Many artists were expelled or went into voluntary exile. For example, the conductors Bruno Walter and Otto Klemperer, the composers Schönberg, Hindemith and Kurt Weill, and the singers Marlene Dietrich and Lotte Lenya all left the country.

In the concert hall, the works of the Jewish composers Mahler and Mendelssohn were banned. Modernist paintings were removed from art galleries. The Nazis also tried to prohibit American jazz and foreign dance-bands music, which was referred to as Negermusik.

However, some artists remained and helped to give the regime respectability. Composers such as Richard Strauss, who became the first president of the Reich Chamber of Music, and singers such as Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, performed for the regime.

The spread of the Volksempfänger (people’s receiver), a mass-produced radio found in over 70 per cent of German homes by 1939, increased the number of listeners who could enjoy German classical music, which was mixed with light entertainment and traditional Germanic tunes and songs. Composers such as Anton Bruckner and Richard Wagner became popular heroes and attracted a mass following, as concerts were filmed to reach a wider audience, and skilfully edited shots of the audience reaction were displayed to reinforce the desired patriotic message.

The Wagnerian Bayreuth Festival was turned from an elitist minority interest into a great popular festival, as were art exhibitions and some theatrical performances. Attendance at arts events was subsidised and encouraged through works outings and special ‘Strength through Joy’ or Hitler Youth events. However, in popularising the arts, the Reich Kulturkammer often resorted to commissioning second-rate artists, as well as forcing those who possessed real talent into narrow and restrictive paths.

Films were seen as a useful popular diversion – partly propagandist and partly to provide relaxation and to offer a ‘shared experience’, binding the community together. Sound was relatively new and was developed to great effect in feature films. The Reich Film Chamber controlled both the content of German films and the foreign films that could be shown.

Some great producers, such as Leni Riefenstahl, flourished and produced works of art, even if the ideological themes were controversial. However, some films lacked subtlety, and The Eternal Jew was so horrific that members of the audience fainted and box office receipts fell away. The cinema was used to show newsreels before the main picture and admission was restricted to the beginning of a programme, so all filmgoers had to sit through a certain amount of propaganda.

The impact of Naziism on the arts was contradictory. Not everything produced in Nazi Germany was an artistic disaster, but much individual creativity and inspiration was lost in the interests of Gleichschaltung (see section 3.4, The end of Weimar democracy) and the desire to use culture as a propagandist tool. Some positive advances occurred despite, rather than because of, Nazi values. Music suffered the least, since it was played as written, but other art forms were reduced to fake posturing. After the war, artistic expression in West Germany seemed to pick up where the Weimar Republic had left off, almost as though the Nazi era had never existed.

Fact: The most famous films of the era, Hitler Youth Quex (1933), Jud Süss (1940) and Ohm Krüger (1941) (which was about British atrocities during the Boer War), all had clear political messages. However, the messages were conveyed subtly and the films are deemed to have some artistic merit. Leni Riefenstahl, who produced the Triumph of Will (1935) about the Nuremberg Party Rally and Olympia (1938) on the 1936 Olympic Games held in Berlin, was a particularly innovative and talented director.

Activity

Weimar culture is epitomised in the works of the playwright Bertolt Brecht, the musician Kurt Weill, the artist George Grosz and the architects of the Bauhaus movement. Investigate some of their works and compare them with what followed during the Nazi era.
3.16 How were social, religious and racial minorities treated within the Nazi state?

Those who failed to fit Nazi criteria for Volksgenossen were subject to intimidation and persecution. Political enemies have already been considered (see section 3.9), but two other important minority groups suffered:

- asocials such as habitual criminals, tramps and beggars, alcoholics, prostitutes, gay men and lesbians, and juvenile delinquents
- biological outsiders, including those suffering hereditary defects that were considered a threat to the future of the German race and those who were regarded as a threat because of their race, such as Roma, Sinti and Jews.

