The Nazis in Power - Expansion of the Rallies

But it was not until 1933, after Hitler came to power, that the Nuremberg Rallies took on the shape so well known to the world. Hitler declared Nuremberg to be the 'city of the Nazi Party rallies' and the resources of the German state were used to expand the annual Nazi celebration. At the 1933 Rally, **Albert Speer**, a young architect, became involved in the organisation of the rally. He constructed a huge wooden framed eagle behind the podium. The next year he was asked by Hitler to draw up an overall plan for the Nazi Party grounds, which were eleven kilometres in extent.



Site of the Rallies

The area had a series of large open spaces such as the **Zeppelin Field**, the **Luitpold Arena** and the **March Field**. The plans also included a number of large buildings such as the **Congress Hall**. These were linked by the **Great Road**, 2 kilometres long and 60 metres wide. Much progress was made in constructing the site but the construction was not completed when war broke out in 1939 (Source 2).

- The Zeppelin Field was built on an old airfield. It could accommodate over 100,000 spectators. Speer's design for a stone structure 'was a mighty flight of stairs topped and enclosed by a long colonnade, flanked on both ends by stone abutment... The structure had a length of thirteen hundred feet and a height of eighty feet.'
- The **Luitpold Arena** could hold 150,000 people. It was used for the mass gatherings of the SS and the SA.
- The **Congress Hall** - a huge hall based on Roman architecture.

Hitler and Speer wanted to create buildings which would last 1,000 years. They wanted to match the great buildings of past civilisations such as those of Ancient Greece and Rome. Hitler believed in Speer's theory of '**ruin value**' - that ancient ruins provided proof of the greatness of previous civilisations. Hitler also wanted his buildings to be the biggest '*to glorify his works and magnify his pride*', according to Albert Speer in his autobiography, *Inside the Third Reich*. These buildings in the Party Rally grounds would demonstrate Nazi power and reflect the glory Hitler planned for Germany. They would also be suitable to mobilise large crowds and create the feeling of a great national community (Sources 1 to 4).

The Themes of the Rallies - Their role in propaganda

The Rallies were used for many purposes: to glorify Hitler and thereby cement his relationship with the German people; spread Nazi ideology; celebrate Nazi achievements; mobilise the mass of the German people. They played a central role in **propagandising** Party members as well as a forum for further recruitment. (See sources 5, 6 and 7)

One way of spreading **Nazi propaganda** was that each rally had a different theme, usually celebrating recent Nazi achievements.

- In 1933, the Nazis celebrated their rise to power in the **Rally of Victory**. Leni Riefenstahl filmed *Victory of Faith* at this rally. Ernest Röhm, leader of the SA, featured in it so almost all copies of it were destroyed after the Night of the Long Knives.
- In 1934, the Nazis emphasised the oneness of Germany in the **Rally of Unity and Strength**. Leni Riefenstahl filmed *Triumph of the Will* at this rally.
- In 1935, the **Rally of Freedom** celebrated breaking the Treaty of Versailles with the introduction of conscription.

SOURCE 5 - THE HITLER YOUTH

'On Sunday all Nuremberg was filled with the presence of young Germany. From the earliest hours of the morning, endless columns of Hitler Youth marched to the stadium. As always, it is a marvellous sight: In rows of 48, the youth stand with others. from their area. It is a picture of discipline and strength. Other Hitler lads and girls sit in the seats around the field. Across from the Führer's platform are the choirs and music groups, and high above the watchtowers from which fanfares and drumbeats will sound. Rows of Naval Hitler Youth stand to the right and left of the Führer's platform.... A few minutes before ten a command thunders over the field. The units and detachments stiffen, then break out in thousand-fold jubilation: The Führer has arrived.'

From The Ceremony of the Hitler Youth, 1936

The Themes of the Rallies

Year	Congress	Location	Theme	Propaganda Film	Context
1923	1st	Munich	Germany Awake	-	Marked an early attempt by the Nazi Party to rally support, occurring before the failed Beer Hall Putsch.
1926	2nd Reich Party Congress	Weimar	Refounding Congress	-	Symbolised the Nazi Party's resurgence after Hitler's imprisonment, despite his speaking ban in Bavaria.
1927	3rd Reich Party Congress	Nuremberg	Day of Awakening	-	Represented the first Nuremberg Rally, signifying the Nazi Party's growing influence and organisational capabilities.
1929	4th Reich Party Congress	Nuremberg	Day of Composure	-	Occurred in a period of economic stability before the global impact of the Wall Street Crash.
1933	5th Reich Party Congress	Nuremberg	Rally of Victory	"Victory of Faith" (Der Sieg des Glaubens)	Celebrated the Nazi's ascent to power, highlighting Albert Speer's architectural contributions to the rally's staging.
1934	6th Reich Party Congress	Nuremberg	Rally of Unity and Strength	"Triumph of the Will" (Triumph des Willens)	Followed the consolidation of Hitler's power after the Night of Long Knives and President Hindenburg's death, featuring extensive development of rally grounds.
1935	7th Reich Party Congress	Nuremberg	Rally of Freedom	"Day of Freedom: Our Armed Forces" (Tag der Freiheit: Unsere Wehrmacht)	Coincided with the introduction of military conscription and the promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws, deepening racial policies and military expansion.

