

The Nazis and the Path to War

Essential Questions:

“Who were the Nazis?”

“What did Germany look like under Nazi rule?”

Nazi Party Platform:

- In February 1920, the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (Nazis) came up with a 25-point program.
 - Written by Adolf Hitler to plan out their vision for a perfect Germany.
 - Combines the ideas of German Nationalism, Socialism, and radical racism (anti-Semitism).
 1. A union of all Germans to form a great Germany on the basis of the right to self-determination of peoples.
 2. Abolition of the Treaty of Versailles.
 3. Land and territory (colonies) for our surplus population.
 4. German blood as a requirement for German citizenship. No Jew can be a member of the nation.
 5. Non-citizens can live in Germany only as foreigners, subject to the law of aliens.
 6. Only citizens can vote or hold public office.
 7. The state insures that every citizen live decently and earn his livelihood. If it is impossible to provide food for the whole population, then aliens must be expelled.
 8. No further immigration of non-Germans. Any non-German who entered Germany after August 2, 1914, shall leave immediately.
 9. A thorough reconstruction of our national system of education. The science of citizenship shall be taught from the beginning.
 10. All newspapers must be published in the German language by German citizens and owners.

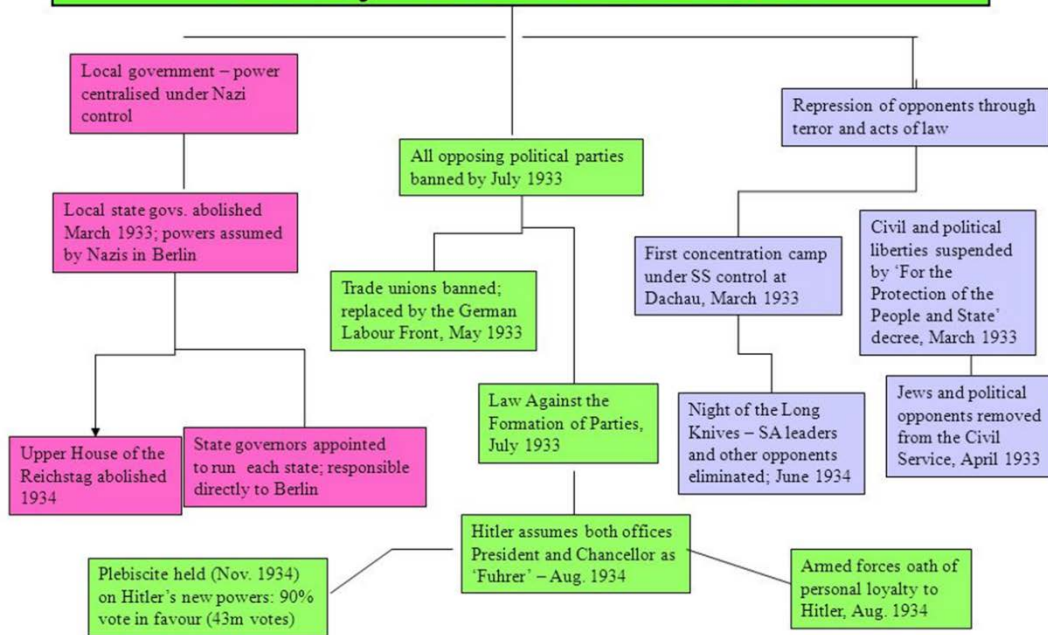
Nazi “Seizure of Power”:

- President Hindenburg appointed Hitler as Chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933.
 - Known as the *Machtergreifung* ("seizure of power")
- Reichstag burns – February 27, 1933
 - Marinus van der Lubbe, a Dutch communist, was found guilty of starting the blaze - executed.
 - *Reichstag Fire Decree* - rescinded most civil liberties, including rights of assembly and freedom of the press - also allowed the police to detain people indefinitely without charges.
 - Violent suppression of communists by the SA - 4,000 members of the Communist Party of Germany were arrested.
- *The Enabling Act* – March, 1933
 - Allowed Hitler to pass laws—even laws that violated the constitution—without the consent of the president or the Reichstag.
- Death of President Hindenburg allows Hitler to assume full dictatorship

Nazification of Germany:

- *Gleichschaltung* ("co-ordination") - brought all aspects of life under party control.
 - All state governments were placed under the control of the central Nazi government
 - All civilian organizations (agricultural groups, volunteer organizations, sports clubs, etc...) had their leadership replaced with Nazis.
 - Includes: *Reichstag Fire Decree, Enabling Act*
- "Day of National Labor" – May 1, 1933
 - Unions invited to Berlin for celebrations - The day after, SA stormtroopers demolished union offices around the country; all trade unions were forced to dissolve and their leaders were arrested – eliminated Communists.
- *Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service* - April, 1933
 - Removed from their jobs all teachers, professors, judges, magistrates, and government officials who were Jewish or opposed the Nazi Party