'Asocials'

In September 1933, 300,000–500,000 so-called beggars and tramps were rounded up. Some (mainly the young unemployed) were given a permit (Wanderkarte) and had to perform compulsory work in return for board and lodgings, but the 'work-shy' were dealt with under the Law Against Dangerous Habitual Criminals, 1933. They were sent to concentration camps and made to wear a black triangle. They could also be compulsorily sterilised, since 'social deviance' was considered to be biologically determined. In the summer of 1938, another big round-up took place under the 'Work-shy Reich' programme. Those arrested were mostly sent to Buchenwald. Of the 10,000 tramps incarcerated during the Third Reich, few survived.

In 1939, the Reich Central Agency for the Struggle Against Juvenile Delinquency was established and a youth concentration camp was set up in Moringen near Hannover in 1940. Here, youths were subjected to biological and racial examination and those deemed unreformable were sterilised. If the 1940 Community Alien Law had been carried out, all those considered deficient in mind or character would have been similarly treated, but this policy was abandoned because of the war.

'Biological outsiders'

In July 1933, the Nazis introduced a law demanding the compulsory sterilisation of those suffering from specified hereditary illnesses. These included some illnesses that had a dubious hereditary base, such as schizophrenia and 'chronic alcoholism'. Heredity courts were established to consider individual cases, and between 1934 and 1945 around 350,000 people were sterilised under this law. People who had been sterilised were forbidden to marry fertile partners.

Euthanasia

The Nazis also launched a propaganda campaign to devalue people with mental or physical disabilities as 'burdens on the community'. This culminated in the euthanasia programme, which began in the summer of 1939. Practised in secret, the programme initially targeted
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 preindustrial 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.
children under three, but it was later extended to children up to sixteen years of age. By 1945, 5,000 children had been murdered by injection or deliberate starvation. In order to extend this programme to adults, carbon monoxide gas was used in six mental hospitals in various parts of Germany. By August 1941, when the programme was officially stopped because of public outrage, 72,000 people had been murdered. However, between 1941 and 1943, the secret programme ‘14F13’ led to the gassing of 30,000–50,000 in the concentration camps on the grounds of mental illness or physical incapacity.

Roma and Sinti

The Nazis persecuted Roma and Sinti people, then called Gypsies, because of their alleged inferior racial character. The term ‘Gypsy’ is now seen, in many countries, to be offensive. There were only around 30,000 ‘Gypsies’ in Germany, but they were included in the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, which banned marriage between Aryans and non-Aryans. Physical traits were analysed and efforts were made to distinguish between pure ‘Gypsies’ and half-‘Gypsies’ (Mischlinge) at the Research Centre for Racial Hygiene and Biological Population Studies.

From December 1938, gypsies were registered, and from 1940 they were deported to Poland to work in camps. In December 1942, they were transferred to Auschwitz and subjected to medical experiments carried out by Dr Josef Mengele, a Nazi German SS officer known as the ‘Angel of Death’.

Mengele supervised the selection of incoming prisoners to determine who should be killed, who would become a forced labourer, and who would be used for human medical experiments. Most of those Mengele experimented on died, either from the experiments or later infections. He also had people killed in order to dissect them afterwards.

It was not just the Roma and Sinti who suffered such cruelty, but of the 20,000 sent to Auschwitz, around 10,000 were murdered. Probably a total of around half a million gypsies were killed in occupied Europe.

Fact: The euthanasia programme began when the parents of a severely disabled boy petitioned Hitler for the right to kill him. Hitler agreed and ordered that other cases be dealt with in the same way.

Fact: Protests against euthanasia were led by the Catholic Bishop Galen. However, there was no similar Church-led protest against attacks on Jews.

Fact: Gypsies were given different-coloured papers according to their origins. The pure, Sinti, Gypsies received brown papers, the Mischlinge were given blue papers and ‘nomads’ received grey papers. There was a suggestion that the Sinti (who had kept their race ‘pure’) should be assigned areas in Bohemia and Moravia where they could live traditionally as ‘museum specimens’. However, the war stopped this from becoming more than a plan.

Fact: Mengele’s ‘research’ included an attempt to change eye colour by injecting chemicals into children’s eyes, experiments involving the amputation of limbs, or the injection of deadly viruses and shock treatments.

