

# UNIT 3:

## NAZISM IN GERMANY UNDER HITLER

### (1918-1939)

#### WW1 in a Nutshell

- Franz Josef wanted to eliminate Serbia
- If Serbia did not comply, Austria would attack
- Austria sought help from Germany
- Other great power block: Russia and France
- July 29 1914: Austria attacked Serbia
- Tsar Nicholas (Russia) was urged to action to protect Serbia
- Russia was mobilised, then Germany could mobilise too under the premise it was being threatened
- August 1: Germany declared war on Russia
- August 3: Germany declared war on France
- Belgium was neutral
- August 4: Britain declared war on Germany
- 1918: War is over, Germany lost

#### Background of Germany (until 1918)

- Since its creation in 1871, the German Empire was ruled by a monarch, the Kaiser (emperor)
- Germany had a parliament (Reichstag) but the elected politicians had very limited powers
- In 1914, Germany went to war with Britain, France and Russia in WW1
- By 1918, the German generals were forced to admit the war was lost
- On 9 November 1918, the Kaiser abdicated and Germany becomes a Republic
- On 11 November 1918, Germany signed an armistice agreement (ceasefire)

#### Weimar Republic

- Fundamental Rights
  - Personal freedom (no arrest without trial)
  - Home privacy
  - Freedom of speech
  - Freedom to form societies and trade unions
  - Property is guaranteed
  - Freedom to have meetings
- President
  - President elected separately
  - Term of 7 years
  - Appoint & dismiss government
  - Article 48

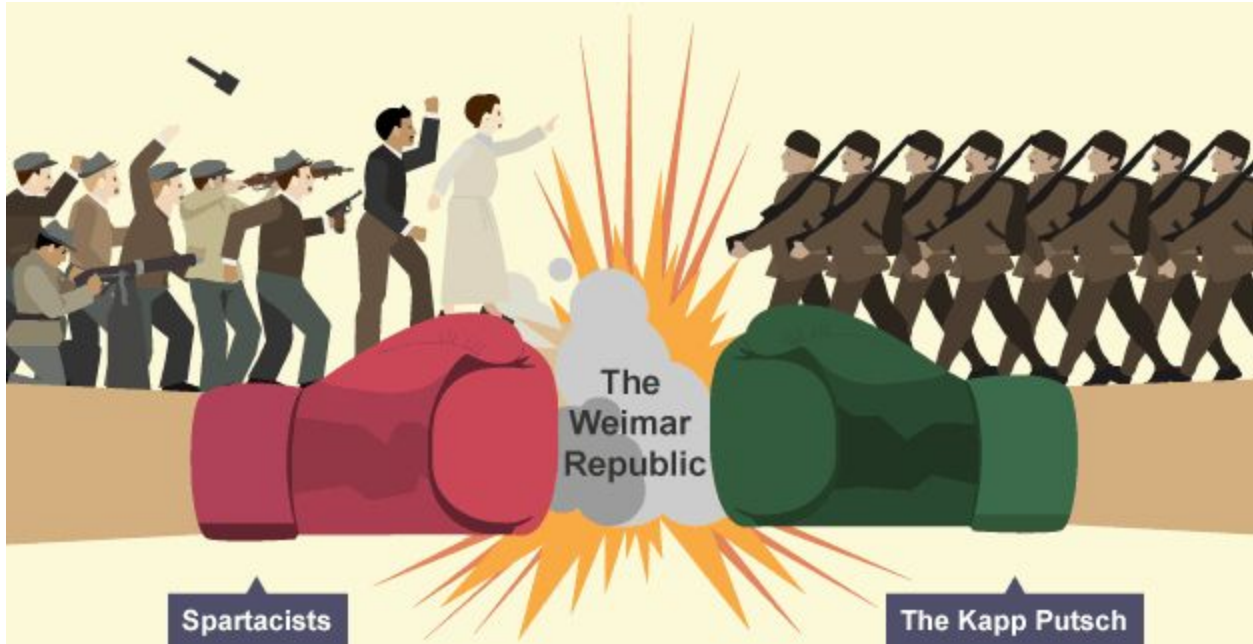
- Proportional Representation
  - % of national vote translates into MPs
  - Parties with small votes get seats
  - Coalition government
- Federal Government
  - Power to make laws
  - Central government (Berlin)
  - 18 Länder (state governments)
  - Berlin: taxation, religion
  - Länder: police, court, schools