Gleichschaltung – the consolidation of society under Nazi control



Nazi Leaders:

***Please see the "Paladins of the Third Reich" handout

- Joseph Goebbels:
 - "Reich Minister of Propaganda"
 - Responsible for Nazi Propaganda and control of entire German Communication media.
- Albert Speer:
 - "Reich Minister for Armaments and War Production"
 - Only former Nazi leader to admit his guilt after the war
- Martin Bormann
 - "Personal Secretary to Adolf Hitler"
 - Never left Hitler's side – access to Hitler came through him
- Herman Goering
 - "Commander-in-Chief of Nazi Luftwaffe" and "Minister for Air"
 - Former WWI war hero (pilot) - Established the first Concentration Camps
- Heinrich Himmler
 - "Minister of the Interior" & "Reichsfuhrer of Nazi SS"
 - Head of the Gestapo (secret police) and SS

Nazi Ideology:

- Fuhrer – there should be a single leader with complete power rather than a democracy.
- Economic self-sufficiency
- Anti-Semitism – Jews are to be blamed for ALL of society's problems
 - Elimination of Jews (deportation or killing)
- Racial "purity" and eugenics
 - Germans are the Aryan or "Master" Race – Elimination of Jews, the mentally and physically disabled, the Romani people ("Gypsy"), Homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Social misfits

- German Nationalism
 - Create a strong Germany with ALL German-speaking people in one country; Treaty of Versailles should be abolished.
- “Lebensraum” – territorial expansionism

Nazi Military and Paramilitary:

- *Wehrmacht*
 - The unified armed forces of Germany from 1935 to 1945 were called the *Wehrmacht* (“defense force”).
 - The *Heer* (army), *Kriegsmarine* (navy), and the *Luftwaffe* (air force)
 - Members of the armed forces were required to pledge an oath of unconditional obedience to Hitler personally
- *The Sturmabteilung* (“Storm Detachment”; Brownshirts)
- *Schutzstaffel (SS; Protection Squadron)*

Nazi SA:

- *The Sturmabteilung* (“Storm Detachment”; Brownshirts)
 - Founded in 1921 – the paramilitary wing of the NSDAP
 - Disrupt opposition political parties, protect Nazi leaders at rallies and assemblies
 - Over 3,000,000 members at its height

Nazi SS:

- *Schutzstaffel (SS; Protection Squadron)*
 - An elite military bodyguard unit – “Hitler's last line of defense”
 - Led by Heinrich Himmler from 1929 onward, the SS had over a 250,000 members by 1938
 - The SS spearheaded the persecution of Jews, who were rounded up into ghettos and concentration camps
- *Einsatzgruppen SS* –
 - 1941 to 1945 – “death squads” killed more than two million people, including 1.3 million Jews
- *SS-Totenkopfverbände* (“death's head units”) ran the concentration camps and extermination camps, where millions were killed

Hitler Youth:

- *Hitler Youth (Hitlerjugend; or ‘HJ’):*
 - Organization created for the *indoctrination* of Nazi values. The HJ was a group designed to indoctrinate kids into Hitler’s ideology, then send them off to war.
- Indoctrination – “The process of teaching a person or group to accept a set of beliefs uncritically”
- The Hitler Youth was in existence from 1922-1945
 - In 1933, there were 50,000 members of the Hitler Youth.
 - By 1934, there were more than 2 million.
 - By 1939, membership in the Hitler Youth became compulsory (mandatory) for all children over the age of ten – 90% of all German children were a part of the HJ.
 - *The purpose:* To ensure the future of Nazi Germany and indoctrinate German youth in Nazi ideology, including racism.

Nazi Society:

Education:

- Nazis removed all Jewish teachers, professors and officials from the education system.
- Teachers had to take an oath of loyalty and obedience to Hitler.
- Textbooks and lessons had to conform to Nazi Party ideology.
- Any books written by “undesirables” or books containing content that went against Nazi ideology were removed
- Book burnings were common in Nazi Germany

Role of women & family:

- A Nazi woman's "world is her husband, her family, her children, and her home"
- Studying in school was discouraged for women in Nazi society.
 - Higher Education and Careers would only "divert them from motherhood"
- Women were encouraged to leave the workforce and "create large families" with racially suitable men.
- Girl's and Women's organizations were created for the indoctrination of Nazi values
 - *Jungmädelbund* ("Young Girls League") for girls age 10 to 14
 - *Bund Deutscher Mädel* ("League of German Girls") for young women age 14 to 18
- *Lebensborn* ("Fountain of Life")
 - Heinrich Himmler encouraged women to have children with members of the SS, who were vetted for racial purity.
 - Eugenics initiative – "racial purity"
- *Lebensborn* ("Fountain of Life") - An SS-founded organization, created by Himmler in 1935
 - Created a series of maternity homes where single mothers, who were "racially pure," could be accommodated during their pregnancies
 - Both parents were examined for racial suitability before acceptance
 - Women were encouraged to "procreate" with SS members and could anonymously give birth here
 - Included the selection of "racially worthy" orphans for adoption and care for children born from Aryan women who had been in relationships with SS members
 - Abortion services provided and encouraged for any child born with a disability