Figure 3.23 Nazi troops hold anti-Semitic placards in front of a locked shop in an organised boycott of German Jewish businesses in Berlin, 1933. One of the signs reads ‘Germans defend yourselves! Don’t buy from the Jews!’
Religious minorities

Although the Nazis exercised a cautious policy towards the main Christian religious churches, they were far less sympathetic to minority religious sects. The Salvation Army, Christian Scientists and Seventh Day Adventists were all attacked while astrologers, faith healers and fortune tellers were banned (despite the SS interest in paganism - see section 3.13, The German Faith Movement, neo-Paganism and 'positive Christianity'). The Jehovah’s witnesses, who refused to compromise with the regime and stood out against military service, were subject to particular persecution and most perished in the concentration camps.

The Nazis also closed down the German Freethinkers League (an atheistic association, but outside National Socialism) and persecuted Freemasons – partly because of their political associations, but also because they espoused values of tolerance and equality and were, in Nazi eyes, associated with Jews.

Jews

Although there were only about 500,000 Jews in Germany itself (less than 1 per cent of the population), and most had been thoroughly assimilated into the German community, Jews were portrayed by the Nazi regime as a serious racial threat and the root cause of Germany’s ills.

The first state-sponsored act of persecution was a one-day boycott of Jewish shops and businesses in March 1933. The action was largely taken to fulfil SA demands and was not repeated, since the economy was too fragile and fear of international repercussions was too great. The government continued to issue contracts to Jewish firms, although Jewish civil servants were dismissed under the Law for a Restoration of a Professional Civil Service, 1933. Persecution increased from 1935, with the announcement of the ‘Law for Protection of German Blood’ (Nuremberg Laws), which banned marriage between Jews and Germans and deprived Jews of German citizenship.

In 1938, persecution escalated as the regime grew increasingly radical:

- Jews were no longer awarded public contracts
- all Jewish property valued at over 5,000 marks had to be registered and could not be sold
- Jews could no longer be employed in businesses
- it was forbidden for Jewish doctors, dentists and lawyers to offer services to Aryans
- all Jewish children were required to bear the names Israel or Sarah in addition to other names
- Jews were obliged to carry identity cards and have their passports stamped with a

On Reichskristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass), 9/10 November 1938, there were attacks on synagogues, businesses, homes and shops – leaving broken glass (like ‘crystal’) everywhere. Hundreds of Jews were injured, ninety-one were murdered and 20,000 were sent to concentration camps on ‘the night the national soul boiled over’. The official excuse for the attacks was the murder by a Jew of Ernst von Rath, a German diplomatic official in Paris. In reality, this orgy of violence was orchestrated by

Increasing numbers of Jews emigrated between 1934 and 1939 as they were expelled from economic life, schools, cinemas, universities, theatres and sports facilities. In cities,
They were even forbidden to enter areas designated ‘for Aryans only’, and in January 1939 Hitler threatened the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe in the event of war.

The invasion of Poland in September 1939 added 3 million Jews to the German empire. Jews were placed in ghettos where they were forbidden to change residence, were subject to a curfew, had to wear a yellow star on their clothing and were compelled to perform labour service.

A final attempt to rid the German Empire of Jews – the Madagascar Plan of summer 1940 – had to be abandoned after Hitler’s failure to conquer Britain left the British in control of the sea. This left millions of European Jews facing death – through malnutrition and hard labour, and by mass shootings as the Germans advanced into Russia from June 1941. Following the Wannsee Conference of January 1942, Jews were gassed in the extermination camps created at Auschwitz, Chelmo, Majdanek and Treblinka, an event ambiguously referred to as the ‘final solution’. Around 6 million Jews died in the camps. The operation was shrouded in secrecy, but the fact that scarce resources were diverted to facilitate this Holocaust at a time when the Germans were struggling in the war gives some indication of the irrationality of Nazism.

3.17 What was the position of women in the Nazi state?

Hitler had very clear views about the position that women should hold in the Nazi state.

Hitler looked back on female emancipation during the Weimar Republic with disfavour. According to Nazi propaganda, the duties of women were as mothers, housewives supporting their husbands, and community organisers.

