Overview

- Nazi domestic and social policy was influenced by a belief in the national community – ‘Volksgemeinschaft’.
- Nazi economic policy was incoherent and, despite having an ideological basis, was moulded by circumstances.
- The Nazis attempted to control the Churches through the Catholic Concordat and a separate Reich Protestant Church. However, neither was ever fully brought into line and attempts to spread an alternative pagan faith met with limited success.
- Young people were the focus of intense indoctrination through the education system and Hitler Youth.
- The experimental, modernist Weimar culture was rejected in favour of a controlled and conservative approach to the arts, which demanded that the arts should glorify Nazi values.
- Nazi policy towards women was conservative, aiming to keep women ‘in the home’, but it was inconsistent since women were encouraged back into the workplace in the war years.
- Minorities were persecuted for their social, religious and racial non-conformity, with policies becoming ever more radical as the regime grew more secure. Attempts to create a ‘Jew-free’ society ultimately led to the Holocaust and the deaths of 6 million Jews.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What factors influenced domestic and social policy?
- How successful was Nazi economic policy?
- What was the relationship between the Nazis and the Churches within Germany?
- How did the Nazis see the role of education and try to ensure the support of youth?
- How did Nazism affect the arts and the media?
- How were social, religious and racial minorities treated within the Nazi State?
- What was the position of women in the Nazi State?
- To what extent did the Nazi authoritarian regime achieve its aims?
3.11 What factors influenced domestic and social policy?

From 1933, the National Socialists set out to create a state that would fulfil their ideological aims and transform society. They wanted to change the way in which people behaved and thought by imposing a new concept of ‘Volksgemeinschaft’. This was an attempt to create a ‘national community’, in which every member of the society worked to support others and to contribute to the greater good of the nation or ‘Volk’. This involved controlling how people lived, worked and spent their leisure time. It required a change in the consciousness of the German people so that they would act as one.

There was no intention to destroy old class divisions but to subordinate them to the new Nazi way of thinking, which in many respects was backward-looking. It perceived women fulfilling their traditional role as mothers and housewives, for example. It was, however, intolerant of alternative institutions, such as the Church, which the Nazis constantly tried to mould to their own way of thinking and only worked with under sufferance.

Volksgemeinschaft was based on blood and race. The ‘Volk’ was made up of racially pure Aryans, and one aim was to encourage every pure German to think of themselves...
as part of a master race, in which the state was superior to the individuals that comprised it. Nationalism and a common weltanschauung was to bind the people together. The ‘Volksgenossen’ (members of this community) would be Aryan and politically and socially committed, and every member would strive towards the goals of the state. In this way, Germans would be prepared for expansion and world domination.

The ideal German was seen as the German peasant farmer, whose very life was dependent on the German soil and whose background was in a traditional German way of life. In contrast, the Nazis sought the eradication of social outsiders, and in particular racial outsiders. Aryan Germans were to be united around common nationalist and anti-Semitic goals and, for the most part, all other policy decisions were subordinate to this aim. However, since Hitler had come to power promising to restore Germany’s economic fortunes, this was also a driving force behind domestic policy in the 1930s.

3.12 How successful was Nazi economic policy?

Hitler had no clear economic programme when he became chancellor in 1933. In the 25-point programme of 1920, the Nazis had claimed to want to respond to the needs of small farmers (29 per cent of the working population) and smaller urban traders. However, as with much of what Hitler said in his quest for power, he displayed little depth of commitment once he reached the top – despite his avowed ideological commitment to the traditional peasant working on the soil. Indeed, as the likelihood of power had grown nearer, he had increasingly looked to reassure big business, which could fund his campaigns and make his dreams a reality.

There was some token acknowledgement of the ‘socialist’ aspects of National Socialism in the policies of early 1933. All peasant debts – a total of 12 billion Reichsmarks – were suspended between March and October 1933 and high tariffs were put on many imported foodstuffs. The setting up of the Reich Food Estate under Richard Darré, the minister of food and agriculture, gave peasant farmers guaranteed prices for their produce. The Reich Entailed Farm Law (September 1933) provided small farmers with security of tenure by forbidding the sale, confiscation, division or mortgaging of any farm between 7.5 and 10 hectares (18.5 and 25 acres) that was owned by Aryan farmers. Similarly, there was a gesture towards helping urban traders in the Law for the Protection of Retail Trade (May 1933). Among other measures, the law forbade the setting up of new department stores.