<i><b>Kaiser's Monarchy</b></i>	<i><b>Weimar Republic</b></i>
Members of the Reichstag are voted in	
Kaiser/President has the power to appoint/dismiss the Chancellor and summon/dismiss the Reichstag	
Chancellor & Ministers proposed new laws/changes to the laws, which were voted on by members of the Reichstag	
Reichstag has deputies (MPs) who vote for laws they approve of, by which the country will be governed	
Kaiser/President has authority over the countries	
Men above 25 allowed to vote	Men & women above 20 allowed to vote
Voters elected the Reichstag	Voters elected the Reichstag, President, Reichsrat and in plebiscites (referendum) on changes to the law
Kaiser commands armed forces	President appoints/dismisses officers
Kaiser can't do that ----->	President can make laws without the Reichstag's consent in case of emergency
Bundesrat can't do that ----->	Reichsrat can veto (reject proposal) the Reichstag

Features of the Weimar Republic	Advantage	Disadvantage
<b>Proportional Representation</b> <i>Voters are counted centrally and then converted into seats in the Reichstag</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Democracy</li> <li>• Increased transparency of voting process</li> <li>• Better representation of different beliefs and ideals</li> <li>• Diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tyranny of the majority</li> <li>• With multiple parties and no majority, necessary to form coalition to rule → instability</li> </ul>
<b>Article 48</b> <i>President can dismiss the Reichstag and can declare a 'state of emergency' and rule alone</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to react quickly to adverse situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to abuse as 'state of emergency' is not clearly defined</li> </ul>