The Themes of the Rallies

Year	Congress	Location	Theme	Propaganda Film	Context
1936	8th Reich Party Congress	Nuremberg	Rally of Honour	-	Focused on the remilitarisation of the Rhineland and the introduction of the Four Year Plan, emphasising military and economic readiness.
1937	9th Reich Party Congress	Nuremberg	Rally of Labour	-	Highlighted achievements in reducing unemployment and showcased the 'Cathedral of Light', a symbol of Nazi architectural and ideological spectacle.
1938	10th Reich Party Congress	Nuremberg	Rally of Greater Germany	-	Celebrated the annexation of Austria and addressed the Sudetenland crisis, underlining the Nazis' expansionist ambitions and the spectacle of the 'Cathedral of Light'.
1939	11th Reich Party Congress	Nuremberg	Rally of Peace	-	Intended to portray Germany as a peace-seeking nation, was cancelled due to the outbreak of World War II, marking the transition from propaganda to warfare.

SOURCE 6-AMERICAN JOURNALIST, WILLIAM SHIRER, EXPERIENCED THE POWER OF HITLER SPEAKING

'I was a little shocked at the faces,' Shirer wrote in his diary, 'when Hitler finally appeared on the balcony for a moment. They reminded me of the crazed expressions I once saw in the back country of Louisiana on the faces of some Holy Rollers.. they looked up at him as if he were a Messiah, their faces transformed into something positively inhuman.' The next morning, Shirer was among the attendees at the Rally's opening ceremony, held inside a large hall on the outskirts of Nuremberg. It was Shirer's first experience with Nazi pomp and pageantry. 'I am beginning to comprehend,' he wrote, 'some of the reasons for Hitler's astounding success. Borrowing a chapter from the Roman [Catholic] church, he is restoring pageantry and colour and mysticism to the drab lives of 20th century Germans. This morning's opening meeting.. was more than a gorgeous show; it also had something of the mysticism and religious fervour of an Easter or Christmas Mass in a great Gothic cathedral. The hall was a sea of brightly coloured flags. Even Hitler's arrival was made dramatic. The band stopped playing. There was a hush over the thirty thousand people packed in the hall. Then the band struck up the Badenweiler March... Hitler appeared in the back of the auditorium and followed by his aides, Göring, Goebbels, Hess, Himmler and the others, he slowly strode down the long centre aisle while thirty thousand hands were raised in salute.' To Shirer, the intoxicating atmosphere inside the hall was such that 'every word dropped by Hitler seemed like an inspired word from on high. Man's - or at least the German's - critical faculty is swept away at such moments, and every lie pronounced is accepted as high truth itself.'



SOURCE 7 - LAUNCHING CAMPAIGNS

'Lloyd George [former British Prime Minister] was predictably impressed by the 1936 Party Day at Nuremberg. More spectacular than ever, it was marked by the launching of two new campaigns: the Four-Year Plan for economic self-sufficiency and an anti-Bolshevik crusade against "the powers of disorder". On a bright Sunday morning, Hitler spoke of the Bolshevik menace to 160,000 massed Brownshirts and SS men the huge Nuremberg stadium, then drove back to the city in an open Mercedes acknowledging the plaudits of the multitude who jammed the narrow streets and hung from the dormer windows.'

J. Toland, Adolf Hitler

THE PROGRAMME OF THE RALLIES

The Nuremberg Rallies were lengthened to seven or eight days from 1934. Each day was centred on a particular programme.

Day 1: Day of Welcome

Day 2: Day of Opening the Congress

Day 3: Day of the Reich Labour Service

Day 4: Day of Community Day 5: Day of the Political Leaders

Day 6: Day of the Hitler Youth

Day 7: Day of the SA and SS

Day 8: Day of the Armed Forces

Each day was focused on speeches by various Nazi leaders along with Hitler. They used these occasions to get across Nazi ideas so that the members of the different organisations were instilled with new spirit and energy in creating the totalitarian state. They could return to their homes full of enthusiasm for Nazi policies.