Although such measures fulfilled one aspect of the Nazis’ professed concerns, they always took second place to the Nazis’ predominant desire, which was to strengthen Germany to fight a future war. It was the ‘national’ aspect of the party’s name that was the real driving force behind Nazi economic policy. This produced the concept of Währungsreform – a defence economy that would provide for Germany’s needs in a future war.
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cartel: A cartel is an agreement between companies to work together to reduce production costs and improve efficiency.

guns and butter: This phrase had been used by historians writing about the Nazis’ preparations for war. The Nazis could not invest heavily in rearmament (guns) while maintaining standards of living (butter). There was also literally a shortage of fats in Germany – both for consumption (butter, margarine and lard) and for industrial purposes (grease).

Fact: Krupp factories supported Hitler with weapons and armaments, while I. G. Farben built chemical plants. During the war, Krupp ran factories using slave labour in occupied countries and in 1943 Alfred Krupp was made minister of the war economy. I. G. Farben built a plant producing synthetic oil and rubber at Auschwitz, where 83,000 slave labourers worked.

I. G. Farben also held the patent for the Zyklon B gas, which was used in the gas chambers. At the Nuremberg Trials, Krupp was sentenced to twelve years in prison and thirteen directors of I. G. Farben were sentenced to one to eight years.

SOURCE A

In February 1933, a week after coming to power, Hitler announced:

For the next four to five years the main principle must be everything for the armed forces. Germany’s position in the world depends decisively upon the position of the German armed forces. The position of the German economy in the world is also dependent on that.


This principle became even more important after 1936 and necessitated a ‘managed economy’ whereby the state regulated economic life. Wehrwirtschaft included the pursuit of self-sufficiency, or autarky, which drove out ‘socialist’ ideas by demanding the development of modern large-scale farms. It also encompassed the acceleration of rearmament, which required the support of big business. Hence, between July 1933 and December 1936, over 1,600 new cartel arrangements were put in place.

The historian Richard Grunberg has estimated that, while only 40 per cent of German production was in the hands of such monopolies in 1933, it was 70 per cent by 1937. Many industrialists and companies became closely associated with the regime – for example, Krupp, the arms and steel manufacturer, and I. G. Farben, which produced chemicals.

However, as Hitler said to building workers in May 1937, ‘the decisive factor is not the theory but the performance of the economy’. Bracher has echoed this point, arguing that ‘at no time did National Socialism develop a consistent economic or social theory’. Ideological ideas could be contradictory and there was a conflict between the continuance of private ownership and increased state direction.

Furthermore, the practical need to provide the German people with a reasonable standard of living was difficult to reconcile with a commitment to rearmament. Hitler never fully resolved this conflict between ‘guns and butter’.

Unemployment had peaked at 6 million (one-sixth of the working population) in July 1932, and when Hitler became chancellor in 1933, Germany’s exports were just 39 per cent of the 1928 level. Reducing unemployment, stimulating the economy and addressing the balance of payments problem, which resulted from the collapse of the export market, were issues the Nazis had to address if they were to retain credibility and support. To help with this, in March 1933, Hitler appointed Dr Hjalmar Schacht as president of the Reichsbank. Schacht was a non-Nazi who was well respected by the business community.

In June 1933, a law to reduce unemployment was passed. This included:

- government spending on public works schemes – Arbeitsdienst
- subsidies for private construction/renovation
- income tax rebates/loans to encourage industrial activity.
Other measures that helped to combat unemployment included:

- emergency relief schemes
- recruitment into the Reich Labour Service (RAD) formed in 1934 – through which the unemployed were sent to work on various civil, military and agricultural projects
- a law for the construction of 7,000 km (4,350 miles) of motorway – the Autobahnen
- specific regulations – for example, that no machinery could be used for road-building when surplus labour was available
- an expansion of the party and national bureaucracy
- discouragement of female labour (see section 3.17), including marriage allowances to remove women from the labour market
- in March 1935, conscription and an increase in rearmament.

