

Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918-39

Key Topic 1: The Weimar Republic, 1918-29

1: The origins of the Republic, 1918-19

- The legacy of the First World War: by the autumn of 1918 Germany was on its knees.
- The people were starving after four years of war and Allied blockade.
- In August and September, the German army collapsed.
- There were mutinies of sailors in the fleet at Kiel. These spread to the army and to the workers in the cities.
- On 9 November the Kaiser fled to Holland, leaving Germany in the hands of the Social Democrats.
- Their leader, Ebert, was horrified when he heard from the generals how bad the situation was and called for a cease-fire on 11 November 1918.
- Some units of the German army had seen little action and did not understand why the Armistice was signed.
- The German people had been told that the war was defensive and so did not understand why the government surrendered when Germany had not been invaded.
- In January 1919, there was an attempted revolution by the Spartacists, who were communist.
- This was only put down by the Freikorps, gangs of ex-soldiers, who roamed the streets of Berlin in uniform.
- The leaders of the Spartacists, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were both shot.
- This encouraged the Frei Korps to believe that the Weimar government was weak and that they could seize power.

The setting up of the Weimar Republic

- The Weimar Constitution was based upon proportional representation.
- This meant that it was very difficult for one party to gain an overall majority in the Reichstag, the lower house of the German parliament.
- The Allies hoped that this would prevent a strong government coming to power.

- In fact, it meant that all German governments were weak and were unable to take decisions.
- Because Berlin was in chaos, the new democratic government met in the small town of Weimar.

The constitution said:

- Everyone over 20, male and female, had the vote.
- Freedom of speech, religion and association were guaranteed.
- There was an elected parliament, called the Reichstag. The Chancellor, (as the Prime Minister was called), had to have the voting support of the Reichstag.
- There was a President, elected every 7 years. It was expected that the President would just be a figurehead.
- There were plans for the President to rule by decree without democratic support in the Reichstag.
- Elections were held on the basis of Proportional Representation. This gave numbers of delegates in the Reichstag in proportion to the numbers of votes cast for their parties in elections.

2: The early challenges to the Weimar Republic

- Germany had no tradition of democracy and of making democratic systems work.
- The Kaiser had despised democracy. Although he had fled, his generals, diplomats and civil servants remained.
- The Weimar constitution was one of the most democratic in the world, but it created difficulties.
- Proportional representation meant that it was worthwhile setting up new parties and the result was that no one party ever had a majority in the Reichstag.
- All governments had to be coalitions and these were frequently changing.
- Proportional representation meant that it was impossible for any one party to gain a majority in the Reichstag and for a strong government to emerge.
- The Weimar politicians who signed the treaty took all the anger of German nationalists. They were called the 'November Criminals'.
- They were accused of '**Stabbing the army in the back**' (because they believed – quite wrongly – that the army had not been defeated).

- The most important party in the 1920s was the Socialists (SPD), but they always needed the support of at least two other parties in order to form a government. The Chancellor was replaced about once a year.

What was the impact of the Treaty of Versailles on the Republic?

- The Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28 June, five years to the day after the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo.
- The German delegates had not been allowed to attend any of the meetings at Versailles, but had been shown the terms of the treaty in May.
- When they saw the terms, they were horrified. They had expected that the Treaty would be based upon Wilson's 'Fourteen Points', which recommended 'Self-Determination'.
- In fact, the Treaty was heavily influenced by Clemenceau's desire to 'make Germany pay'.
- The German delegates considered restarting the war, but this was impossible.

The main terms of the Treaty were as follows

- **Land** - Germany lost about 10% of her land, Alsace-Lorraine was given back to France.
- The Polish Corridor was created to give the new country of Poland a way out to the Baltic.
- This cut Germany into two. Germany also lost land to Belgium, Denmark and Czechoslovakia.
- **Colonies** - all German colonies were taken away and were handed to Britain and France to look after under League of Nations mandates until they were ready for independence.
- **Armed forces** - the German army was reduced to 100,000 men and conscription was banned.
- The navy was reduced to six ships and submarines were banned, the air force was to be completely destroyed.
- **The Rhineland** - this was to be demilitarised, no soldiers or military equipment were to be kept within thirty miles of the east bank of the river. The Allies would occupy it for fifteen years.
- **The Saar** - this was to be occupied for fifteen years and France would be able to mine coal in it for those years.

- **Reparations** -In 1919 the Germans were required to pay for all of the civilian damage caused during the First World War.
- The final bill was presented on 1 May 1921 and was fixed at £6,600,000,000. To be paid over thirty years.
 1. Germany was to hand over all merchant ships of over 1600 tonnes, half of those between 800 and 1600 tonnes and one quarter of her fishing fleet.
 2. She was also to build 200,000 tonnes of shipping for the Allies in each of the next five years.
 3. Large quantities of coal were to be handed over to France, Belgium and Italy for the next ten years.
 4. Germany was to pay for the cost of the armies of occupation and had to agree to the sale of German property in the Allied countries.
- **War Guilt** - Germany was to accept the blame for the war, alone.

Why was the Treaty very unpopular in Germany?

- The Germans had expected that they would be treated much more leniently.
- They had opened peace negotiations on the basis of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, which had explicitly denied that it would be a vengeful peace.
- The German people had not been told much about the war, they thought they were fighting a defensive war against aggressive neighbours.
- They did not know about the scale of Germany's defeat in autumn, 1918. The terms therefore came as a huge surprise to many of the German people.
- The Reparations were regarded as very severe as they punished the German people for years to come, not the Kaiser who had fled to Holland.
- The German government had not been allowed to take part in the negotiations; it was presented with the final version and told to sign it or else the war would continue.
- The War Guilt Clause was regarded as very unfair. The war had been sparked off by the murder of an Austrian by a Serb. Germany had only been one of the countries which became involved.
- Many Germans believed that they were being used as scapegoats for all of the other countries.