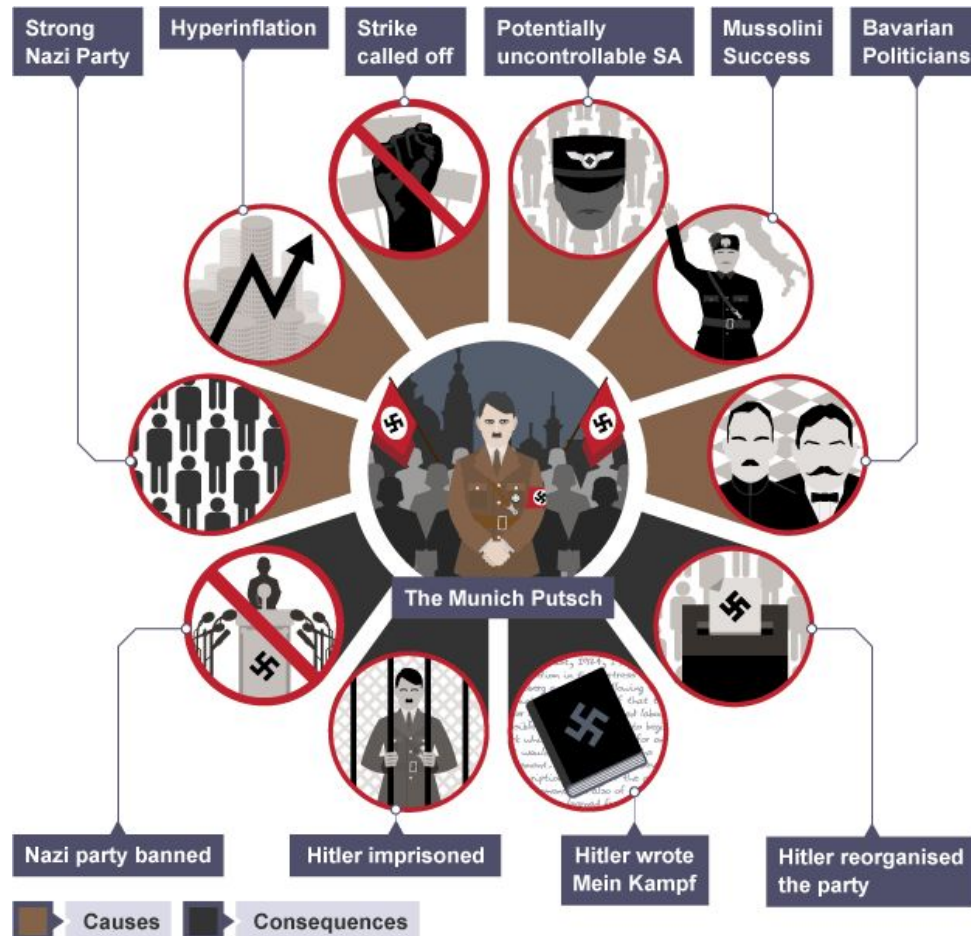
## Opposition to the Weimar Republic

Party	KPD (communist party)	SPD (Social Democratic Party)	DDP (German Democratic Party)	Centre Party	DVP (German People's Party)	DNVP (German Nationalist Party)	NSDAP (Nazi Party)
Support	Working class	Industrial working class, some middle class	Mostly middle class	Roman Catholics	Wealthy middle class, business owners Stresseman	Middle & upper classes, government officials, soldiers	Nationalists, conservatives Freikorps, lower middle class
Policies	Against republic Worker's revolution Russian model	Supported republic Social reforms Working people Poor	Supported republic Individual freedom	Supported republic & Catholic Church	Reluctantly Supported republic Monarchists Trade Industry	Against republic Strong nationalist Make Germany strong	Against republic Strong Government Nationalist



- Spartacist Uprising/Revolt (1919)
  - **Aims**
    - Led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht
    - Spartacists were communists who wanted Germany to be run by the working class
    - Believed power and wealth should be shared equally among the population
    - Wanted to establish a communist state in Germany and destroy the Weimar Republic
    - Inspired by the Russian Revolution (1917)
  - **Incident**
    - January 1919
    - 100,000 workers went on strike and demonstrated in the centre of Berlin
  - **Aftermath**
    - Luxemburg and Liebknecht were arrested and executed by the Freikorps
    - The communists and many of the working class developed a hatred of the Social Democrats
- Kapp Putsch (1920)
  - **Aims**
    - Re-establish an autocratic government (monarchy) and overthrow the Weimar Government
    - General Ludendorff, General von Lüttwitz and Dr Wolfgang Kapp
    - Rebellion by the Freikorps when the government tried to disband them
  - **Incident**
    - 13 March 1920

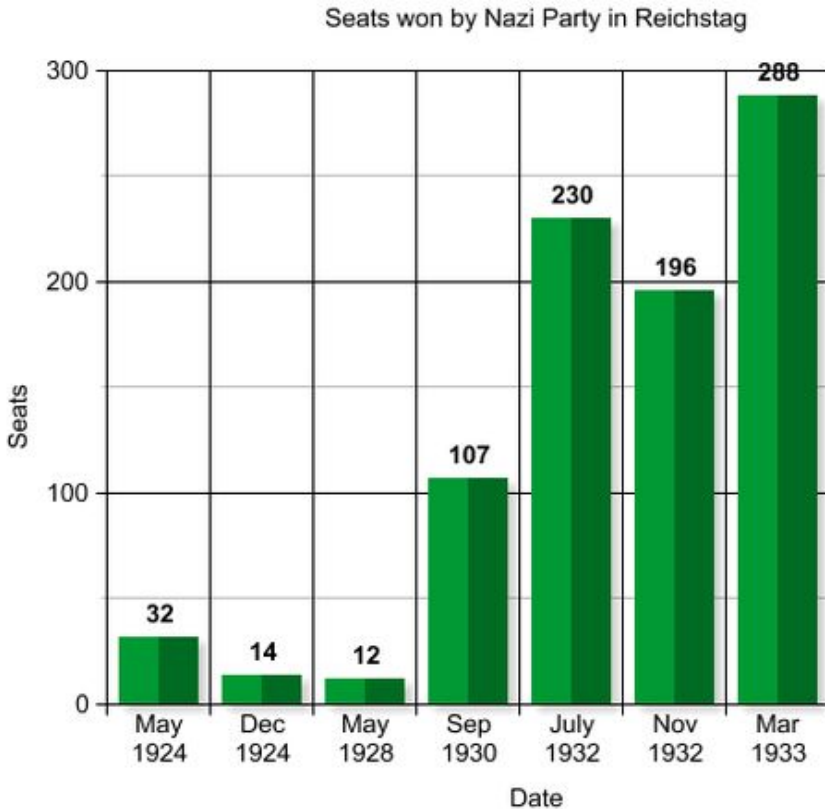
- 5,000 Freikorps marched on Berlin
- **Aftermath**
  - President Ebert called a general strike and millions of workers responded, stopping the putsch
  - Worsened the division between the right-wing and the government
- Beer Hall/Munich Putsch (1923)
  - **Aims**
    - Nazis, led by Hitler
    - Wanted to seize power of the Bavarian state government by kidnapping Gustav von Kahr (state commissioner of Bavaria) and two other conservative politicians
    - Inspired by action Italian fascist Benito Mussolini had taken, granting him dictatorship in Italy
  - **Incident**
    - 8 November 1923
    - Hitler and 600 SA members burst into a meeting that Kahr and Lossow were holding at the local Beer Hall
    - The SA took over the army headquarters and the offices of the local newspaper
    - The next day, Hitler and the SA went into Munich and there was a short scuffle in which the police killed 16 members of the SA
    - Hitler fled, but was arrested two days later
  - **Aftermath**
    - Ludendorff was let off without a sentence, Rohm received 15 months but was released immediately without serving his sentence
    - Short term failure:
      - The Nazi Party was banned and Hitler was prevented from speaking in public until 1927
      - Hitler was tried for high treason and sentenced to five years in prison
    - Long term success:
      - During Hitler's time in prison, he wrote 'Mein Kampf' - a propaganda book of Nazi beliefs which was very well-known
      - The judge was so lenient with Hitler's sentence, suggesting that people in authority had sympathy with Hitler
      - Hitler realised revolution would not work and that he would have to use democratic means, so he reorganised the party to enable it to take part in elections