In order to stimulate the economy, tax concessions were offered to businesses, and Schacht also raised money for investment through ‘mefo bills’. These were credit notes, issued by the Reichsbank and guaranteed by the government. The bills were a means of ‘deficit financing’. They were paid back with interest after five years from the increased government tax revenue they helped to generate. Repayments on mefo bills accounted for 50 per cent of government expenditure in 1934–35.

Mefo bills permitted subsidies and agreements, such as that to match private investment in the car industry. This helped to stimulate housing, road construction and a variety of industries. Among these was the rearmament industry, although it was not the main growth area before 1936.

Schacht also took action to erode Germany’s debt and improve the balance of payments position. In 1933, controls were introduced to limit the drain of Germany’s foreign exchange by paying foreign debts in Reichsmarks.

In July 1934, debt repayment was stopped altogether and creditors were given bonds instead. Although creditor countries opposed this move, they failed to cooperate to put pressure on Germany. Consequently, the Nazis were able to push ahead with the New Plan of September 1934, devised by Schacht, who was promoted to minister of economics that year. The New Plan supported:

- increased government regulation of imports
- the development of trade with less-developed countries
- the development of German trade with central and south-east Europe.

The New Plan led to a series of trade agreements, particularly with the Balkan and South American states, which provided for the import of vital raw materials. Since these were paid for in Reichsmarks, they encouraged such countries to buy German goods in return. According to William Shirer, ‘Schacht’s creation of credit, in a country that had little liquid capital and almost no financial reserves, was the work of a genius.’

Other influences that helped the revival of the economy included the avoidance of labour troubles with the dissolution of the trade unions, the banning of strikes and the creation of the DAF in May 1933, and the Nazis’ continued use of propaganda to increase the illusion of success and prosperity and maintain confidence. There were also other ‘windfalls’, such as the seizure of Jewish property and Austrian assets, following the Anschluss of 1938.

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**Figure 3.20 Dr Hjalmar Schacht (1877–1970)**

Although not a Nazi Party member, Schacht helped to raise funds for the party in the 1930s. In August 1934, he was made minister of economics. However, he protested against extreme anti-Semitism and opposed Hitler’s demand for increasing expenditure on rearmament. He resigned as minister of economics in November 1937 and as president of the Reichsbank in January 1939. In 1944, he was charged with being involved in the July Bomb Plot. At the Nuremberg Trials, he was found not guilty of war crimes.

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**deficit financing**: This refers to the practice of spending more government money than is received. The difference is made up by borrowing.

**bond**: A bond is the contract accompanying a loan. The creditor is promised that they will be paid back at some point in the future and in the meantime annual interest is paid on the amount lent.
Fact: Each rank-and-file RAD member was assigned to a work ‘battalion’ in one of forty districts and was supplied with a spade and a bicycle.

Did the Nazis perform an ‘economic miracle’?

Unemployment fell from 6 million to 2.5 million within eighteen months of Hitler coming to power. By 1936, it stood at 1.6 million and, with subsequent expansion, by 1939 it had fallen below 200,000. Economic investment increased and public expenditure reached 23.6 billion Reichsmarks in 1939 – a considerable advance on 17.1 billion Reichsmarks in 1932 and 18.4 billion in 1933.

SOURCE B

What we have achieved in two and a half years in the way of a planned provision of labour, a planned regulation of the market, a planned control of prices and wages, was considered a few years ago to be absolutely impossible. We only succeeded because behind these apparently dead economic measures we had the living energies of the whole nation.


Fact: Following the Austrian Anschluss with Germany in 1938 (see section 3.10, Foreign policy success 1933–42), Austrian Jews were forced to declare their land, personal possessions, bank and savings accounts, securities, insurance policies and pension payments. These assets, totalling over $800 million, were gradually expropriated as Jews were deprived of their possessions and given jobs as forced labourers or removed to the Austrian concentration camp Mauthausen. By February 1939, 77.6 per cent of Austrian Jewish shops and businesses had been seized.