- Some of this was justified: the negotiations had been opened on the basis of the 14 Points.
- Reparations had more to do with revenge and with French war-debts than with fairness.
- However, the losses of territory and resources were not that great. The German economy revived rapidly and successfully in the later 1920s.
- Also, Germany had rejected the 14 Points while they stood a chance of winning the war and their own treatment of Russia at the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1918 was very punitive.
- Germany had suffered worse than any of the other major countries, except possibly for Russia.
- Two million German soldiers had been killed and the German economy had been ruined by the blockade set up by the Allies. Conditions in Germany in the winter of 1918/19 were very bad.
- The politicians who had signed the Armistice were called the November Criminals by Hitler, who joined a small extreme party in Bavaria in 1919.
- The government became very unpopular and from 1919 onwards there was increasing violence and large numbers of murders.
- Many soldiers did not believe that the army had actually been defeated, as Germany had surrendered before it had been invaded.
- Some wanted to fight on, but the odds against Germany had been very long indeed, with Britain, France and the USA all on the other side. When they returned home, they were treated like heroes.

Challenges to the Republic from Left and Right

- The first signs of unrest had been the **Spartacist Revolt** in January 1919; this had been crushed by the Freikorps.
- The Freikorps were gangs of ex-soldiers who paraded around towns and cities attacking opponents.
- In 1920, Ebert, the German president tried to disband the Freikorps, but this only led to an attempted coup by the Freikorps in March 1920, the Kapp Putsch.
- Once again, the government was helpless and the revolt was only defeated by the trade unions.
- They organised a general strike and refused to deal with the Freikorps. In the next two years there were more revolts, by both left and right.

- There were 400 political murders between 1919 and 1923. The most famous were the murders of Paul Erzberger in 1921, he was one of the ministers who had signed the Treaty of Versailles, and Walter Rathenau in 1922.
- Erzberger was killed by members of the Freikorps, Rathenau by a Nationalist who believed that he had sold out to Communist Russia because he had just negotiated the Treaty of Rapallo with Russia.
- In fact, Rathenau had reached an agreement so that the German armed forces could train in secret inside Russia and so break the Treaty of Versailles.

The consequences of these outbreaks of disorder were

- Increased street violence, often organised by the Freikorps
- A growing lack of respect for the Weimar government, which was seen to be collaborating with the Allies. This led to rising inflation and unemployment.
- The growth of extremist parties, particularly in the south of Germany.
- Although they were insignificant at first, the most important of these parties was to be the German Workers Party, which was set up in Bavaria 1919 by Anton Drexler.

The challenges of 1923

The Occupation of the Ruhr

- The new German government made its first reparations payment in 1922, but in December announced that it would not be able to make further payments.
- In January 1923 the Germans stopped coal shipments. The Allied Reparations Commission declared Germany in default.
- On 11 January, the French and Belgian governments retaliated by sending troops into the Ruhr.
- They intended to force the Germans to hand over coal and iron ore in place of the payments.
- The German workers in the Ruhr went on strike and the Weimar government called for passive resistance to the French and Belgians.
- It paid strike pay to workers by printing paper currency. This led to hyperinflation in Germany.
- The French attempted to set up a separatist movement in then Rhineland, but then cut off the Ruhr from the rest of Germany and brought in their own workers to work in the coalmines.

- The French forces brought in their own workers and then cut the Ruhr off from the rest of Germany. Violence broke out and a number of French soldiers were killed.

What were the results of the occupation of the Ruhr?

Hyperinflation

- Prices had been rising in Germany since the end of the war, but in 1923, inflation turned into hyperinflation.
- From January 1923, inflation in Germany reached ridiculous proportions as the government printed money to pay the strikers.
- Eventually 62 factories were working around the clock to keep up with demand.
- By August, prices were rising by up to 400% every day. People who had saved money lost everything.
- The middle classes were worst hit. War pensioners and anybody on a fixed income were hit very hard.
- Wages were paid every hour and then people rushed to spend their money as quickly as possible, buying anything that they could.
- Shopkeepers tried to keep their shops closed, but the government forced them to open.
- A loaf of bread which cost 29 pfennigs in 1913, cost 1200 marks by summer 1923 and 428,000,000,000 marks by November 1923.
- But some people benefited. Anybody who had borrowed money could repay the loan very easily, speculators and gamblers did very well and multi-millionaires appeared overnight.
- Foreigners flocked into Germany to buy up works of art as Germans desperately tried to make ends meet.
- In fact, despite the chaos, the Weimar government became more popular for the first time. Its support for the strikers began to swing popular opinion behind it.
- Hyperinflation was seen as something forced upon Germany from outside.

3: The recovery of the Republic 1924-29

- In August 1923, Gustav Stresemann came to power. He immediately offered to call off passive resistance and restart reparations if the French and Belgians would withdraw.
- Passive resistance was called off in September and Stresemann then immediately tackled hyperinflation.

- Stresemann issued a new currency called the **Rentenmark**, which was based upon German land and not gold.
- The old marks could be exchanged for Rentenmarks at the very good rate of 300,000,000 to 1.
- He then persuaded the Allies to agree to the **Dawes Plan**. This was a programme of loans from US bankers to help German economy to recover. 25 billion marks were invested in Germany in the next five years.
- The Dawes Plan also cut the amount of reparations Germany had to pay and extended the time they had to pay it.
- With some economic recovery, some reparations were paid. With some reparations paid, the French and Belgians withdrew their troops from the Ruhr in 1925.
- As relations between Germany and her neighbours improved, Stresemann signed the Locarno Pact.

The Locarno Pacts

- The Locarno Pacts were signed in October 1925 by France, Belgium and Germany.
- They guaranteed the borders between France and Belgium and Germany. Britain and Italy signed as guarantors of the treaty.
- A second set of agreements finalised arbitration treaties between Germany and France, Belgium, Czechoslovakia and Poland.
- These were intended to bring an end to the bitterness that had prevailed after the First World War.
- A third section created mutual defence pacts between France and Poland and Czechoslovakia.
- These were intended as protection against any future German aggression.

Why were the Locarno Pacts important?

