

# Hitler and Nazi Germany

## GUIDE TO READING

### The BIG Idea

**Human Rights** Hitler's totalitarian state was widely accepted, but German Jews and minorities were persecuted.

### Content Vocabulary

- Nazi (p. 804)
- Aryans (p. 806)
- concentration camps (p. 806)

### Academic Vocabulary

- require (p. 809)
- prohibit (p. 809)

### People, Places, and Events

- Adolf Hitler (p. 804)
- Nuremberg (p. 808)
- Munich (p. 804)
- Nuremberg laws (p. 809)
- Reichstag (p. 805)
- Kristallnacht (p. 809)
- Enabling Act (p. 806)
- Heinrich Himmler (p. 807)

### Reading Strategy

**Categorizing Information** As you read, use a chart like the one below to list anti-Semitic policies enforced by the Nazi Party.

Anti-Semitic Policies

*Recovering from the humiliating loss of World War I and from the Great Depression, Germans found extremist parties more attractive. Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party promised to build a new Germany, and his party's propaganda appealed to the German sense of national honor. The new Germany that Hitler envisioned did not include any group the Nazis considered inferior, especially the Jewish people.*

## Hitler and His Views

**MAIN IDEA** Adolf Hitler's ideas were based on racism and German nationalism.

**HISTORY & YOU** What would you say if you were asked whether you valued all types of people? Read on to learn about Hitler's ideology.

**Adolf Hitler** was born in Austria on April 20, 1889. Unsuccessful in school, he traveled to Vienna to become an artist but was rejected by the academy. Here he developed his basic social and political ideas. At the core of Hitler's ideas was racism, especially anti-Semitism (hostility toward Jews). Hitler was also an extreme nationalist who understood how political parties could effectively use propaganda and terror.

Hitler served four years on the Western Front during World War I. At the end of the war, Hitler remained in Germany and decided to enter politics. In 1919 he joined the little-known German Workers' Party, one of several right-wing extreme nationalist parties in **Munich**.

By the summer of 1921, Hitler had taken total control of the party. By then the party had been renamed the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP, an abbreviation of the German name), or **Nazi**, for short. Within two years, party membership had grown to 55,000 people, with 15,000 in the party militia. The militia was variously known as the SA, the Storm Troops, or the Brownshirts, after the color of their uniforms.

An overconfident Hitler staged an armed uprising against the government in Munich in November 1923. This uprising, called the Beer Hall Putsch, was quickly crushed, and Hitler was sentenced to prison. During his brief stay in jail, Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf*, or *My Struggle*, an account of his movement and its basic ideas.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler links extreme German nationalism, strong anti-Semitism, and anticommunism together by a Social Darwinian theory of struggle. This theory emphasizes the right of superior nations to lebensraum (LAY•buhnzh•rowm)—“living space”—through expansion. It also upholds the right of superior individuals to gain authoritarian leadership over the masses.



## The Message of Nazism

Nazi banners adorn Nuremberg's medieval imperial castle. Below it is a map of Germany, with East Prussia separated from the rest of the country by Poland.



This poster commemorates the 1934 Nuremberg Rally. Hitler considered Nuremberg to be “the most German of all cities.” Starting in 1933, the year Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany, annual Nazi Party rallies were held at Nuremberg.

The following excerpt is from the introductory chapter of a handbook given to Hitler Youth boys between the ages of 10 and 14. Nearly every German boy would have received a copy.

“Our beloved swastika flag appears at this time too. The Führer himself designed it. For us, it is more than an outward symbol. We National Socialists [Nazis] see our program in our flag. We see the social in the red, the movement’s national thinking in the white, and in the swastika we see the symbol of the victory of Aryan humanity and the victory of productive humanity, which was always anti-Semitic and will always be anti-Semitic. When this flag flies, it is a parable of our desires: We think of national freedom and social justice, of racial purity and the victory of Nordic humanity. The swastika reminds us of the time when Nordic farmers and warriors marched to Italy and Greece. It was borne at the front of the soldiers as a holy symbol of the Germanic-German spirit.”