Fact: During the years of the Weimar Republic, women had been granted the vote and enjoyed greater equality with men than under the Nazis. They had been encouraged to pursue higher education, to take up professional posts and to participate in politics as members of the Reichstag.

Figure 3.24 According to Nazi ideology, a woman’s primary role was as a mother, whose duty was to bear further Aryans.
To encourage motherhood, birth control centres were closed, abortion was made illegal unless necessary for the eradication of 'genetic defects', and maternity benefits were increased. Income tax allowances for dependent children were raised and large families enjoyed concessions on expenses such as school fees and railway fares. In 1935, the Lebensborn (Spring of Life) project encouraged unmarried women with good racial credentials to become pregnant, with selected SS men as the fathers. 'The Honour Cross of German Motherhood' or 'Mothers' Cross' was established in May 1939 to encourage all women to 'bear a child for the Führer'.

However, only the genetically pure were allowed to procreate. From 1935, couples needed a certificate of 'fitness to marry' before a marriage licence could be issued. From 1938, 'unproductive' marriages could be ended. After 1941, couples found cohabiting after their marriage had been banned were sent to concentration camps. Mothers who failed in their duty to support their children's education as 'national comrades', for example attending the Hitler Youth (see section 3.14), could also face having their children removed.

To facilitate their role as mothers and alleviate male unemployment, legislation and propaganda were used to remove women from the workplace. By the Law for the Reduction of Unemployment of June 1933, women were encouraged to leave work on marriage with the support of generous loans. Marriage loans provided just over half an average year's earnings. They had a low interest rate of 1 per cent per month over eight-and-a-quarter years. They were reduced by one-quarter and repayments delayed by a year on the birth of each healthy child, so after having four children a couple owed nothing. At first, loans were only granted if a wife gave up her job, but the regulations changed in 1937. By 1939, 42 per cent of all marriages were loan assisted.

**SOURCE C**

The slogan 'Emancipation of Women' was invented by Jewish intellectuals. If the man's world is said to be the state, his struggle, his readiness to devote his powers to the service of the community, then it may perhaps be said that the woman's is a smaller world. For her world is her husband, her family, her children and her home.


In 1934, all married women were forced out of careers in medicine, the legal profession and the Civil Service. They were even declared ineligible for jury service, supposedly because they could not think logically. Similar beliefs placed politics out of women's reach. In a striking contrast with the 1920s, women were banned from senior positions in the Nazi leadership and there were no female Nazi members of the Reichstag. Education also discriminated against women. Only 10 per cent of university entrants were female until a shortage of professional and technical experts in the later 1930s led to a relaxation of policy.
Similarly, when a labour shortage began to affect rearmament plans in 1936, some women were once more drawn back into factories. Compulsory agricultural labour service was introduced for women under twenty-five in 1939, and from January 1943 women aged 16-45 could be conscripted for the war effort.

Speer later wrote of his struggle to get Hitler to agree to the need for female mobilisation, but leading Nazis justified the apparent change in policies by arguing that in wartime the whole of Germany had become the ‘home’ where women were required to serve.

Nazi policies towards women were therefore contradictory. While they claimed to promote the importance of family values, they encouraged an independent youth that placed the party above the family. While they extolled conventional morality and the importance of marriage, they also permitted illegitimate births and easier divorce, and advanced compulsory sterilisation for those with genetic defects. While they told women to stay in the home, from 1936 women were encouraged to return to the factories. While female education was initially discouraged, by the war years women were encouraged to enter universities and train for professional roles.

### 3.18 To what extent did the Nazi authoritarian regime achieve its aims?

Goebbels once wrote that ‘the aim of the National Socialist Revolution must be a totalitarian state, which will permeate all aspects of public life.’ In practice, the National Socialist regime never created such a state. Whilst Nazi Germany was a one-party state, dependent on propaganda and repression and bound by clear ideological principles, National Socialist power was never ‘total’. Whilst it sought the ‘blind obedience’ of the authoritarian state, the regime was, in practice, based on a number of compromises.