- At the time they were seen as important steps in the process of Collective Security.
- There was talk of the 'spirit of Locarno', which seemed to offer the prospect of a Europe free from war.
- Locarno marked the re-emergence of Germany onto the European stage, thanks to the leadership of Stresemann.

- In 1926, Germany was admitted to the **League of Nations** and became one of the Permanent Council Members. This was a major triumph for Stresemann.
- In 1928, Germany signed the **Kellogg-Briand Pact**, which banned warfare

The recovery of Germany

- Germany now appeared to have recovered from the effects of the war and the political unrest that had succeeded it.
- There was growing support from many Germans for the Weimar government, however, coalitions continued to come and go regularly and there was a new chancellor on average every twelve months.
- There was increasing support for Democracy, from Germans who wanted their country run on democratic lines for the first time.

Changes in society

- Businesses, which prospered again under the recovery programme. New industries, like cars, radios, telephones, aircraft as well as shipbuilding all did very well.
- The Republic began to build social housing and committed itself to full employment.
- Benefits were made available for the unemployed, sick and elderly.

Cultural changes

- Artists enjoyed the new freedom from censorship, which Weimar offered after the heavy hand of the Kaiser.
- Film makers, like Fritz Lang, and architects like Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus school, led the world.
- Jazz clubs and cabarets did well as people spent the money they now had. Berlin became one of the most popular and freest cities in Europe.
- Berlin had 120 newspapers and 40 theatres.
- **Women** were given full equality, in education and employment and the right to vote.
- 35% of women in the Weimar Republic were working in 1925
- In 1929, the **Young Plan** reduced Germany's reparations still further. The amount payable by Germany was reduced to 1,707,000,000 marks per year, of which only 660,000,000 had to be paid.
- The rest could be postponed for up to two years. Payments would gradually increase for thirty-six years and would end in 1988.

- Because the payments under the Young Plan were less than Germany was making under the Dawes Plan, most people expected this to be a final settlement of the reparations problems.
- However, the Young Plan was attacked by right-wing parties and Hitler was used as a spokesman by Alfred Hugenberg, the leader of the German National Party.

Key Topic 2: Hitler rise to power 1919- 33

1: The early development of the Nazi Party, 1920-22

Hitler's early career

- Hitler was born in Austria in 1889. Both his parents died when he was young and he drifted to Vienna and tried to get into an Academy of Art.
- He was rejected twice. He lived rough and earned a living painting postcards.
- He later claimed that his hatred of Jews began in Vienna, although there is no evidence for this because he often met Jews, worked for them and ate in their houses
- In 1914, he volunteered for the German army and served throughout the First World War.
- He won the Iron Cross First Class and was promoted to Lance-Corporal. He later described it as the happiest time of his life.
- Hitler, who was gassed in October, spent the last weeks of the war in hospital.
- Like many he did not understand why the government had surrendered and came to believe in a Jewish conspiracy to save property in Germany.
- He accused the November Criminals, the politicians who had signed the Armistice, of betraying Germany.
- Hitler remained in the army after the war and eventually got a job as a spy for the German army. In September 1919, he was ordered to join the German Workers' Party.
- Hitler joined the Party Committee and was appointed to be in charge of propaganda. In 1921, he became the leader.
- Hitler changed the name of the Party to the 'National Socialist German Workers' Party'.
- He wanted to attract as many supporters as possible, National was intended to entice attract right-wing nationalists, and Socialist to attract workingmen.
- The party soon became nick-named the Nazis by their opponents. But this was a term never used by Hitler. He always referred to his followers as National Socialists.
- The Nazis were just one of a number of extremist fringe parties in Bavaria in the early 1920s. They had a few thousand supporters, but were unknown in the other parts of Germany.

- Their main appeal was through the speeches of Hitler, who soon gained a reputation as a powerful orator, despite his Austrian accent.
- Hitler set up his own private army, the **Sturm Abteilung (SA)**, led by a violent ex-soldier Ernst Roehm, and used it to attack his opponents in the streets.
- He tried to pose as a strong man who could solve Germany' problems.

In 1920, Hitler published the 25 Point Programme; some of the main aims were:

1. We demand the union of all Germany in a Greater Germany on the basis of the right of national self-determination.
3. We demand land and territory (colonies) to feed our people and to settle our surplus population.
4. Only members of the nation may be citizens of the State. Only those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation. Accordingly, no Jew may be a member of the nation.
5. Non-citizens may live in Germany only as guests and must be subject to laws for aliens.
8. All non-German immigration must be prevented. We demand that all non-Germans who entered Germany after 2 August 1914 shall be required to leave the Reich forthwith.
23. We demand controls on the press to prevent deliberate lies being spread about political parties. The publishing of papers which do not support to the national welfare must be forbidden.
25. To put the whole of this programme into effect, we demand the creation of a strong central state power for the Reich.

2: The Munich Putsch and the lean years

- Hitler saw the chaos that Hyperinflation caused in 1923 as an opportunity to try to seize power.
- He had already tried to stage a coup in May, but this had been easily broken up by the authorities.
- This time, therefore, he delayed until members of his own party demanded action.
- When he heard of a meeting at the Burgerbraukeller in Munich on 8 November, at which three Bavarian ministers were due to be present, he decided to act.

- At exactly 8.30 p.m., Hitler broke up the meeting; he fired a gun at the ceiling and announced that he was going to try to take over the government the following morning.
- The ministers present agreed to support him, but in the confusion they escaped and the authorities were warned of the plot.
- The night was spent drinking and the owner of the beer hall later claimed that the Nazis had drunk nearly 2,400 pints of beer and caused considerable damage.

What happened on 9 November?

- The following day, Ernst Roehm, the leader of the Sturm Abteilung, the Storm Troopers, seized the Post Office in Munich at about 8.30 a.m. and waited for Hitler to march to his support.
- In the meantime, Hitler had got up late, probably because the Nazis had been drinking heavily all night and had a late breakfast. He did not begin the march until about 11.00 a.m.
- Hitler and the war-hero Ludendorff led the march into Munich the next morning. They had about 2,000 supporters.
- They hoped the police would not fire at them and that the people would rise in support.
- In fact no one joined them, the police opened fire and 16 Nazis were killed, including Hitler's bodyguard who dived on top of Hitler to protect him.