## Hitler and the Nazi Party

- In 1919, Hitler joined a small right-wing group called the German Workers' Party, took over and changed its name to the National Socialists (Nazis)
- The party developed a 25-Point Programme
- Ideology
  - *Lebensraum*: the need for 'living space' for the German nation to expand
  - The Treaty of Versailles should be abolished and all German-speaking people united in one country
  - *Fuehrer*: idea that there should be a single leader with complete power rather than a democracy
  - Social Darwinism: idea that the Aryan race was superior and Jews were 'subhuman'
  - Autarky: idea that Germany should be economically self-sufficient
  - Germany was in danger from Communists and Jews who had to be destroyed
  - The 25 Point Plan had policies that were:
    - **Socialist**
      - Farmers should be given their land
      - Pensions should improve

- Public industries (e.g. electricity, water) should be owned by the state
- **Nationalist**
  - All German-speaking people should be united in one country
  - The Treaty of Versailles should be abolished
  - There should be special laws for foreigners
- **Racist**
  - Jews should not be German citizens and immigration should be stopped
- **Fascist**
  - A strong central government and control of the newspaper
- Appeal
  - In the 1920s, the Nazis tried to be all things to all people
    - Thus had broader social and geographical appeal than the communists, who only appealed to the industrial workers in Germany's cities
  - Nazi support came from:
    - **Wealthy businessmen**
      - Frightened by the increase in support for the communists
      - Began to finance Hitler and the Nazis
    - **Middle-class**
      - Alarmed by the obvious failure of democracy
      - Decided the country needed a strong government and voted for Hitler
    - **Nationalists**
      - Blamed legacy of the Treaty of Versailles and reparations
    - Rural areas
- Membership
  - All classes
  - Mostly lower-middle class (shopkeepers, small businesses)
  - Male dominated, beer-swilling, Authoritarian
  - Anti-semitic
  - Anti-intellectual
  - Some elite (managers, academics)



### How the Nazis rose to power

- Circumstance (weaknesses of Weimar Republic)
  - Fragmented Reichstag due to PR → political instability
  - Negative perception over Treaty of Versailles
  - Weimar Government could not respond to crisis - system broke down
- Circumstance - crisis
  - High unemployment rate
  - Great Depression
  - Nazi promised to improve life
- Political intrigue
  - Fear of Communist takeover
    - Hitler appointed Chancellor by President Hindenburg to stop support for Communists
- Nazi strength
  - Hitler's appeal
  - Nazi's appeal
  - Appeal of radical ideas
  - Effective propaganda
  - Organised set up