However, despite Hitler’s talk of a new ‘determination’, the economic situation when he took office was not as bad as he liked to suggest. Thanks to Brüning, reparations had ended and unemployment had started to fall after July 1932. Work creation schemes had been established and the world economic recovery from late 1932 had laid the basis for the so-called ‘Nazi economic miracle’. Furthermore, despite considerable economic achievements, the Nazis’ economic policies were not a total success. Reserves of foreign currency remained low and the balance of payments continued to be in deficit – and this grew worse after 1936, when Schacht’s influence declined. Rearmament put a strain on the economy, and although real wages increased overall, the price of food rose to the detriment of the poorer peasants and urban workers.

Figure 3.21 Inside the Krupp factory in Essen, 1933
Historians who question the strong dictator theory (e.g. Kershaw and Overy) would argue that there was no coherent Nazi economic policy, so it is wrong to ascribe the term ‘Nazi economic miracle’ to what happened after 1933. Despite Nazi claims, most economic policies were not carefully thought through and evolved according to political whims.

**How ready was Germany for war in 1939?**

By 1936, Schacht was urging a curb in public expenditure and a slowdown in the pace of rearmament, as it was straining the balance of payments. Hitler disagreed, and in August 1936 the Four-Year Plan was announced, with Hermann Goering as its director.

- Emphasis was to be placed on self-sufficiency, or autarky; plants were to be built for the production of ersatz (substitute) synthetic materials, such as artificial rubber (known as Buna), which could be made from acetylene.
- Special encouragement was to be given to the chemical industry and the development of synthetic fuel (such as using coal to produce oil).
- Steelworks were to be developed, using the lower-grade ores that were available within Germany (the Hermann Goering steelworks was erected in compliance with this).
- Emphasis was to be placed on the production of heavy machinery.
- The office of the Four-Year Plan was to issue regulations controlling foreign exchange, labour, raw materials distribution and prices.
- Targets for private industry were to be established through six sub-offices with special responsibilities for production and distribution. (These were: raw materials; labour force; agriculture; price control; foreign exchange; and the Reichswerke Hermann Goering, the steel plant that coordinated rearmament.)

The Four-Year Plan extended Nazi control by setting up a 'managed economy' in cooperation with big business. Private industry continued, but failure to conform and meet expectations could result in the business-being taken over. The plan had some success and there was a growth in output in all of the key areas. However, overall targets were not met (especially those for synthetic fuel, rubber, fats and light metals) and the production of synthetic substitutes proved costly. For example, to produce one tonne of oil, it took six tonnes of coal. By 1939, Germany still imported a third of all its raw materials, including iron ore, oil and rubber, and there remained a shortage of foreign exchange to buy necessary imports.

The development of the plan was also impeded by bureaucratic inefficiency and internal rivalry, while the need to maintain the production of consumer goods for the German people impeded the priorities of the plan.

Tim Mason, a Marxist historian, has argued that the German economy had reached a crisis point by 1938 and that this was so serious that it drove Germany to war. Mason claims that the economy had been put under strain by rearmament. He argues that the regime, which had consistently favoured capitalist big business over the workers, was unable to demand the 'sacrifices' necessary to pursue its...
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ends, such as wage reductions. Consequently the conflict between ‘guns and butter’ threatened unrest among the working classes and led Hitler to divert attention by going to war before he was really ready to do so. However, according to Overy, the decision to go to war was caused, rather than was caused by, an economic crisis. He argues that the outbreak of war was decided by the ending of appeasement, not an economic need.

Most historians agree that, whatever the reason, Germany was not fully prepared for war in 1939. Taylor, for example, has stressed that Hitler was unable to concentrate on rearmament because he needed to keep up consumer production. Burton Klein has put forward the view that Germany was ready for a short war of Blitzkrieg, but not for total war, which Hitler never intended. In support of this view, he has pointed to the ‘quite modest’ scale of economic mobilisation in 1939 and to the 30 per cent rise in the production of consumer goods between 1936 and 1939.