What happened to Hitler?

- In a Nazi biography, Hitler claimed that his shoulder was dislocated when the man next to him was shot. Other versions of the story suggest that he fell to the ground to avoid being shot.
- Hitler fled and was arrested two days later. Hitler was tried for high treason. He was found guilty and sentenced to just five years in prison by a pro-Nazi judge.
- After only eleven months in prison Hitler was let out.

The consequences of the Munich Putsch

Party reorganisation and 'Mein Kampf'

While Hitler was in prison after the Beer Hall Putsch, he wrote '**Mein Kampf**' (My Struggle), which was a cross between his autobiography and a list of his political ideas:

- The German people were a master race, a 'herrenvolk'. All other races (Slavs, Jews, black people) were inferior.
- Germany should be re-united and seize land to the east

- To make Germany great again, a new leader was needed. Democracy was a weak system and should be replaced by dictatorship. Communism was evil, too.
- Hitler also decided that he would have to change his tactics and the way that his party was organised.
- He decided that it must try to gain power by legal means.
- He must set up a proper political party with a national organisation. Up to then, the Nazis had only been well known in Bavaria.
- He needed to win as many votes as possible if he was to gain a majority in the Reichstag.
- He set up sections for women and children and for teachers and founded the Hitler Youth.
- He appointed Josef Goebbels as head of propaganda. His job was to put the Nazi message across as clearly as possible.
- In 1926 the black-uniformed SS (Schutz Staffel) was formed, loyal to Hitler personally.

Why did Hitler decide to make these changes?

- He knew that if he tried to use violence again and failed a second time, he would be finished.
- The result was that by the end of 1926 the Nazi Party had 50,000 members, but its seats in the Reichstag had fallen from 32 in 1924 to only won 12 in the general election of 1928.
- During the 'Golden Years', most Germans had little time for the Nazis and in 1928 they only won 800,000 votes in the general election.

The Bamberg Conference

- In early 1926, the Nazi Party appeared to Hitler as if it was splitting into two different groups.
- This was because Hitler had originally tried to persuade as many people to join as possible.
- He had wanted nationalists (right-wing) and socialist (left-wing); by 1926, differences were emerging
- At Bamberg, the northern group represented the socialist wing of the Party. The southern group was the nationalist wing.

- Hitler made it clear that the Nazi Party was nationalist and he was not going to allow socialist ideas.
- Joseph Goebbels, who was originally in the socialist wing, changed sides as a result of the speech Hitler made at the Conference.

3: The growth in support for the Nazis 1929-32

Why did support for the Nazis increase in the late 1920s?

- In 1928 the Nazis won support outside of Bavaria for virtually the first time.
- They began to win votes in farming areas of north Germany, as prices fell.
- In 1929, Hitler won the support of a wealthy businessman, Alfred Hugenberg, when he attacked the Young Plan.
- Hugenberg offered to finance the Nazis. He also owned 53 newspapers, which he used to publicise the Nazis.
- In 1929, Hugenberg bought the largest cinema chain in Germany, Hitler then had access to even more publicity.
- From 1929 support for the Nazis rose steadily.

Numbers of Nazi members in the Reichstag

1928	12
1930	107
1932 July	230
1932 Nov	196

Why did support for the Hitler and the Nazis grow so quickly?

The impact of the Great Depression and the growth in unemployment

- On 3 October 1929 Gustav Stresemann died. He had been responsible, more than any other politician, for Germany's recovery in the 1920s.
- On 24 October 1929 Wall Street, the American Stock Exchange crashed. US bankers called in their loans to Germany. German companies had to close down.
- This led to the Depression of the 1930s, which affected Germany more than any other country. By 1932 6,000,000 Germans (one in three of all workers) were out of work.
- Unemployment pay only lasted six months. After that came real poverty and homelessness.

- The Weimar government seemed unable to deal with the crisis (along with most governments in the world).
- The worst effects were felt from 1931 onwards when a series of banks went bust.
- This ruined many ordinary Germans and led to them losing their homes and being forced to live on the streets.
- In desperation, people began to look for extreme measures to deal with the situation.
- Two parties began to gain support, the Nazis and the Communists. Voters began to turn away from the centre parties and look to extremes.
- The Social Democrats refused to cut unemployment pay and so went into opposition.
- As they were the largest single party this made it difficult to make coalitions. Governments came and went.

Failure of successive governments

- In this situation, President Hindenburg began to allow **Chancellor Brüning** (1930-32) to use his emergency powers on a regular basis to by-pass the Reichstag.
- Brüning tried to tackle the Depression by reducing government spending, which cut wages of state employees, and raising taxes.
- These policies were very unpopular, but there was little else he could do.
- The policies would have worked and Brüning would have been able to balance the budget but he also faced opposition from Hindenburg.
- In April 1932, the president asked him to take more right-wingers into the government; Brüning refused and resigned.

Reasons for the growth in support for the Nazi Party

- Hitler told the German people that the problems of the Depression were not their fault.
- He blamed the Jews and the Weimar democrats for Germany's problems. He used them as a scapegoat.
- The Nazi Party propaganda chief, Goebbels, had Hugenberg's money and newspapers to back them.
- Hitler hired a private plane to fly around Germany. He was the first politician to do this.
- Goebbels organised torchlight processions, rallies, radio broadcasts, films. Nazi propaganda was far ahead of any of their rivals.