## Political Circumstances in Germany

### ● **Limitations in Germany's new constitution - weaknesses of Weimar Government**

- Fragmented Reichstag due to proportional representation
  - Too many small competing parties with no party gaining a majority
- Coalition government formed by all parties
  - Parties unwilling to compromise
  - Government kept breaking up, frequent changes in government
  - 20 coalitions from 1919-1923
  - Difficult to pass laws (disagreement), especially in times of crisis e.g. Great Depression
  - Thus democratic government system was seen as weak by the people
- Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution
  - Allowed President to dissolve Parliament and rule by decree for six months "in times of emergency"
- Impact of Treaty of Versailles
- Opposition from the right and left - political uprisings
  - Left wing opposition (communist)
    - Spartacist uprising
  - Right wing opposition (fascist)
- Weak support from people
  - Kapp putsch (1920) - right wing extremists attempted to overthrow the government
  - Civil service, judiciary, military and big businesses used to work for the Kaiser and wanted his return

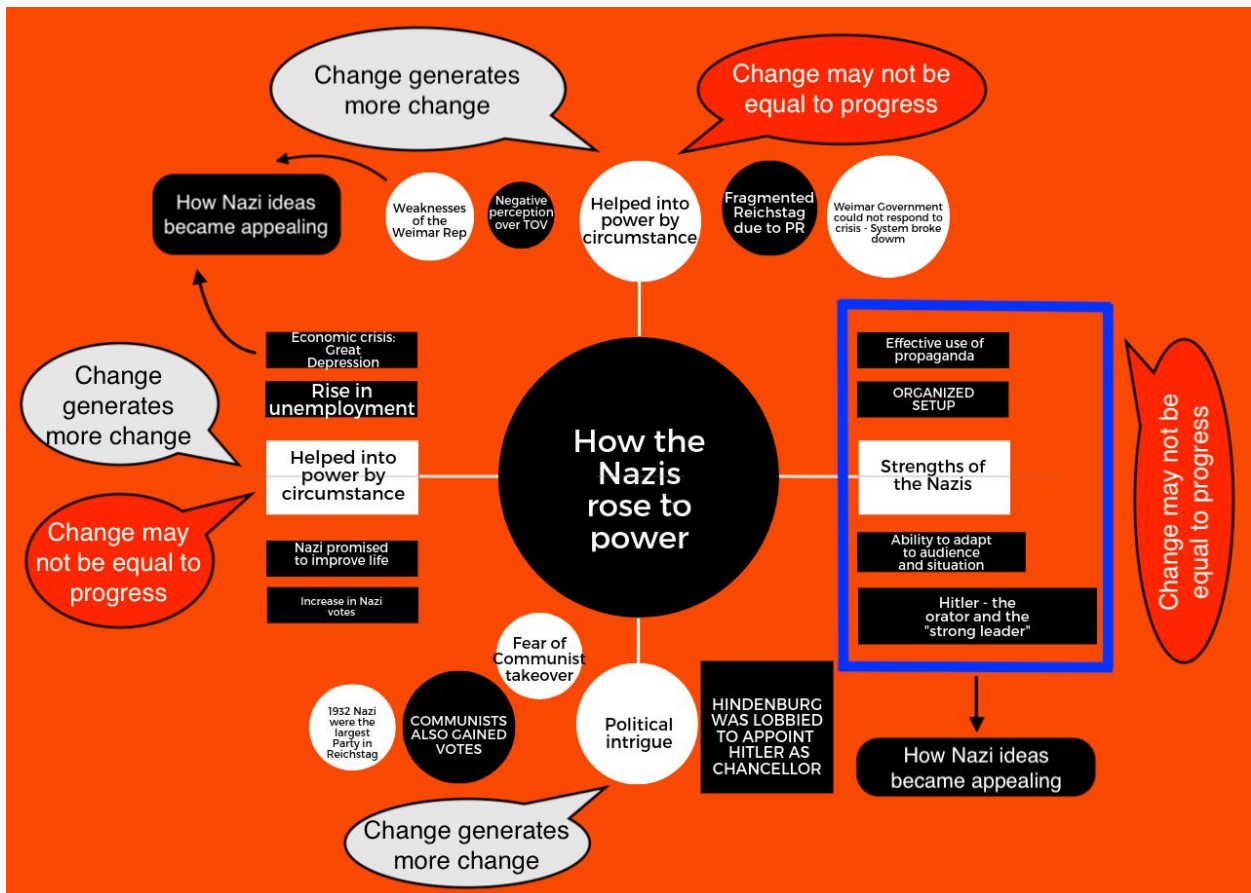
## Economic Circumstances in Germany

- Hyperinflation
  - Post-war Germany struggled with unemployment, poverty, fragile economy
  - Reparations were seen as a heavy burden, could not make payments
  - Caused by Weimar Government printing money → devaluation of currency → prices spiralled → hyperinflation
  - Problem resolved when Chancellor Stresemann introduced a new currency (Rentenmark)
- Great Depression
  - USA suddenly recalled all their loans and investments in Germany
  - Germany's banks crashed
  - Economic crisis → social crisis: unemployment etc
  - Political crisis because coalition government could not decide what action to take

## Hitler's Leadership Abilities

- Ideology
  - 25 points
    - Appealed to all groups
- Charisma and skills

- Strategic in political tactics
  - Exploitation of the fears of communism
    - Many groups in Germany feared a Communist takeover
    - Farmers and big industry owners feared an outcome similar to that of the Soviet Union
    -
  - Skilful at making deals with politicians
  - Reorganisation of the Nazi Party
    - With the failed Munich Putsch (1923)
    - Increased party membership via youth organisations



## Post-1933

### Hitler's Weaknesses in Jan 1933

- Unstable position as Chancellor; he could be removed by:
  - President (Hindenburg)
    - Hindenburg distrusted Hitler

- Political opponents (Communists)
  - Nazi Party won 37% of total votes → no clear majority rule