—*The Life of the Führer*

The Nazi eagle perched on a swastika was the formal symbol of the Third Reich. Behind it is the Third Reich battle flag.

## DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTIONS

1. **Explaining** Based on the excerpt, what is the meaning of the swastika?
2. **Making Connections** Why does the excerpt refer to “Nordic farmers and warriors”?

## Rise of Nazism

While in prison, Hitler realized that the Nazis would have to attain power by legal means, not by a violent overthrow of the Weimar Republic. Hitler knew that the Nazi Party would have to be a mass political party that could compete for votes with the other political parties.

Once out of prison, Hitler expanded the Nazi Party in Germany. By 1929, it had a national party organization. Three years

later, it had 800,000 members and had become the largest party in the **Reichstag**—the German parliament.

No doubt, Germany’s economic difficulties were a crucial factor in the Nazi rise to power. Unemployment had risen dramatically, growing from 4.35 million in 1931 to about 5.5 million by the winter of 1932. The Great Depression made extremist parties more attractive.

Hitler promised a new Germany that appealed to nationalism and militarism.



A teacher in Hamburg described the emotional response of the audience at one of Hitler's rallies, "When the speech was over, there was roaring enthusiasm and applause. . . . How many look up to him with touching faith as their helper, their saviour, their deliverer from unbearable distress."

## The Nazis Take Control

After 1930, the German government ruled by decree with the support of President Hindenburg. The Reichstag had little power. Increasingly, the right-wing elites of Germany—the industrial leaders, landed aristocrats, military officers, and higher bureaucrats—looked to Hitler for leadership. Under pressure, Hindenburg agreed to allow Hitler to become chancellor in 1933 and create a new government.

Within two months, Hitler had laid the foundation for the Nazi Party's complete control over Germany. Hitler's "legal seizure" of power came on March 23, 1933, when a two-thirds vote of the Reichstag passed the **Enabling Act**. This law gave the government the power to ignore the constitution for four years while it issued laws to deal with the country's problems. It also gave Hitler's later actions a legal basis. He no longer needed the Reichstag or President Hindenburg. In effect, Hitler became a dictator appointed by the parliamentary body itself.

With their new power, the Nazis quickly brought all institutions under their control. They purged the civil service of democratic elements and of Jews—whom they blamed for Europe's economic woes. They set up prison camps called **concentration camps** for people who opposed them. Trade unions were dissolved. All political parties except the Nazis were abolished.

By the end of the summer of 1933, only seven months after being appointed chancellor, Hitler had established the basis for a totalitarian state. When Hindenburg died in 1934, the office of president was abolished. Hitler became sole ruler of Germany. People took oaths of loyalty to their *Führer* (FYUR•uhr), or "Leader."

**✓ Reading Check** Examining Why was the Enabling Act important to Hitler's success?

## The Nazi State, 1933–1939

**MAIN IDEA** Hitler used anti-Semitism, economic policy, and propaganda to build a Nazi state.

**HISTORY & YOU** What if the U.S. president declared, "The time of personal happiness is over"? Read to learn how the German people reacted to a similar statement by Hitler.

Hitler wanted to develop a totalitarian state. He had not simply sought power for power's sake. He had a larger goal—the development of an **Aryan** racial state that would dominate Europe and possibly the world for generations to come. (*Aryan* is a term used to identify people speaking Indo-European languages. The Nazis misused the term by treating it as a racial designation and identifying the Aryans with the ancient Greeks and Romans and twentieth-century Germans and Scandinavians.)

Nazis thought the Germans were the true descendants and leaders of the Aryans and would create another empire like the one ruled by the ancient Romans. The Nazis believed that the world had already seen two German empires, or Reichs: the Holy Roman Empire and the German Empire of 1871 to 1918. It was Hitler's goal to create a Third Reich, the empire of Nazi Germany.