Censorship:

- Joseph Goebbels wanted to eradicate "overstated Jewish intellectualism"
- Book burnings – took place throughout the Nazi era in Germany
 - Raids on public and private libraries
 - Authors and book publishers fled Nazi Germany in droves in the early 1930's
 - Newspapers, like other media, were controlled by the Nazi government
 - By 1939, over two thirds of the newspapers and magazines were directly owned by the Nazi Propaganda Ministry.
- Goebbels controlled the radio stations and newspapers in Germany – directed news organizations to publish content favorable to the Nazi regime.

Nazi Racial Policy and Eugenics:

- Racism and Anti-Semitism were basic beliefs of the Nazi regime – became infused into German society 1933-1945.
- Based on the belief that the Germans were a superior "Master Race"
- Nazis believed that there was an inherent conflict between the Aryan "Master Race" and inferior races, particularly Jews
- The Nazi regime used violence and economic pressure to encourage Jews and "undesirables" to **voluntarily leave the country**

Nazi Racial Policy and Eugenics:

- *Persecution of Jews:*
 - Included: *The Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service*
 - April 1, 1933 – Hitler declared a national boycott of Jewish businesses
 - Forced removal of any Jewish influence from cultural life
 - Jewish businesses were forbidden to advertise and forced to shut down
 - Jewish citizens were harassed and violently attacked
 - Many towns posted signs forbidding entry to Jews
 - Nazis began removing any books considered un-German, pro-Communist, or containing any Jewish influence
 - May 10, 1933 - Nationwide book burning was held

- *Kristallnacht* (“Night of Broken Glass”)
 - November 9-10, 1938
 - Jewish homes, hospitals, and schools were ransacked
 - Nazi rioters destroyed 267 synagogues throughout Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland
 - Over 7,000 Jewish businesses were either destroyed or damaged
- *The Holocaust & The Final Solution*
 - *Genocide* – “the deliberate killing of a large group of people, especially those of a particular ethnic group or nation”
 - December 1941 – Hitler decides that the Jews of Europe were to be exterminated immediately – The “Final Solution to the Jewish Question.”
 - This meant the total eradication of the Jewish population of Europe—eleven million people
- *Persecution of Roma:*
 - Romani or Gypsy people were persecuted from the early days of the regime.
 - The Romani were forbidden to marry people of German blood.
 - Roma were shipped to concentration camps starting in 1935 and killed in large numbers.
 - 220,000 Roma were killed during WWII era.
 - Approximately 25% of the Romani population in Europe.
- *Persecution of People with disabilities:*
 - *Action T4* – a program of systematic murder of the physically and mentally handicapped and patients in psychiatric hospitals (1939 until the end of the war).
 - *The Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring* – passed by the Reichstag on July 14, 1933
 - Over 400,000 disabled individuals underwent compulsory sterilization.
 - Both of these programs also included victims from disadvantaged groups such as prostitutes, the poor, the homeless, and criminals.
 - Also used to justify killing Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, “social misfits,” and members of the political and religious opposition.

Nazi Health:

- 1933 – Jews were denied health insurance coverage.
- 1933 – Jewish doctors were forbidden to treat government-insured patients
- 1937 – Jewish doctors were forbidden to treat non-Jewish patients
- 1938 – Jew’s right to practice medicine was removed entirely by the Nazi government
- Nazi Germany had a strong anti-tobacco movement
 - Smoking was banned.
- Physical fitness was encouraged – militaristic mentality
- *Dr. Josef Mengele - SS-Hauptsturmführer*, camp doctor at Auschwitz
 - Notorious Nazi doctor – performed medical experiments on concentration camp inmates beginning in 1941
 - Many of his victims died or were intentionally killed.
 - Concentration camp inmates were made available for purchase by pharmaceutical companies for drug testing and other experiments.

Nazi Economy:

- Reviving the German economy was vital
 - Germany was still in an economic depression
 - Six million people were unemployed in 1933
- How did Hitler “fix the economy?”
 - Largely ignored the Treaty of Versailles
 - Deficit spending
 - *Nazi “New Deal”* – public works projects were undertaken beginning in 1934
 - The Autobahn
 - Created 1.7 million new jobs by the end of 1934
 - Average wages both per hour and per week began to rise by 1934