SOURCE 8-RALLY OF GREATER GERMANY

'The Party Congress at Nuremberg that year served as a dramatic prelude to the developing political crisis by its impressive display of Nazi power and discipline. The title of the 1938 festivities was appropriate: "First Party Rally of Greater Germany", as were the trappings. Hitler had brought from Vienna.. the insignia of the First Reich - the Imperial crown, the Orb of Empire, the Sceptre and the Imperial Sword. At the presentation of these symbols of imperialism he solemnly vowed that they would remain in Nuremberg."

J. Toland, Adolf Hitler

SOURCE 9 – SPECTACULAR

'200,000 party faithful with more than 20,000 unfurled flags crowded into Zeppelin Field and lined up with military precision. The effect of Speer's 130 giant searchlights was more breathtaking than imagined.. In the awesome silence, Hitler's voice came across the field from loudspeakers with eerie effect. "We are strong and will get stronger!" he said, and made it as much a threat as a promise.'

J. Toland, Adolf Hitler

The Organisation of the Rallies

Each Rally had to be carefully planned. In 1933, 500,000 Nazis had to be accommodated in factories, public buildings and in a camp with kitchens, washing facilities and outdoor toilets (Sources 4, 5, 6 and 7).

Features of the Rallies - Their role in propaganda

Each Rally was preceded the night before by the performance of the opera, Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg, by Wagner, Hitler's favourite composer. The Rally was opened with the Party Roll of Honour of those who died for the Party. Each part of the Nazi organisation presented themselves before Hitler over the six or seven days of the rally - the Hitler Youth, the German Women's League, the Reich Labour Front, the SA and the SS, as also did the Wehrmacht (the German armed forces). The ritual associated with each of these presentations played a very important part in the **propaganda** of the rally. On each day, Hitler's speech was the highlight of the occasion (Source 10).

Apart from emphasising the themes of each rally, other features of the rallies were used for **propaganda** purposes.



SOURCE 10 - HITLER SPEAKS

'The sense of power, of force and unity was irresistible, and all converged with a mounting crescendo of excitement on the supreme moment when the Führer himself made his entry. Paradoxically, the man who was most affected by such spectacles was their originator, Hitler himself, and they played an indispensable part in the process of self-intoxication.'

A. Bullock, *Hitler: a Study in Tyranny*



Hitler cult

Triumph of the Will showed how the cult of Hitler was promoted. At the beginning, Hitler is seen descending by plane from the clouds, a modern-day saviour coming to help his people. They are worshipping him as they wait. Many other aspects of the film feature Hitler, from speaking, to meeting supporters, to participating in the ceremony of the Blood Flag (the flag sanctified by the blood of those who lost their lives in the Munich Putsch in 1923). At the conclusion of Triumph of the Will, he is praised by Hess who says: "The Party is Hitler! Hitler is Germany - just as Germany is Hitler! Hitler! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! (resounding cheers)."



SOURCE 11 – RIEFENSTAHL

'Hitler appointed [Leni Riefenstahl] to make films of the rallies. As the only woman officially involved in the proceedings, she had frequent conflicts with the party organisation, which was soon up in arms against her. The Nazis were by tradition anti feminist and could hardly brook this self-assured woman, the more so since she knew how to bend this men's world to her purposes. Intrigues were launched and slanderous stories carried to Hess, in order to have her ousted. But after the first Party Rally film, which convinced even the doubters skill as a director, these attacks ceased.'

Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1970



Religious experience and Ritual

Apart from presenting Hitler as saviour or messiah, another aspect of the religious element was the use of 130 searchlights by Speer from 1934 onwards to create the Cathedral of Light around the Zeppelin field at night (Source 9).

Ritual reinforced Nazi ideas in the minds of the people. Songs, parades and marching were the most obvious elements of the use of ritual. There was also the widespread use of flags and the consecration of Party flags. Here Hitler used the Blood Flag or Banner as a symbol of sacrifice and loyalty to the Party and touched the new flags with it.

As part of the ritual, all groups in the Nazi organisation presented themselves separately before Hitler. As an example, in 1936 45,000 men of the Labour Front, responsible for public works in the Third Reich, marched before the Fuhrer, carrying spades like rifles. They proclaimed, *'The hour has come when once a year we lay aside our work and appear before the Fuhrer. We stand in common work and uniform. No one is too good to work for the fatherland, and thus this service has become the duty of all.'*

TRIUMPH OF THE WILL

In 1934, Hitler commissioned **Leni Riefenstahl** to film the Nuremberg rally. Preparations for the rally were linked with preparations for the filming. Nuremberg became a giant stage with flags, banners, marches and torches. Riefenstahl used 30 cameramen and over 100 technicians. She also used planes, cranes, roller skates and tracking rails to shoot the documentary. In all, 61 hours of footage was reduced to two hours of documentary, called the Triumph of the Will. 'At the premiere [of the film] she was greeted coolly by party officials but even Goebbels, her greatest critic, realised it was an outstanding achievement and, in its way, far more effective propaganda for the Führer and National Socialism than any other film yet made.' (Toland) Often regarded as one of the masterpieces of film propaganda, it was banned from public viewing for over fifty years. Now it can be viewed online.