Overy has also argued that, although Hitler was undoubtedly preparing for war, he was not ready in 1939. This theory is backed up by Hitler’s speech at the Hossbach Conference in November 1937. In this speech, Hitler argued that Britain and France would not fight for Czech independence and that Poland could be taken without a general war.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 (Hitler’s ‘deal’ with Joseph Stalin to divide Poland between them) also fits the view that Hitler planned to absorb Poland peacefully and use Polish resources for economic build-up before launching into full-scale war, perhaps in 1942. When Hitler’s plans for peaceful expansion failed in September 1939, Hitler told Goering that he wanted ‘complete conversion of the economy to wartime requirements’. It is likely that it was at this stage that target dates had to be brought forward and a new acceleration applied.

Speer’s management of the wartime German economy

When war broke out, the Nazi rearmament programmes were only half completed. Consequently, the early German victories were more the result of their enemies’ weaknesses and their own military tactics than that of superior German armaments. However, these victories gave a false sense of confidence. Resources within Germany were not used efficiently. For example, the army could call up any worker, regardless of his skills or employment, women remained in the home, and few prisoners of war were set to work. (The proportion of prisoners in work had still only reached 40 per cent by 1942.) Furthermore, there was no central authority to direct labour.

Hitler’s failure to defeat Britain at the end of 1940 and the Soviet Union after the invasion of June 1941 created a situation that the German economy had never been prepared to deal with. Rather than a short war of Blitzkrieg, it had to sustain a long war. To achieve this, Fritz Todt was made minister of armaments and munitions in March 1940. He died in February 1942 and was replaced by Albert Speer.

Todt laid the foundations for Speer by setting up a series of committees with chairmen from industry to rationalise production. However, he had only limited success because of military interference. Erhard Milch (Goering’s deputy at
the air ministry) also organised aircraft production through committees linking producers and contractors, but he suffered the same level of army bureaucracy.

Speer's role in enabling Germany to continue the war to 1945 was to be of immense importance. Although he fought constant battles against other Nazi leaders, such as Goering, Himmler and Martin Bormann, as well as obstructive local Gauleiters, he managed to turn wartime production round.

In April 1942, Speer persuaded Hitler to establish a Central Planning Board to organise the allocation of raw materials and ensure that a larger proportion went into armaments. The Central Planning Board:

- set norms for the multiple use of separately manufactured parts to reduce unnecessary duplication
- provided for substitution in raw materials and ensured the development of new processes
- increased industrial capacity (sometimes by converting existing plants)
- placed bans or limits on the manufacture of unnecessary goods
- set schedules and issued output comparisons
- organised the distribution of labour, machinery and power supplies.

Speer worked extremely hard, overseeing everything himself. Hitler remained unrealistic and never fully understood Germany's economic position. He was reluctant to endorse rationing or to cut consumer production, which was kept at only 3 per cent below peacetime levels in 1942.

In the organisation of labour, Speer had to counter the prejudice of both Hitler and Fritz Saukel, who was officially responsible for the supply of labour. In January 1943, it was agreed that German women could be conscripted into the factories, but the order continued to be frequently ignored.

However, labour supplies were maintained with the use of 7 million foreign workers (both male and female) transferred to German factories. Although forced labour could be unreliable (particularly when workers were living on meagre rations), statistics would certainly support Speer's success in increasing wartime production.

In the first six months of Speer's control, overall armament production rose 50 per cent - guns 27 per cent, tanks 25 per cent and ammunition 97 per cent. Work continued despite military losses, defeats and allied bombing raids. On average, in the second quarter of 1944, 111,000 tonnes of bombs were dropped on Germany every month - many falling on fuel plants and refineries. Yet, from the production of 3,744 aircraft in 1940, factories reached a peak production of 25,285 planes in 1944. By rebuilding works to protect the factories from enemy bombing raids, 5,000 new planes were still built in the first four months of 1945.