- Hitler said that he would be able to solve the problems. He offered strong leadership and easy solutions.
- Hitler said that he would do away with the Treaty of Versailles, which had treated Germany so badly, and make their country great again.
- He was always backed up by large numbers of disciplined and uniformed followers. The SA rose in numbers from 30,000 in 1929 to 440,000 in 1932.
- The discipline, the processions and the uniforms gave the impression of toughness and knowing what was needed. It reminded people of the old days under the Kaiser.
- The violence of the SA increased. This gave the impression of action and purpose.
- They particularly attacked Communists, which pleased middle class and business people. It also made the Weimar system look as though they couldn't keep order.
- Hitler promised different things to different groups of people.
- To businessmen he promised that he would control the Trade Unions and deal with the Communists.
- To workers he promised that he would provide jobs.

How did Hitler become chancellor?

- In 1932 Hitler stood in the presidential elections against Hindenburg. Hindenburg won 17 million votes, Hitler won 11 million.
- Hindenburg was very angry that Hitler had dared to stand against him.
- In the July 1932 general election, the Nazis became the biggest party in Reichstag.
- Hindenburg refused to appoint Hitler Chancellor. Hindenburg despised Hitler because he was an Austrian by birth.
- He disliked his anti-Semitism. Hindenburg knew that Jews had fought and died for Germany in the Great War.
- **Franz von Papen** became chancellor. He was a political nobody with little support in the Reichstag.
- In November there was another general election. The Nazis lost some support, but were still the biggest party in the Reichstag.
- Franz von Papen was replaced as chancellor by **General Kurt von Schleicher**.
- Schleicher had even less support than von Papen and only lasted a month.

- The problem was that Hindenburg wanted a chancellor who he could trust (preferably a general), but the Reichstag was dominated by the Nazis, Socialists and Communists.
- Von Papen was furious that von Schleicher had taken his place and was determined to get rid of him.
- In January 1933, he suggested that Hindenburg appoint Hitler as chancellor, with von Papen as vice-chancellor in a coalition government.
- Hindenburg's son, Oscar, helped von Papen to persuade his father that Hitler should be appointed.
- Von Papen thought he could control Hitler. He believed that the fall in the number of Nazi MPs in November 1932 suggested that the Nazis were becoming less popular.
- Hindenburg against his better judgement agreed. On 31 January 1933 Hitler became chancellor of Germany. He led a coalition government, which included three Nazis.

Key Topic 3: Nazi control and dictatorship, 1933-39

1: The creation of a dictatorship

- Hitler had no intention of being controlled by von Papen. He immediately called for a general election on 5 March.
- He was determined to gain the overall majority that he needed to make himself dictator legally.
- A week before the elections the Reichstag building was set on fire. The fire was almost certainly started by the Nazis themselves.
- The fire was blamed on the communists, because a Dutch member of the Communist Party was arrested inside the Reichstag building. 4,000 Communists were arrested.
- The probable culprits, however, were members of the Berlin SA, led by Karl Ernst, who were acting on the orders of Hermann Goering.
- The Storm-troopers were later shot by the SS to avoid the truth coming out.
- In March 1933, before the election, Goering, the Minister for the Interior in Prussia, enrolled SA members as special constables.
- Members of other parties attacked, arrested, beaten up.
- In the election the Nazis won 17.3 million votes, 288 seats, the biggest party, but still not a majority in Reichstag. 22 million vote for other parties.
- When the Reichstag met on 17 March, the Socialists and Communists were threatened and intimidated.

The Enabling Act

- On 23 March the Reichstag met again. Many opponents of the Nazis stayed away.
- With the support of Hugenberg's National Party the Nazis now controlled the Reichstag.
- The Reichstag passed the Enabling Act, 1933. This gave Hitler the power to by-pass the Reichstag and make laws without its consent for four years.
- It was passed by 441 votes to 83 with the help of the Nationalists, and with the Reichstag building surrounded by armed SA members.
- Local government was taken over by the Nazis; each of the 18 provinces was given a Nazi governor, April, 1933. Local parliaments were abolished.
- Only Nazis could become civil servants, judges.

- Trade unions were abolished in May 1933.
- The Law against the Establishment of Parties banned all other political parties were banned in July 1933. Their leaders were arrested, or fled abroad.
- The first concentration camp, at Dachau, was set up for political opponents in 1933.

The Night of the Long Knives

- Once Hitler became chancellor, he began to face opposition within the Nazi Party.
- Hitler's only rival was Ernst Rohm, head of the SA, 3 million strong, or so Roehm claimed, by 1934.
- The SA was the left wing of the Nazi Party. Its members had been attracted by the addition of 'Socialist' to the name of the German Workers' Party.
- Roehm wanted a socialist revolution in Germany and also wanted the SA to be merged with the German army, with himself at the head. This would make him more powerful than Hitler.
- Hitler was not only well aware of Roehm's ambitions, but also realised that the generals would never accept Roehm as commander-in-chief.
- Hitler would need their support if his plans for war were to be realised.

Why did Hitler order the Night of the Long Knives?

- Hitler did not want the socialists within the party to take control. He wanted a right wing dictatorship.
- He needed the support of the army for his plans for war and knew that the generals would not accept Roehm as their leader.
- Hitler had to act before President Hindenburg died. It would be very difficult to deny Roehm power when Hitler became Fuhrer.
- Roehm claimed that the SA was growing rapidly. He put the membership at 3,000,000, although it was probably nearer 500,000.
- Roehm ordered all members of the SA to go on holiday for the month of July 1934 and summoned the leaders to Munich for a conference.
- On the night of 30 June 1934, 400 SA leaders, including Rohm, were assassinated by the SS on Hitler's orders. Also murdered were General Kurt von Schleicher and his wife.

- In 1934, Hindenburg died. Hitler becomes President and Chancellor combined, calling himself simply, The Leader – Der Fuhrer. The army swore its oath of loyalty to Hitler, personally.

