

The Nazi State in peace and war

Hitler taking power after his election

- The beginning:
 - Von Papen and his allies thought that they could control him.
 - At first there were only two Nazi ministers, but they controlled the police.
 - The SA were now free to attack their political enemies.
 - Their newspapers were closed down, offices raided, members beaten up.
 - To win over the army, Hitler promised to tear up the military clauses of the Treaty.
- The Reichstag Fire
 - Dutch communist, Marinus van der Lubbe set fire to the Reichstag building.
 - Hitler took advantage, said it was a signal of the Communist revolution, and acted.
 - **The Decree of the President for the Protection of People and State** was passed.
 - It suspended human rights and gave the police increased power.
 - Waves of arrests followed, beating and torture were commonplace.
 - The first concentration camp was set up at **Dachau**.
- The Enabling Act:
 - Nazis won 44% of vote in the next election.
 - Hitler wanted to pass the Enabling Act, which would allow the government to pass laws without the approval of parliament or president.
 - This required a 2/3s majority (as it changed the constitution), so SA mobs intimidated the MPs and stopped Communist MPs from entering the building on the day of the vote.
 - It was passed.
- The end of opposition as Nazis took complete power.
 - Nazi terror increased and they attacked all political parties (incl. their supporters).
 - One by one, all political parties were banned or dissolved themselves.
 - All trade unions were disbanded, leaders arrested, and member forced to join the Nazi-controlled **Labour Front**.
- The vicious secret police, **Gestapo**, was formed. They watched enemies of the regime.
 - Criticism of the regime resulted in arrest, torture, and detention in concentration camps.
 - The conditions in concentration camps were harsh, with arbitrary violence.
 - Prisoners were subject to whims of the SS guards.
 - Extermination camps were set up when WWII broke out, to eliminate Jews and other racial enemies of the Nazis.

The Night of the Long Knives

- The Brownshirts (SA), under the control of Ernst Röhm, were growing too powerful. There were 3 million of them – thugs who were disliked and seen as unacceptable.
- **Göring** and **Goebbels** were jealous, and the army were worried about their power.
- Hitler was persuaded to take action against them.
 - On the night of 29th June 1934, units of SS arrested and executed the SA leaders.
 - He took this opportunity to kill other political opponents.
- This action was popular with Germans – ruthless, but necessary.
- The SA was fatally weakened, and now the SS (led by **Himmler**) were the main force.

Hindenburg died – Hitler now combined president and chancellor and became **Der Führer**.

Economic success

- The massive improvement in the economy was a major factor in Hitler's popularity.
- Unemployment fell from 6 to 1 million from 1932 to 1937.
 - There were massive public works schemes (dams, *autobahns* [motorways], railroads).
 - Programme of rearmament led to large increase in production of steel, tanks, planes, etc.
 - Army was greatly expanded.
- Germany's economic success was showcased in the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

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Life for workers

- Working hours were increased, no right to strike.
- But the Nazi party knew they needed their support – they placed great stress on the important role they played in the *volkgemeinschaft* [people's community].
 - May 1st became a paid national holiday.
 - **Strength through joy** (leisure arm of German Labour Front):
 - Organised activities (concerts, plays) with cheap tickets.
 - Organised cheap holidays to go abroad.
 - The *Volkswagen* was a big plan, but outbreak of war meant no one ever got a car.

Indoctrinating the young in Nazi Germany

- Boys = future soldiers of the Reich, girls = future mothers.
- Schools were required to teach Nazi ideologies – taught to be loyal to Hitler.
 - Teachers had to be part of the National Socialist Teachers's League.
 - They had to be careful what they said, and couldn't criticise the regime.
- Boys joined the **German Young People** at 10, and then the **Hitler Youth** at age 14.
 - Hitler Youth was a militarised version of Boy Scouts.
- Girls joined the **League of Young Girls** at 10, and **League of German Maidens** at 14.

Role of women

- German women had gained freedom after WWI, but the Nazis wanted to reverse this.
- Propaganda stressed that a woman's duty was to support her husband and raise children.
- Medals were awarded to women with 4 or more children.
- Women were encouraged to leave work (often by financial incentives) and it became difficult for them to go to university or have a career.
- During WWII, the policies had to be reversed and women worked in factories.