To achieve his goal, Hitler needed the active involvement of the German people. Hitler stated:

### **PRIMARY SOURCE**

"We must develop organizations in which an individual's entire life can take place. Then every activity and every need of every individual will be regulated by the collectivity represented by the party. There is no longer any arbitrary will, there are no longer any free realms in which the individual belongs to himself. . . . The time of personal happiness is over."

—Adolf Hitler

The Nazis pursued the creation of the totalitarian state in a variety of ways. They employed economic policies, mass spectacles, and organizations—both old and new—to further Nazi goals. They also freely used terror. Policies toward women and, in particular, toward Jews reflected Nazi aims.



## The State and Terror

Nazi Germany was the scene of almost constant personal and institutional conflict. Struggle was a basic feature of relationships within the party, within the state, and between party and state. Hitler, of course, was the ultimate decision maker and absolute ruler.

The *Schutzstaffeln* (“Guard Squadrons”), known simply as the SS, were an important force for maintaining order. The SS was originally created as Hitler’s personal

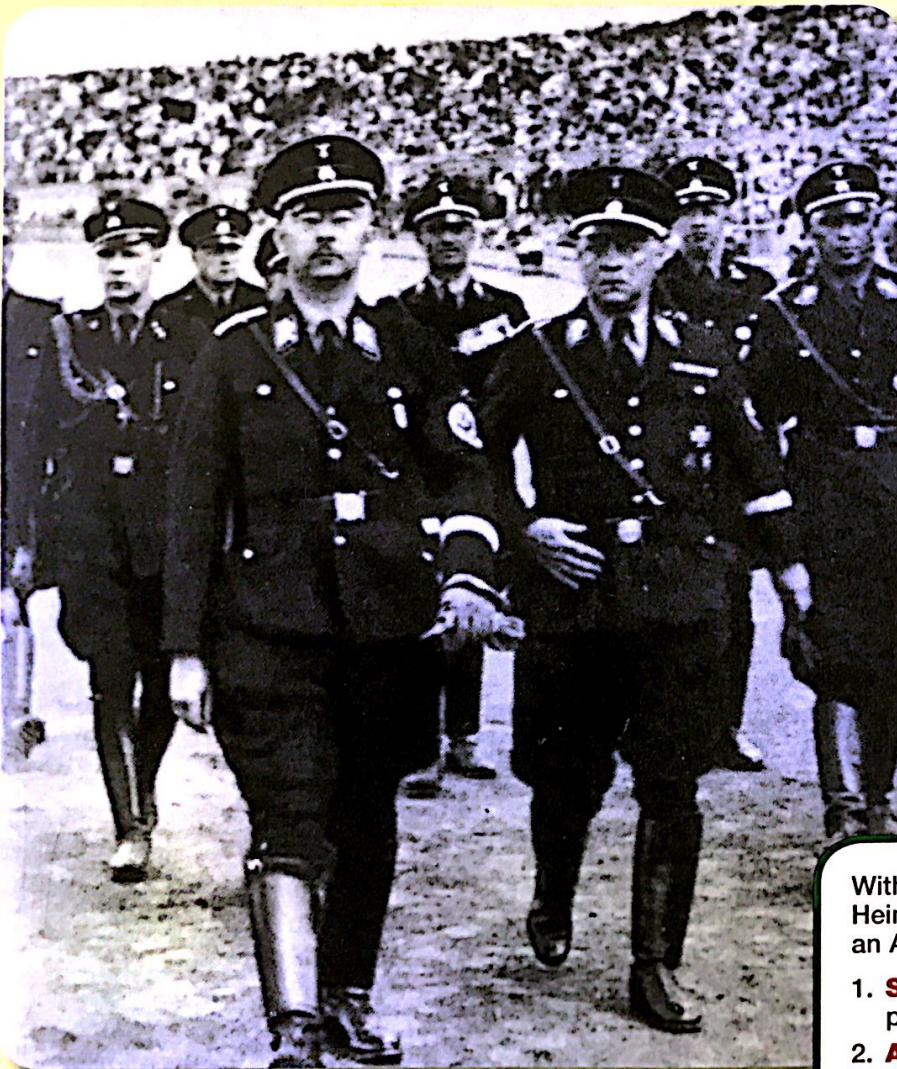
bodyguard. Under the direction of **Heinrich Himmler**, the SS came to control not only the secret police forces that Himmler had set up, but also the regular police forces.