2: The Police State

- The Gestapo (Geheime Staats Polizei), or secret police, was set up in 1933 and was run by Himmler after 1936.
- It was responsible for investigating cases of espionage, treason and sabotage and was exempt from the jurisdiction of the courts.
- That meant that complaints against it could not be made and cases could not be brought against its actions.
- Consequently, the Gestapo could take any action that it wished without fear of protest or restraint.
- This power became even greater in 1934, when Goering handed the Gestapo over to Heinrich Himmler and in 1936 it was merged with the SS.
- The Gestapo favourite tactic to deal with opponents of the regime was 'protective custody'.
- This involved the arrest and detention of individuals, who then had to sign a document stating that they had requested being given protection against personal harm
- From 1937, the camps were run by the SS. In fact, Dachau became the headquarters of the SS education and medical services.
- The SS had been set up as a small protection squad for Hitler in 1925, but grew enormously under its leader Heinrich Himmler.
- By 1934, it had more than 50,000 members and they acted as if they were above the law.
- SS officers were attached to army units to ensure that regular officers obeyed Nazi instructions.
- Eventually, the SS had three sections. One section operated as a form of political police force, which became very powerful after it was merged with the Gestapo in 1936.
- The Waffen SS was a fighting force with superior weapons to the army; by 1945 it had 950,000 members.
- The final section was the Death's Head SS, which ran the Concentration and Extermination Camps. Members of this group were selected for their sheer brutality.

- The SD (Sicherheitsdienst) was the intelligence section of the SS. It compiled evidence against the SA which led to the Night of the Long Knives.

The Legal System

- Nazis soon dominated the government and the judicial system. All provincial assemblies were closed and replaced by *Gaus*. Each of these was run by a *Gauleiter*.
- Within each *Gau* were a number of *Kreis* (districts or counties), followed by the *Ort* (municipal) level, which was the lowest in the Nazi Party organization.
- In court, evidence from informers was used; people were encouraged to inform on neighbours, colleagues, even their own family.
- Every block or street had an informer who reported on any behaviour that might suggest non-Nazi views e.g. not giving the Hitler salute.
- People who offended could be arrested and sent away for 're-education', which usually meant a spell in 'protective custody'.
- Protective custody involved the arrest and detention of individuals, who then had to sign a document stating that they had requested being given protection against personal harm
- Nazi 'People's Courts' tried people, often in secret. The judges were all Nazis. By 1939 more than 160,000 political prisoners in Germany.
- The first concentration camps had been opened in 1933. Treatment was deliberately made as strict as possible to act as a deterrent.
- Political opponents, gypsies, or anybody else that the Nazis regarded as 'untermensch', were simply locked away.

The Nazis and the Catholic Church

- In 1933, Hitler signed a **Concordat** with the Pope to protect the Roman Catholic Church in Germany.
- He agreed to safeguard the rights of the Catholics if the Church kept out of politics. No agreement was made with the Protestant Churches.
- Criticisms of brutality and changes in education began in 1935 and resulted in priests being arrested, often on trumped up charges.
- In March 1937, Pope Pius IX attacked Nazis in an encyclical (open letter) and the regime reacted by arresting hundreds of priests; many were sent to concentration camps and even shot.

The Protestant Churches

- Unlike Catholics, Protestants belonged to many different Churches, consequently, the Nazis believed that they would be able to deal more effectively with them.
- The Nazis were supported by '**German Christians**', an organisation which believed that National Socialism and Christianity shared common values.
- Opposition to Nazification was led by Martin Niemoller who set up the Confessional Church; this soon claimed 75% support amongst church ministers.
- The Nazis declared the Church illegal and arrested ministers; 800 alone in 1937, many of whom were sent to concentration camps.
- Some Protestants formed a 'Reich Church', as part of the Nazi Party.
- Mein Kampf was placed next to the bible on the altar and the swastika was given equal prominence with the cross. Many Protestants refused to join and many were arrested.
- Many other religious groups persecuted.

3: Controlling and influencing attitudes

- In 1933, Josef Goebbels became Minister for People's Enlightenment and Propaganda.
- He controlled all forms of communication: books, newspapers, films, newsreels, radio as well as music and the arts.
- Films and parades became major features of Nazi propaganda. The Nazis produced hundreds of films all glorifying themselves and Germany.
- Feature films were made about German heroes, such as the Teutonic Knights and Frederick the Great, who had created the state of Prussia in the eighteenth century.
- Thousands of extras were used to create massive battle scenes in which the Germans were always successful.
- Newsreel films were made by directors like Leni Riefenstahl, who filmed the Olympic Games in 1936.
- Her most famous film was 'The Triumph of the Will', which encouraged people to fight against the odds.
- These films were intended to emphasise the superiority of the German people and show how much progress had been made under the Nazis.
- No non-Nazi views were ever heard in newspapers and books. Only messages praising Hitler and the Nazis reached the public.

- In 1934, the 'Burning of the books' took place. Nazi students took books by Jewish or anti-Nazi authors out of libraries and burnt them in huge bonfires.
- The novels of H G Wells were banned because one, 'Things to Come', described a future war in which humanity was destroyed.
- Cheap radios were produced. Hitler's portrait was in every public place. People almost worshipped him; he was portrayed as Germany's saviour from disaster.
- Rallies were held regularly at which Nazi flags were carried and speeches made praising Hitler. The **1936 Olympic Games** were a propaganda coup for Hitler.
- Photographers, writers, musicians and others had to join Nazi organisations in order to work. If they did not, their work was banned.
- All newspapers had been taken over in 1933 and the surviving ones were dominated by Nazi propaganda.
- The most well known was the Volkischer Beobachter (People's Observer), which was in effect the official paper of the Nazi Party.
- The most effective was 'Der Sturmer', edited by Julius Streicher, which had first appeared in May 1923.
- It attacked Jews in crude, vicious and vivid ways and contained reports of scandals involving Jews.
- Its visual material was often sexually explicit and attracted younger readers.
- It spread anti-Jewish propaganda and was directed to a mass audience. Its sentences were short and its vocabulary elementary.
- By 1925, there were cartoons in every issue. Photographs were added in 1930. The number of pages in each issue increased over the years.
- In 1927, it had a weekly circulation of 14,000 copies. This was a very low figure and only increased slowly after the Wall Street Crash.
- When Hitler came to power in 1933, this figure had only risen to 25,000.
- The big jump in circulation came after Hitler became Chancellor and reached its highest figure of 486,000 in 1935.
- The paper could be read free of charge in public places, consequently, its readership was higher than its circulation.
- On the occasion of the annual Nuremburg rallies, print runs were as high as 2 million.