  - Hitler was leading a coalition government
- The people
  - Electorate could turn against Hitler and/or Nazi Party
- Army
  - Army was suspicious of him

### **How did Hitler consolidate his power in 1933 and 1934?**

- 27 Feb 1933: Reichstag fire
  - A Dutch Communist, van der Lubbe, was caught red-handed in the burning building
  - Hitler blamed the Communists and used to fire to persuade Hindenburg to pass an emergency law restricting personal liberty
    - Enabled Hitler to imprison many Communist leaders which stopped them from campaigning in the election
- 5 March 1933: Reichstag election
  - Nazis did not gain overall majority but enough seats to pass the Enabling Act
  - After Hitler arrested the Communists and the SA intimidated the other parties
- 23 Mar 1933: Enabling Act
  - Hitler could make his own laws
- 14 Jul 1933: Political parties banned
  - Party leaders were sent to concentration camps
- 30 Jun 1934: Night of Long Knives
- 19 Aug 1934: Hitler becomes Führer
  - Hindenburg died
  - All soldiers swore an oath of loyalty to Hitler alone
  - SS is Hitler's army
  - Communists are banned
  - Hitler merged the presidency with the office of Chancellor under the title of Leader

### **Totalitarianism**

- A political system where the state recognises no limits to its authority and strives to regulate every aspect of public and private life wherever feasible

### **Enemies of the Reich**

- Political opponents
  - Communists
  - Social Democrats
- Homosexuals
- Work shy
- Gypsies

- Trade unionists
- Germans who bought from Jews
- Pacifists
- Radical Christian organisations
- Anyone who criticised Hitler/Nazis

### The Nazi Police State

- People
- SS
  - Grew from a personal protection force for Hitler into a huge organisation
  - In charge of concentration camps, spying
- Gestapo (Geheimstaatspolizei - secret state police)
  - Employed an army of spies who would inform on people
- Concentration Camps
  - Began as temporary prisons in disused warehouses or temporary enclosures for Nazi opposition
  - Political opponents and 'asocials' imprisoned
  - Slave labour used to manufacture weapons or work on public works schemes
  - The number of camps quadrupled between 1939 and 1942 to 300+ as slave-labourers from across Europe, Jews, political prisoners, criminals, homosexuals, gypsies, mentally ill and others were incarcerated
  - Some became 'death' camps as part of the Final Solution



## **Propaganda**

- Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or view
- Joseph Goebbels
  - In charge of the Nazi propaganda programme
  - One of Hitler's most trusted ministers
- Cinema
  - Nazis controlled which films could be shown