OPENING SEQUENCE OF TRIUMPH OF THE WILL:

'September 4, 1934. 20 years after the outbreak of World War I, 16 years after German woe and sorrow began, 19 months after the beginning of Germany's rebirth, Adolf Hitler flew again to Nuremberg to review the columns of his faithful admirers.'



Enemies

Speeches from the Nazi leaders highlighted the enemies they blamed for the problems of Germany - the Treaty of Versailles, the Bolsheviks (Communists) and the Jews.

Treaty of Versailles: National Socialism has 'succeeded in unfastening shackle upon shackle of that Treaty which at one time was meant to destroy them for all time to come.' (The Irish Times, 7 September 1938)

Bolsheviks (Communists): 'Bolshevism turns flourishing countrysides into sinister wastes of ruins; National Socialism transforms a Reich of destruction and misery into a healthy State and a flourishing economic life...' (Hitler's speech, 14 September 1936)

Jews: 'The nation, he said, had been cleansed of "parasites". They had begun the struggle against "the greatest enemy threatening to destroy our nation - the international Jewish enemy". (The Irish Times, 7 September 1938)

SUMMARY OF THE NUREMBERG RALLIES

- The Nuremberg Rallies were annual events for the Nazi Party, which usually lasted a week from 1933 onwards.
- The Nuremberg Rallies were great propaganda occasions for Hitler and the Nazi Party.
- They used them to persuade their own followers as well as the wider German public and the world.
- They used them to get across their ideas and to create unity amongst party members.
- Each rally was based on a theme, and each day was centred on the parades and speeches of one section of the Nazi organisation.
- In the 1935 rally, the Nuremberg Laws against the Jews were passed at a special meeting of the Reichstag that was held there.
- Hitler's leadership was a central feature of the rallies.
- Leni Riefenstahl was asked by Hitler to film the 1934 rally. This film was called *Triumph of the Will* and it was a very successful propaganda film.
- There was huge organisation involved in the rallies, especially since in the later ones, about half a million people attended.
- Hitler commissioned Albert Speer to design the rally grounds, but this work was not finished when war began in 1939.



THE PROPAGANDA OF TRIUMPH OF THE WILL

The Nazis, especially the young men, are blond and blue eyed, like the Aryan race. They are muscular and happy, but they are also shown behaving like normal young men. The efficiency of Nazi organisation is emphasised through organising the camps, the food, the disciplined marches and parades. Presented as a documentary, it was a propaganda film designed to convince Germany and the world of the power, strength and determination of the German people under Hitler's leadership.

R. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*



The Nuremberg Laws

In 1935, the Reichstag held a meeting in Nuremberg on the last day of the Rally. Here it passed the Nuremberg Laws against the Jews. Jews became second-class citizens; Jews were also prevented from marrying non-Jews.

German power and Unity: The architecture, the parades, the thousands marching and the scale of the organisation were deliberately done to emphasise both Nazi and German power. Speeches also highlighted German power and unity, and Triumph of the Will portrayed a happy and united people adoring their master.



Nuremberg - a Symbol of Nazism

The 1939 Rally, with a theme of the Party Rally of Peace, was cancelled due to the outbreak of the Second World War on 1 September 1939. By then Nuremberg had become a key symbol of the Nazis. This, along with its role as a centre of war production, led to massive Allied bombing which flattened much of the city. After the war, the US army held a victory parade there and blew up the swastika which was behind the reviewing stand. The trials of the Nazi war criminals were deliberately held in the city.

Nuremberg has now become the centre of a museum and what is left of the Nazi Party grounds have a preservation order on them. Long after the Rallies have ended, their spectacle still causes controversy.



WEB RESOURCES

- German Propaganda Archive, Nazi Propaganda, 1933-45-
<http://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/ww2era.htm>
- Documentation Centre Nazi Party Rally Grounds
- Topics - The Nazi Party Rally Grounds - <https://museums.nuernberg.de/documentation-center/the-site/the-nazi-party-rally-grounds/>
- Search YouTube for 'Nuremberg Rally' and 'Triumph of the Will'