4: Opposition, resistance and conformity

Opposition from civilians

- There was little real opposition to the Nazis during the war. Swing groups danced to American music.
- More serious was the White Rose which distributed leaflets attacking the Nazis.
- Edelweiss pirates refused to join the Hitler Youth and sometimes attacked Nazi officials. They helped deserters to avoid capture.
- The White Rose group also began painting anti-Nazi slogans on the sides of houses.
- This included 'Down with Hitler', 'Hitler Mass Murderer' and 'Freedom. They also painted crossed-out swastikas.
- The leaders, Hans and Sophie Scholl were arrested and executed.
- Niemoller and Bonhoeffer were Protestant priests who spoke out against the Nazis.
- Bishop von Galen was a Catholic who preached against euthanasia.
- The most effective and determined opposition to Nazi policies came from ordinary parish priests and individual clergy, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Alfred Delp.
- Swing groups were widespread in the late 1930s and opposed the activities of the Youth Leagues. They listened to jazz and other foreign music.
- The Edelweiss Pirates attacked Nazi officials and helped prisoners of war escape.
- The SPD (Socialists) managed to smuggle literature into Germany. The KPD (Communists) set up an underground that was never completely eliminated.

Opposition from the military

- There was a plot against Hitler in 1938 and two generals were arrested

Key Topic 4: Life in Nazi Germany, 1933-39

1: Nazi policies towards women

The effects of Nazi rule on the lives of men and women

- The Nazi Party was a man's party. There were no women in senior positions. Hitler and the Nazis did not believe in equality for the sexes.
- Women had to stay at home, produce more children and look after the family.
- This was for both racial reasons: (to produce more racially-pure Germans) and economic reasons (to solve unemployment by removing women from the labour market)
- There was a great deal of propaganda about the ideal German family. Photographs and posters showed the woman looking after the children and the man going out to work and protecting the wife.
- Women were forced to give up work when they got married. They could not be civil servants, lawyers, judges or doctors.
- Men were to be preferred to women in job applications.
- Couples received a loan of 1,000 marks on getting married. After four children, the loan did not have to be repaid.
- The Mutterkreuz (Mothers' Cross) was awarded to women on Hitler's mother's birthday 12 August).
- Four children meant a bronze cross, six for a silver cross and eight for a gold cross.
- Women with hereditary diseases or mental illness were sterilised so as to keep the German race 'pure'.
- Unmarried women could volunteer to have a child by a 'pure Aryan' SS member.
- Nazi propaganda discouraged wearing make-up, high heels, perfume, smoking in public.
- Women were encouraged to wear traditional peasant dress with a head scarf.
- Women's roles can be summarised as three 'Ks': Kinder, Kirche, Kuche = Children, Church, Cooking.

2: Nazi policies towards the young

- All schools came under Nazi control. All school books were rewritten and included Nazi ideas about hatred of the Jews and war. Boys and girls went to separate schools.
- All teachers had to join the Nazi Teachers League
- The curriculum was changed. Subjects concentrated upon German history and nationalism.
- Girls were prevented from studying science and could only learn the mathematics necessary to be a housewife.
- In History: pupils were taught about great events of German history, from a pro-German point of view.
- The Nazis view of the First World War, the 'stab in the back' was included as 'the truth'.
- In Biology, pupils were taught eugenics, phoney 'race science', which was designed to 'prove" the superiority of the German race.'
- Pupils got much more PE; boxing was compulsory for boys; girls did cross-country.

The Nazi Youth Movements

- Children joined at the age of five and stayed until eighteen. Membership was virtually compulsory.
- Boys joined the Pimpfen, then the German Youth and then the Hitler Youth. Girls joined the League of German Maidens.
- Children took part in 'fun' activities, camping, sports, outings. These helped make the Youth movements popular at first.
- They also had lectures about Nazi ideas, like racism. The girls were taught about child-rearing.
- The boys did activities which prepared them for the army: cleaning rifles, reading maps, throwing hand grenades, doing mock parachute jumps, going on long marches.
- The meetings were in the evenings and at weekends. Girls found that they had little time for homework. This was to prevent them having a career.
- Children were encouraged to spy on their parents and report what they did and said.

- In 1933 30% of young people in Germany were in the Nazi Youth movements; by 1938 it was 82%. So compulsory was it that the 18% who did not join is surprising.
- By the later 1930s some young people were getting resentful of the time the Hitler Youth took up, and the boring lectures they had all heard before at school.

3: Employment and living standards

- Most people in Nazi Germany found themselves getting better off; transport improved, there was more security.
- Germany seemed to be recovering. In 1936 the Olympic Games were held in Berlin and the Rhineland was reoccupied. Both these events made Germans proud of their country.
- Workers had few rights. Trade unions were abolished and they had to join the Labour Front.
- Wages were low and rose much more slowly than business profits. Conditions of work in the Labour Front were tough, but it was at least a job.
- After what had happened to their country in the years after 1919 and during the Depression, many people were prepared to accept Nazism.
- They preferred to close their eyes to the arrests of opponents, the mistreatment of the Jews, the Nazi corruption.
- At least until the war started going badly, about 1942, most people were quite ready to go along with the Nazis.

'Kraft durch Freude' (KdF) – Strength through Joy

- The Nazi belief in controlling the lives of German workers extended to their leisure time. There was a long list of activities for workers to select from.
- They included theatre performances and concerts, hikes and sporting events, holidays and cruises, museum tours and exhibitions, weekend trips and courses and lectures.
- Workers in the Third Reich averaged between 6 and 15 days paid holiday each year. Under Weimar, the figure was between 3 and 8 days.
- Cheap holidays organised by KdF was a sure way to win the support of many ordinary Germans.
- The KdF also organised P.E. sessions and provided sports facilities in factories and workplaces.
- In 1938, the KdF launched the Volkswagen (The People's Car), designed by Ferdinand Porsche. It was priced at below 1,000 marks-repayable over 4 years.