## **Why were Jews seen as enemies?**

- Economic
  - Possess too much wealth and power
- Chosen people
  - Arrogantly claim they are the chosen people (religion)
- Scapegoat
  - Convenient group to single out and blame for problems
- Deicide
  - Killed Jesus
- Outsiders
  - Racially different from Germans
- Racial Theory
  - Inferior race

## **Persecution of the Jews**

- Hitler was strongly opposed to marriages between Germans and Jews
- Felt that Jews were racially impure
- Stages
  - Stage 1: Denial of civil rights (1933-1938)
    - Refused protection from police
    - 1933
      - 1 Apr: SA organised boycott of Jewish shops
      - Apr: Jewish civil servants were dismissed (sacked from government jobs)
      - Sep: Banned from inheriting land
      - Jews could not own farms
      - Jews were banned from jobs involving media
    - 1935
      - Jews banned from joining the Army
      - Jewish authors could not publish their works
      - Jews were not allowed to own radios, typewriters and bicycles
      - Nuremberg Laws passed
      - Jews stripped of citizenship

- Jews banned from marrying Germans
- Stage 2: Acceleration of persecution
  - Kristallnacht (night of broken glass)
    - Night of 9 Nov 1938: Jewish shops and synagogues were ransacked or destroyed with many killed or injured throughout Germany
    - Probably organised in advance by the SA, under orders from Goebbels
- Stage 3: Holocaust

### **Hitler's Economic Policies**

- Hitler's economic priorities
  - Drag Germany out of world recession
  - Solve unemployment problems (as promised)
  - Make Germany self-sufficient
  - Give jobs taken by Jews to Aryans (as in Mein Kampf and 25 Points)
  - Bring economy to focus on war and rearmament
    - Some car factories were closed to build firearms
- Solving unemployment
  - During election campaigns Hitler promised to solve unemployment (6 million Germans unemployed)
- RAD - National Labour Service
  - Gave men jobs in public work schemes
  - RAD men had to wear a uniform and live in camps
  - Given free meals and pocket money
  - Built drainage ditches, schools, new network of motorways and planted new forests
- Aims of Hitler's Public Works Programme
  - Improve living conditions of Germans
  - Kick start cycle of prosperity
  - Build impressive buildings so the Germans would feel proud
  - Improve the public transport network for industrial and military use
- Autarky - national self sufficiency
  - Hitler wanted Germany to be a strong independent country sufficient in food and materials
    - Because Germany lost WW1 because it ran out of food and war materials
  - German scientists developed all sorts of artificial substitutes such as petrol from coal and coffee from acorns
    - Made in Germany and created jobs in new industries
  - Hitler also encouraged the growth of the car industry
- Car industry
  - Produced low cost cars which helped keep Germans happy
  - Car production could be easily switched to production of military vehicles

- Created jobs in other industries because of need for standardised parts
  - Steel, glass, rubber, leather (cycle of prosperity)
- Other measures
  - By 1934, all Jews were sacked from civil service jobs which were then given to Germans
  - Unemployed Jews were not registered
  - Women lost their jobs to men
  - People who refused jobs offered by labour service were arrested and placed in concentration camps
- Hjalmar Schacht
  - President of the Reichsbank which directed German economic policy
  - Believed in steady growth and a stable currency
  - Promoted trade agreements with developing countries trading manufactured goods for cheap raw materials
  - Against spending too much on rearmament before the German economy was strong enough
  - New Plan (1934) aimed to reduce imports into Germany and strengthen currency
  - Fell out with Hitler over the speed of rearmament
  - Replaced by Hermann Goering in 1936
- Hitler's ideas
  - German economy can be converted into a war machine
  - Germany must rearm quickly