The SS was based on two principles: terror and ideology. Terror included the instruments of repression and murder—secret police, criminal police, concentration camps, and later, execution squads and death camps (concentration camps where prisoners are killed). For Himmler, the chief goal of the SS was to further the Aryan master race.

### INFOGRAPHICS

### PRIMARY SOURCE

#### Himmler and the SS



▲ Heinrich Himmler at Nuremberg, mid-1930s

“We have to know that the enemy during war is not only the enemy in the military sense, but also the ideological enemy. When I speak of enemies, I of course mean our natural enemy—Bolshevism led by international Jewry and Free Masons. . . . [Bolshevism] is the exact opposite of all which the Aryan people loves, cherishes and values. . . . We [Aryans] are more valuable because our blood enables us to be more inventive than the others, to lead our people better than the others, because we have better soldiers, better statesmen, a higher culture, a better character. We have better quality, if I now turn to your area, because the German soldier is more devoted to his duty, more decent and intelligent than the soldier of the other people.”

—Heinrich Himmler, “Lecture on the Nature and Tasks of the SS,” January 1937

### DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTIONS

With the feared SS under his control, Heinrich Himmler pursued the Nazi goal of an Aryan master race.

1. **Specifying** According to Himmler, what political ideology was linked to Jews?
2. **Analyzing Primary Sources** How did Himmler use Nazi ideology to motivate the SS in this speech?



Kristallnacht or "Night of Shattered Glass"



Still visible in this burned synagogue is a *bimah*, a raised platform from which the Torah is read.



Kristallnacht was named for the shattered windows resulting from violence against Jews.

Although anti-Semitic policies had been in effect in Germany since the Nazi takeover in 1933, the events of *Kristallnacht* signaled the start of a more violent era of anti-Semitism. Businesses could not reopen unless managed by non-Jews. Jews were banned from schools and most public places.

"Regards: Measures against Jews tonight. . . .

"a) Only such measures may be taken which do not jeopardize German life or property (for instance, burning of synagogues only if there is no danger of fires for the neighborhoods).

"b) Business establishments and homes of Jews may be destroyed but not looted. . . .

"c) In business streets special care is to be taken that non-Jewish establishments will be safeguarded at all cost against damage. . . .

"As soon as the events of this night permit the use of the designated officers, as many Jews, particularly wealthy ones, as the local jails will hold, are to be arrested in all districts."

—Directive from SS officer Reinhard Heydrich, November 10, 1938

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTIONS

1. **Hypothesizing** Why do you think Heydrich said that Jewish-owned stores and homes could be destroyed but not looted?
2. **Organizing** Research and create a time line of anti-Semitic Nazi policies in the years before *Kristallnacht*.

Economics and Spectacles

In the economic sphere, Hitler used public works projects and grants to private construction firms to put people back to work and end the Depression. A massive rearmament program, however, was the key to solving the unemployment problem.

Unemployment, which had reached more than 5 million people in 1932, dropped to 2.5 million in 1934 and less than 500,000 in 1937. The regime claimed full credit for solving Germany's economic woes. The new regime's part in bringing an end to the Depression was an important

factor in leading many Germans to accept Hitler and the Nazis.