- The VW would involve buyers in weekly instalments (plus insurance) of 6 marks per week, exclusive of running charges.
- In theory, when the account reached 750 marks, the worker would be given an order number leading to him receiving a car.
- By November 1940, there were 300,000 potential purchasers but no cars were produced – only a few show models. No one received a car.
- The millions of marks invested were re-directed into the expanding weapons industries. This accelerated as World War Two approached.

Schonheit Der Arbeit (Beauty of Labour)

- Beauty of Labour was a section of the German Labour Front, which aimed to improve working conditions in factories.
- It introduced features not seen in many workplaces before such as washing facilities and low-cost canteens.
- It organised factory celebrations, folk dancing and political education. It existed alongside the similar Strength through Joy movement.

Rearmament

- German re-armament gave a huge boost to industry, which soon had millions of new jobs.
- From 1935, at first secretly, then quite openly, Hitler ordered the building of submarines, aircraft and tanks. This was quite contrary to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.
- The army was increased from 100,000 to 1,400,000 by 1939. Every man did two years military training after the Labour Service.
- Many people were removed from the list of unemployed: Jews, many women, young men in the National Labour Front.
- By 1936, recorded unemployment was down from 6 million to 1 million; by 1938 industry was short of workers.
- During the Second World War, workers were forced into German factories from all the countries the Nazis had overrun.
- Under the impact of war the Nazis were forced to allow women to work, as industrial output increased.
- Hitler wanted the German economy to be self-sufficient so that it would be able to operate even in a war.

- Foreign imports were restricted and research put into finding substitutes for rubber, petrol, coffee and cotton. This policy was known as Autarky.

Nazi policies to reduce unemployment

- Before the Nazis came to power, the National Labour Service had been started. This used government money to provide jobs for the unemployed: building bridges, roads, forests.
- The Nazis took up and expanded these schemes. Hitler was especially keen on the building of the first motorways, Autobahns.
- All men had to spend six months in the Labour Service from the age of eighteen. That is, after they left the Hitler Youth.
- Their wages were only about 50p per week, but everything was provided for them.
- They wore uniforms and marched like soldiers to work everyday.
- Much of the work was done by hand and not by machinery. This meant that there were more jobs.

The Labour Front

- The Labour Front took over the role of the banned trade unions and ordered that workers could not be sacked on the spot but he also decreed that a worker could not leave his job without government permission.
- Workers had to pay membership dues to the Labour Front, which were deducted from their wages.
- By 1939, the Labour Front had increased the number of weekly hours worked from 60 to 72 (including overtime).
- Strikes were outlawed. However, the average factory worker was earning ten times more than those on dole money and there were few complaints.

4: The persecution of minorities

Racial beliefs

- The Nazis believed that Germans were the Herrenvolk: the Master Race.
- Jews, communists, Slavs and other racial groups were inferior: Untermensch.
- In September 1935, Roma became subject to the restrictions of the Nuremberg Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour.

- This forbade intermarriage between Germans and 'non-Aryans', specifically Jews, Roma and people of African descent.
- In 1937, the National Citizenship Law relegated Roma to the status of second-class citizens, depriving them of their civil rights.
- From 12-18 June 1938, Gypsy Clean-Up Week took place throughout Germany.

How did the Nazis treat the mentally ill and handicapped in the years 1933-39?

- Hitler ordered the sterilisation of all persons suffering from diseases which were considered to be hereditary; these included mental illness.
- The 'Sterilisation Law' was based on the idea of weeding out so-called genetic defects from the total German people.
- Forced sterilisations began in January 1934 and between 300,000 and 400,000 were legally sterilised.

What treatment did homosexuals receive from the Nazis in the years 1933-39?

- In 1936, Himmler created a Reich Central Office for the Combating of Homosexuality and Abortion.
- From 1937 onwards, homosexuals were rounded up, sent to concentration camps and forced to wear pink triangles.
- Camp guards and fellow inmates treated them harshly. The number of homosexuals dealt with this way could have been as high as 15,000.
- In Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp, the SS used homosexuals as target practice. In Dachau, they were systematically exterminated'.

The persecution of the Jews

- Hitler blamed Jews for the defeat of Germany in the First World War. He wanted to purify German blood by eliminating all Jews and other minority groups.
- In fact, only about 1% of the population of Germany were Jewish. They were well-integrated, filling many positions in society, and contributing to it.
- In April, the first official boycott of Jewish shops, doctors and lawyers began. Nazi Stormtroopers stopped Germans shopping in Jewish shops.
- The purpose of the boycott was to bankrupt Jewish shopkeepers and to destroy what they had spent years building up.
- Later the same month, the Civil Service excluded Jews from government jobs.
- In 1934, they were forbidden from taking legal and pharmaceutical examinations.

- On buses, trains and in parks, Jews had to sit on seats labelled for them. In school, children were taught anti-Semitic ideas.
- Jewish children were ridiculed by their teachers and their bullying in the playground by other children went unpunished.

The Nuremberg Laws

- In 1935, the Nuremberg Laws were announced; these made Jews second class citizens and prevented them from marrying non-Jews.
- All kinds of civil rights were removed: voting, going to university, travelling, attending a theatre, cinema or sporting event.

Kristallnacht

- In 1938 a young Jew assassinated a German diplomat in France. This led to an organised attack on Jewish shops, houses and synagogues all over Germany. 91 Jews killed; 20,000 arrested.
- The Jewish community in Germany had to pay a 'fine' of 1 billion marks. This was known as Kristallnacht (the night of broken glass).
- From early 1939 Jews were banned from owning businesses; all men to add the name 'Israel' and all women the name 'Sara' to their own.
- The aim of the Nazis was to force Jews to leave Germany and many did, going to Britain, France and the USA in particular.
- But once war broke out this became more difficult, so Jews were forced into Concentration Camps.
- Many were put into concentration camps and were later murdered.