## **25 Point Plan**

1. We demand the union of all Germans in a Great Germany on the basis of the principle of self-determination of all peoples.
2. We demand that the German people have rights equal to those of other nations; and that the Peace Treaties of Versailles and St. Germain shall be abrogated.
3. We demand land and territory (colonies) for the maintenance of our people and the settlement of our surplus population.
4. Only those who are our fellow countrymen can become citizens. Only those who have German blood, regardless of creed, can be our countrymen. Hence no Jew can be a countryman.
5. Those who are not citizens must live in Germany as foreigners and must be subject to the law of aliens.
6. The right to choose the government and determine the laws of the State shall belong only to citizens. We therefore demand that no public office, of whatever nature, whether in the central government, the province, or the municipality, shall be held by anyone who is not a citizen.  
We wage war against the corrupt parliamentary administration whereby men are appointed to posts by favor of the party without regard to character and fitness.
7. We demand that the State shall above all undertake to ensure that every citizen shall have the possibility of living decently and earning a livelihood. If it should not be possible to feed the whole population, then aliens (non-citizens) must be expelled from the Reich.
8. Any further immigration of non-Germans must be prevented. We demand that all non-Germans who have entered Germany since August 2, 1914, shall be compelled to leave the Reich immediately.
9. All citizens must possess equal rights and duties.

10. The first duty of every citizen must be to work mentally or physically. No individual shall do any work that offends against the interest of the community to the benefit of all.

Therefore we demand:

11. That all unearned income, and all income that does not arise from work, be abolished.

12. Since every war imposes on the people fearful sacrifices in blood and treasure, all personal profit arising from the war must be regarded as treason to the people. We therefore demand the total confiscation of all war profits.

13. We demand the nationalization of all trusts.

14. We demand profit-sharing in large industries.

15. We demand a generous increase in old-age pensions.

16. We demand the creation and maintenance of a sound middle-class, the immediate communalization of large stores which will be rented cheaply to small tradespeople, and the strongest consideration must be given to ensure that small traders shall deliver the supplies needed by the State, the provinces and municipalities.

17. We demand an agrarian reform in accordance with our national requirements, and the enactment of a law to expropriate the owners without compensation of any land needed for the common purpose. The abolition of ground rents, and the prohibition of all speculation in land.

18. We demand that ruthless war be waged against those who work to the injury of the common welfare. Traitors, usurers, profiteers, etc., are to be punished with death, regardless of creed or race.

19. We demand that Roman law, which serves a materialist ordering of the world, be replaced by German common law.

20. In order to make it possible for every capable and industrious German to obtain higher education, and thus the opportunity to reach into positions of leadership, the State must assume the responsibility of organizing thoroughly the entire cultural system of the people. The curricula of all educational establishments shall be adapted to practical life. The conception of the State Idea (science of citizenship) must be taught in the schools from the very beginning. We demand that specially talented children of poor parents, whatever their station or occupation, be educated at the expense of the State.

21. The State has the duty to help raise the standard of national health by providing maternity welfare centers, by prohibiting juvenile labor, by increasing physical fitness through the introduction of compulsory games and gymnastics, and by the greatest possible encouragement of associations concerned with the physical education of the young.

22. We demand the abolition of the regular army and the creation of a national (folk) army.

23. We demand that there be a legal campaign against those who propagate deliberate political lies and disseminate them through the press. In order to make possible the creation of a German press, we demand:

(a) All editors and their assistants on newspapers published in the German language shall be German citizens.

(b) Non-German newspapers shall only be published with the express permission of the State. They must not be published in the German language.

(c) All financial interests in or in any way affecting German newspapers shall be forbidden to non-Germans by law, and we demand that the punishment for transgressing this law be the immediate suppression of the newspaper and the expulsion of the non-Germans from the Reich.

Newspapers transgressing against the common welfare shall be suppressed. We demand legal action against those tendencies in art and literature that have a disruptive influence upon the life of our folk, and that any organizations that offend against the foregoing demands shall be dissolved.

24. We demand freedom for all religious faiths in the state, insofar as they do not endanger its existence or offend the moral and ethical sense of the Germanic race.

The party as such represents the point of view of a positive Christianity without binding itself to any one particular confession. It fights against the Jewish materialist spirit within and without, and is convinced that a lasting recovery of our folk can only come about from within on the principle:

COMMON GOOD BEFORE INDIVIDUAL GOOD

25. In order to carry out this program we demand: the creation of a strong central authority in the State, the



unconditional authority by the political central parliament of the whole State and all its organizations.

The formation of professional committees and of committees representing the several estates of the realm, to ensure that the laws promulgated by the central authority shall be carried out by the federal states.

The leaders of the party undertake to promote the execution of the foregoing points at all costs, if necessary at the sacrifice of their own lives.