The chaotic governmental structure (see section 3.8) left a confusion of authority, while the practicalities of creating a Germany capable of waging war meant that obedience to the dictates of Nazi ideology sometimes had to be overlooked. There was comparatively little outright opposition in Nazi Germany, but it never disappeared altogether.

Furthermore, the Nazis never achieved the authoritarian control over society that they had hoped for with their Volksgemeinschaft ideas. There were certainly some major social changes, but these fell short of creating a truly ‘National Community’. Compromises were made over the Churches and the position of women, while the Euthanasia Project had to be abandoned and the persecution of minorities was often veiled in secrecy, suggesting the mass of the population had not been reconciled to Nazi ideas.

Even though Nazi Germany was radicalised, through a mixture of ideology and Hitler’s own personality, to create a state upheld by the SS-Police-SD system and capable of conducting the savage persecution of social and racial outsiders culminating in the Holocaust, it is hard to categorise it as ‘authoritarian’ in every sense of the word.
Hitler and Nazi Germany

Was Nazi Germany a totalitarian state and was Hitler ‘Master of the Third Reich’?

By 1938, outward appearances gave the impression of an effective and successful totalitarian regime. At its head was an all-powerful Führer with unlimited power that filtered down through his Reich cabinet and state governors to keep everyone in line. In theory, the party and state worked together, but studies of Nazi rule both at local level and in central government have suggested that the regime was not run as effectively as was once thought.

It is now more common to see the Nazi regime as a confused, polycratic system. This is because Hitler superimposed the party structure on to the state that he took over and deliberately generated competition within it. For example, within the chancellery, made up of Hitler’s close friends and followers, he allowed competences to overlap so that no one was quite sure who was responsible for what. There was, for example, considerable conflict between the authority of Goering and Albert Speer (see section 3.12, Speer’s management of the wartime German economy) over the economy. Similarly, the civil service found some of its work was bypassed by party members.

According to the historian Broszat, Hitler created a ‘confusing system of “empires”’. He believes this accounts for the ‘cumulative radicalism’ that marked the Nazi regime.
Brezat claims that policies grew more extreme because party leaders were constantly trying to go one stage further to please or impress Hitler.

This confusion fitted with Hitler’s ideological belief in the survival of the fittest. Hitler encouraged competition. It provided an opt-out if things went wrong and left him to intervene only when it suited him. Having no clearly organised pattern to government also appealed to Hitler’s fundamental laziness and lack of interest in bureaucratic detail.

This state of affairs did not help a regime that depended on Hitler’s decisions to run smoothly. According to structuralist historians such as Mommsen, Kershaw, Jeremy Noakes and Broszat, the Third Reich was not a powerful totalitarian state and Hitler was a ‘weak’ dictator. Although the authority of the Führer was never questioned, these historians argue that the formation of policy and decisions about its implementation were such a matter of guesswork, as ministers and officials sought to ‘work towards the Führer’, that the regime was chaotic.

SOURCE D

In the twelve years of his rule in Germany, Hitler produced the biggest confusion in government that has ever existed in a civilised state. During his period of government he removed from the organization of the state all clarity of leadership and produced a completely opaque network of competencies.


Intentionalist historians, such as Bracher and Hugh Trevor-Roper, suggest that the overlapping of interests was deliberate and that Hitler was a powerful integrating figure at the centre of government. According to them, internal rivalries generated a degree of effectiveness, reinforcing Hitler’s position and power. Hitler was able to take the praise for effective policies and blame others for ineffective ones – making himself a ‘strong’ dictator.

End of unit activities

1. Draw a table to show the economic concerns of the Nazi government at key dates during the Nazis’ time in power and their success in dealing with these issues:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key stages in the development of the Nazi economy</th>
<th>Main policies</th>
<th>Success?</th>
<th>Failure?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1933–36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936–42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KEY CONCEPTS ACTIVITY

Significance: Make a two-column table. In one column record the arguments that suggest Hitler was a strong dictator; in the other record those that suggest he was a weak dictator. Add the names of historians and quotations to support each view. At the bottom of each column, record the significance of that interpretation for an understanding of Hitler’s government.

QUESTION

Is the phrase a ‘weak dictator’ a contradiction in terms? Explain your views.