However, not even Speer could overcome Germany's inherent disadvantages in the war. In the end, bombing and shrinking resources, as Germany's enemies advanced from east and west, caused the economy to crumble in 1945. By 1945, 400,000 civilians had been killed in bombing raids, and towns, cities and factories lay in ruins. The transport network had completely broken down with roads and railways destroyed or in a state of total disrepair, and oil was unobtainable.
According to Mommsen's view of Nazism's destructive capacity, economic destruction was the product of Hitler's personal obsession, as summed up in his order to Speer in 1945 to destroy transport and factories lest they fall into enemy hands. He claimed, 'The Germans have failed to prove worthy of their Führer. I must die and all Germany must die with me.' Fortunately, Speer countermanded the order, but there is no doubt that the Nazi economy had ultimately failed.

3.13 What was the relationship between the Nazis and the Churches within Germany?

Germany contained both Protestants (58 per cent of the population) and Catholics (32 per cent) as well as other religious groups.

Hitler's determination to set up an Aryanised social community left little room for religion, but since both the Protestant and Catholic Churches shared a good deal of common ideological ground with Nazism, in their dislike of Marxism, their conservatism, belief in family values and underlying anti-Semitism (even if in principle they spoke against it), he sought to 'use' rather than attack them, but he wanted to restrict the Churches to a purely spiritual role. This ran counter to the desire of most churchmen to maintain the Church's role in other activities such as youth groups.

The Protestant Church

The Protestant Church, which had Lutheran and Calvinist branches, had never been fully united, and with the rise of Nazism, a 'German Christian' movement emerged calling for a new national 'People's Church'. This was mainly supported by young pastors and theology students who saw the Nazis' 'national uprising' as the opportunity for religious as well as political renewal. The German Christians described themselves as the SA of the Church and adopted uniforms, marches and salutes. Their motto was 'the swastika on our breasts and the cross in our hearts'.

In May 1933 Hitler set up the Reich Church with the help of the German Christians, and he appointed a Reich bishop to coordinate the Protestant churches under his authority. In July, Ludwig Müller took this position and German Christians were appointed as state bishops and given other senior positions in the Church.

Some German Christians even wanted to remove the Old Testament from religious practice, calling it 'Jewish'. However, not all members of the Protestant Church approved of the German Christians and certainly not of their more outspoken devotees.

In September 1933, a group of 100 pastors headed by Martin Niemöller set up the Pastors' Emergency League to resist the German Christians and defend traditional Lutheranism. Some members of this League were arrested, including
Bishop Meiser of Bavaria and Bishop Wurm of Württemberg in 1934, provoking mass
demonstrations.

In October 1934, the Pastors’ Emergency League formally broke with the Reich
Church to form its own Confessional Church. This led Hitler to abandon his attempt to
impose direct control on the Protestant Church through the Reich bishop. The bishops
of Bavaria and Württemberg were reinstated and orthodox officials and bishops were
allowed to continue in their positions.

This left the Protestant Church divided into three:

- the ‘official’ Reich Church under Müller, which cooperated with the regime but
tried to retain organisational autonomy
- the German Christians, who tried to control the Reich Church but whose influence
decayed
- the Confessional Church, which formed an oppositional Church and was subject to
harassment from both the state and other Church authorities but had strong support
in some areas.

From 1934, the Church suffered less from direct persecution than from attempts to curb
its activities. Confessional schools were abolished, religious teaching was downgraded
in schools, and young people’s time was taken up with the Hitler Youth to such an extent
that attendance at Sunday services as well as participation in other Church activities
was hindered. The weakening of the Church was, however, sporadic and uncoordinated
because of the way the Nazi state was run, with some Gauleiters being far more
anti-religious than others.

**The Catholic Church**

The Catholic Church came to terms with the Nazis, agreeing to the dissolution of the
Centre Party and, in July 1933, signing a Concordat. According to the Concordat, the
Vatican recognised the Nazi regime and promised not to interfere in politics. In return,
the state promised not to interfere in the Catholic Church, which would keep control
over its educational, youth and communal organisations.