In addition, the Nazis used mass demonstrations and spectacles to make the German people an instrument of Hitler's policies. These meetings, especially the **Nuremberg** party rallies that were held every September, usually evoked mass enthusiasm and excitement.

The Nazi totalitarian state also controlled institutions, which included churches, schools, and universities. In addition, Nazi professional organizations and youth organizations taught Nazi ideals.



## Women and Nazism

Women played a crucial role in the Aryan state as bearers of the children who, the Nazis believed, would bring about the triumph of the Aryan race. The Nazis believed men were destined to be warriors and political leaders, while women were meant to be wives and mothers. By preserving this clear distinction, each could best serve to “maintain the whole community.”

Nazi ideas determined employment opportunities for women. Jobs in heavy industry, the Nazis thought, might hinder women from bearing healthy children. Certain professions, including university teaching, medicine, and law, were also considered unsuitable for women, especially married women. The Nazis instead encouraged women to pursue other occupations, such as social work and nursing. The Nazi regime pushed its campaign against working women with poster slogans such as “Get ahold of pots and pans and broom and you’ll sooner find a groom!”

## Anti-Semitic Policies

From its beginning, the Nazi Party reflected the strong anti-Semitic beliefs of Adolf Hitler. Once in power, the Nazis translated anti-Semitic ideas into anti-Semitic policies, including anti-Jewish boycotts and other measures.

In September 1935, the Nazis announced new racial laws at the annual party rally in Nuremberg. These **Nuremberg laws** defined who was considered a Jew—anyone with even one Jewish grandparent. They also excluded Jews from German citizenship, stripped Jews of their civil rights, and forbade marriages between Jews and German citizens. Jews could neither teach nor take part in the arts. Eventually, German Jews were also **required** to wear yellow Stars of David and to carry identification cards saying they were Jewish.

A more violent phase of anti-Jewish activity began on the night of November 9, 1938—**Kristallnacht**, or the “night of shattered glass.” In a destructive rampage, Nazis burned synagogues and destroyed some 7,000 Jewish businesses. At least 100 Jews were killed. Thirty thousand Jewish males were rounded up and sent to concentration camps.

*Kristallnacht* led to further drastic steps. Jews were barred from all public transportation and all public buildings, including schools and hospitals. They were **prohibited** from owning, managing, or working in any retail store. The Jews were forced to clean up all the debris and damage due to *Kristallnacht*. Finally, under the direction of the SS, Jews were encouraged to “emigrate from Germany.” The fortunate Jews were the ones who managed to escape from the country.

**✓ Reading Check** **Summarizing** What steps did Hitler take to establish a Nazi totalitarian state in Germany?

### Vocabulary

1. **Explain** the significance of: Adolf Hitler, Munich, Nazi, Reichstag, Enabling Act, concentration camps, Aryan, Heinrich Himmler, Nuremberg, Nuremberg laws, require, *Kristallnacht*, prohibit.

### Main Ideas

2. **Summarize** the steps that Hitler took to become the sole ruler of Germany.
3. **Describe** the policies and programs that the Nazis used to create a Third Reich. Using a table like the one below, identify the goals for each policy or program.

Policy/Program	Goals

4. **List** the rights that the Nazi government took from the Jews.

### Critical Thinking

5. **The BIG Idea Determining Cause and Effect** How did mass demonstrations and meetings contribute to the success of the Nazi Party?
6. **Drawing Conclusions** Why were the methods used by Himmler’s SS effective in furthering Nazi goals?
7. **Comparing** In what ways were the governments of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy alike?
8. **Analyzing Visuals** Examine the poster on page 805. Why is East Prussia shown as being separated from the rest of Germany?

### Writing About History

9. **Expository Writing** Find a library book by a German who lived under Nazism. Read about the author’s life. Write a report about whether that person could have resisted the government and why or why not.

### History ONLINE

For help with the concepts in this section of *Glencoe World History*, go to [glencoe.com](http://glencoe.com) and click Study Central™.