However, between 1933 and 1939, the Nazis increasingly tried to go back on
their promises. They used propaganda, insulting the clergy and Catholic practices
to encourage anti-Catholic feeling. Catholic schools were closed and had almost
disappeared by 1939. Catholic organisations and societies were also removed. For
example, in 1936, Church youth organisations were disbanded when the Hitler Youth
became compulsory.

In 1937, Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical *With Burning Anxiety* (Mit Brennender Sorge),
attacking Nazi beliefs. This was smuggled into Germany and read out in Catholic
churches. However, his successor in 1939, Pius XII, failed to condemn Nazism outright
and has been criticised for his tolerance of the regime.

Bishop Galen’s protest against euthanasia in 1941 was the most outspoken criticism
to come from a Catholic prelate but, although between one-third and half of
Catholic clergy were harassed by the regime, only one Catholic bishop was expelled
and one was imprisoned for any length of time, suggesting that protest against the
Nazis was limited.
The German Faith Movement, neo-Paganism and ‘positive Christianity’

Moves to weaken the Church were not always well coordinated. In the mid-1930s a ‘Church Secession’ campaign deliberately encouraged Germans to abandon the Churches. Some members of the Nazi Party, though not Hitler himself, encouraged the pagan German Faith Movement. This embraced several beliefs that fitted well with Nazism, including a belief in Blut und Boden (blood and soil) ideology and the rejection of Christian ethics.

Although it remained a small sect, at its height the German Faith Movement had around 200,000 supporters and was particularly strong among the SS. Paganism also influenced policy. For example, carols and nativity plays were banned from schools in 1938 and the word ‘Christmas’ was forbidden and replaced by ‘Yuletide’ in the war years.

Overall, the record of the Churches in the period of Nazi domination is not one of which they were to feel proud in later years. As organisations, they almost completely surrendered to the Nazi political leadership, although the breakaway Confessional Church and some individual clergymen (see the profiles of Niemöller and Bonhoeffer) were able to stand out as symbols of religious opposition to Nazism.

However, Christianity as such does not seem to have been affected. Church attendance remained steady, and even increased in the war years, making Christian belief an obstacle to a fully totalitarian state.

3.14 How did the Nazis see the role of education and try to ensure the support of young people?

Young people were very important to the Nazis. According to Hans Schemm, leader of the Nazi Teachers’ League, ‘those who have youth on their side control the future’. Consequently, much effort was put into winning over this new generation through youth movements and the control of education.

In July 1933, Hitler appointed Baldur von Schirach as ‘youth leader of the German Reich’. By the end of 1933, von Schirach had control over all youth organisations except for those Catholic organisations exempted under the Concordat (see section 3.6, The Catholic Church).

Membership of the Hitler Youth (Hitlerjugend: HJ) became compulsory in 1936, and in March 1939 the Catholic youth groups were finally closed down. The Hitler Youth was divided into various sections.
Nazi youth organisations were governed by two basic aims: to train boys for war and girls for motherhood. At every level there were uniforms, competitions, expeditions, sports, musical activities, theatrical productions and artistic displays to take part in. There was incessant activity and competition, which penalised the weak or uncommitted. Values of honour, discipline and self-sacrifice were encouraged, with contempt for moderation, intellect and sensitivity. Youths were even encouraged to spy on their parents and report aberrant attitudes.

Generally, the Hitlerjugend was well received by young people. However, some young people disliked the regimentation, and by the later 1930s alternative, illegal youth groups began to attract growing numbers. These included the working-class Edelweiss Pirates, and the middle/upper-class Swing Movement, whose members rejected Nazi values by dancing to American jazz (black) music and wearing American-style fashions.

The German education system was also used to inculcate Nazi values, and in May 1934 a centralised Reich Education Ministry was established under Bernhard Rust. No substantial change was made to the structure of the education system, apart from the establishment of a new series of elite schools including Nazis, Adolf Hitler Schools and the Ordensburgen (see the Fact box). However, there was a radical revision of the curriculum.

Biology, history and German became the means for conveying Nazi philosophy. In biology, racial differences and the Nazis’ interpretation of Darwin’s theory of selection and survival of the fittest were emphasised. History was designed to ‘awaken in the younger generation that sense of responsibility towards ancestors and grandchildren that will enable it to let its life be subsumed in eternal Germany’.

German lessons encouraged a consciousness of the nation and there was an emphasis on folklore. Ideology even entered the curriculum in a lesser way in Maths, where problems were posed in ideological language. At further education colleges and universities, new subjects such as genetics, racial theory, folklore, military studies and the study of German borderlands made an appearance. There was also a huge emphasis on sport, which occupied a minimum of five hours a week, giving the gymnasium teacher a new status. This was at the expense of religious education, which ceased to exist as a subject in the school-leaving examination in 1935. There was also differentiation between the curriculum for males and females, with the latter emphasising home economics.

Teachers and lecturers were also subject to Nazi controls. Some were dismissed under the 1933 Civil Service Law, and in 1939 all teachers became Reich civil servants. The National Socialist Teachers’ League and National Socialist Lecturers’ League organised special ‘camps’ to reinforce Nazi values. At these camps, all teachers below the age of fifty were expected to participate in sport. The teaching profession was required to

Fact: The Nazis (national political educational institutions) were set up from April 1933 and in 1936 fell under the influence of the SS. They produced highly trained youngsters for the armed forces. Classes were known as platoons and the routine of the school was based on that of a military camp with a communal style of living and sporting drill before breakfast. The Adolf Hitler Youth Schools were strongly influenced by the Hitler Youth. The ten Ordensburgen were party-controlled Nazi colleges, set up from 1937, with an emphasis on physical training.

Fact: A pupil had to reach the required standard in sport before they could move to the next class. Sport was an examination subject for grammar school entry (a child could be refused entry to secondary school if they had a serious physical handicap) and for the school-leaving examination. Persistently unsatisfactory sporting performance could be grounds for expulsion.

Theory of knowledge

Teaching history: Is it right for governments to control what is taught in schools? What is acceptable and what is not? Does the teaching of History serve a specific purpose? If so, what?
be actively anti-Semitic, and 'Jewish' theses, such as Einstein’s theory of relativity, were banned.

It is hard to gauge the effect of Nazi youth policies, but the willingness of millions of young people to fight for the Nazi cause when war broke out must suggest some degree of success. However, the quality of educational provision declined and extra youth activities sapped young peoples' energies. Furthermore, there was active discrimination against women and Jews and, in wartime, evacuations and the conscription of teachers further disrupted education.

3.15 How did Nazism affect the arts and the media?

The Nazis believed that Germany’s impressive cultural history placed the arts in a unique position in German society. Both élite art, such as classical music, paintings, sculpture and theatre, and the more popular arts such as film, radio broadcasting and light entertainment were perceived as media for reinforcing Germans’ shared statehood and race. Nazis despised the modernist styles of the ‘decadent’ Weimar era and looked to exploit ‘traditional’ art forms that were unadventurous, of high moral standing, dominated by Aryanism and that glorified a mythical past.

The main themes of the arts included:

- ‘blood and soil’, in which the peasant was cast as the representative of the ‘pure’ Aryan blood of the German people and his struggles with the soil and the weather were glorified
- anti-feminism, with its emphasis on pre-industrial images of women
- anti-Semitism, which permeated all aspects of composition and performance as well as colouring the themes of literature and film
- order, as reflected in a return to the classical tradition (particularly in sculpture and architecture), with solidity of style and a sense of dominance and purpose which served to underpin Nazi notions of the superiority of the state and the permanence of the Reich.

Goebbels was made minister of propaganda and popular enlightenment in 1933 and his office imposed rigorous censorship on all art forms, encouraging only those that conveyed a suitable propaganda message. In May 1933, Goebbels coordinated a ‘burning of the books’. This symbolically and physically destroyed works associated with Jews, Bolsheviks and ‘Negroes’, as well as anything seen as ‘decadent’ and ‘un-German’.

The annual Great German Art exhibition was another propaganda pageant, and the Reich Kulturkammer (Reich Chamber of Culture) ensured that only arts ‘suitable’ for the masses were permitted. An individual’s artistic tastes could become the subject of a report by their local block warden.