

SECTION 3

Hitler and Nazi Germany

Guide to Reading

Main Ideas

- Hitler and the Nazi Party established a totalitarian state in Germany.
- Many Germans accepted the Nazi dictatorship, while other Germans suffered greatly under Hitler's rule.

Key Terms

Reichstag, concentration camp

People to Identify

Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler

Places to Locate

Munich, Nuremberg

Preview Questions

1. How did Adolf Hitler rise to power?
2. What were the chief features of the Nazi totalitarian state?
3. How did the rise of Nazism affect Germany?

Reading Strategy

Categorizing Information Use a chart like the one below to list anti-Semitic policies enforced by the Nazi Party.

Anti-Semitic Policies

Preview of Events

◆ 1880

◆ 1890

◆ 1900

◆ 1910

◆ 1920

◆ 1930

◆ 1940

1889

Hitler is born

1921

Hitler takes control of the National Socialist German Workers' Party

1933

Reichstag passes Enabling Act

1935

Nazis enact Nuremberg laws

1938

The Kristallnacht occurs

Voices from the Past

In September 1936, Adolf Hitler spoke to a mass rally in the city of Nuremberg:

“Do we not feel once again in this hour the miracle that brought us together? Once you heard the voice of a man, and it struck deep into your hearts; it awakened you, and you followed this voice. . . . When we meet each other here, the wonder of our coming together fills us all. Not everyone of you sees me, and I do not see everyone of you. But I feel you, and you feel me. It is the belief in our people that has made us small men great, that has made brave and courageous men out of us wavering, timid folk; this belief . . . joined us together into one whole! . . . You come, that you may, once in a while, gain the feeling that now we are together; we are with him and he with us, and we are now Germany!”

—*The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, Norman Baynes, ed., 1942

Hitler worked to create an emotional bond between himself and the German people.

Hitler and His Views

Adolf Hitler was born in Austria on April 20, 1889. A failure in secondary school, he eventually traveled to Vienna to become an artist but was rejected by the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. He stayed in the city, supported at first by an inheritance. While in Vienna, however, Hitler developed his basic ideas, which he held for the rest of his life.

At the core of Hitler's ideas was racism, especially anti-Semitism. Hitler was also an extreme nationalist who understood how political parties could effectively use propaganda and terror. Finally, during his Viennese years, Hitler came to believe firmly in the need for struggle, which he saw as the "granite foundation of the world."

At the end of World War I, after four years of service on the Western Front, 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, which by then had been renamed the **National Socialist German Workers' Party** (NSDAP), 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*, extreme German nationalism, strong anti-Semitism, and anticommunism are linked together by a Social Darwinian theory of struggle. This theory emphasizes the right of superior nations to lebensraum (LAY•buhn•ROWM)—living space—

through expansion. It also upholds the right of superior individuals to gain authoritarian leadership over the masses.

Reading Check Summarizing What main ideas does Hitler express in his book *Mein Kampf*?

Rise of Nazism

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

After his release from prison, Hitler expanded the Nazi Party to all parts of 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 6 million by the winter of 1932. The economic and psychological impact of the Great Depression made extremist parties more attractive.

Hitler promised to create a new Germany. His appeals to national pride, national honor, and traditional militarism struck an emotional chord in his listeners. After attending one of Hitler's rallies, a schoolteacher in Hamburg said, "When the speech was over, there was roaring enthusiasm and applause. . . .—How many look up to him with

Picturing History

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote that mass meetings were important because individuals who feel weak and uncertain become intoxicated with the power of the group. **How do you think Hitler viewed the average person?**



touching faith as their helper, their saviour, their deliverer from unbearable distress.”

✓ Reading Check Explaining What factors helped the Nazi Party to gain power in Germany?

Victory of Nazism

After 1930, the German government ruled by decree with the support of President Hindenburg. The Reichstag had little power, and thus Hitler clearly saw that controlling the parliament was not very important.

More and more, the right-wing elites of Germany—the industrial leaders, landed aristocrats, military officers, and higher bureaucrats—looked to Hitler for leadership. He had the mass support to create a right-wing, authoritarian regime that would save Germany and people in privileged positions from a Communist takeover. In 1933, Hindenburg, under pressure, agreed to allow Hitler to become chancellor and create a new government.

Within two months, Hitler had laid the foundation for the Nazis’ complete control over Germany. The crowning step of 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.

The Enabling Act 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 source of power, the Nazis acted quickly to bring all institutions under Nazi control. The civil service was purged of Jews and democratic elements. Large prison camps called **concentration camps** were set up for people who opposed the new regime. 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. Public officials and soldiers were all required to take a personal oath of loyalty to Hitler as their *Führer* (FYUR•uhr), or “Leader.”

✓ Reading Check Examining Why was the Enabling Act important to Hitler’s success in controlling Germany?

THE WAY IT WAS

YOUNG PEOPLE IN . . .

Nazi Germany

In setting up a totalitarian state, the Nazis recognized the importance of winning young people over to their ideas. The Hitler Youth, an organization for young people between the ages of 10 and 18, was formed in 1926 for that purpose.

By 1939, all German young people were expected to join the Hitler Youth. Upon entering, each took an oath: “In the presence of this blood banner [Nazi flag], which represents our Führer, I swear to devote all my energies and my strength to the savior of our country, Adolf Hitler. I am



Young Germans waving flags

willing and ready to give up my life for him, so help me God.”

Members of the Hitler Youth had their own uniforms and took part in a number of activities. For males, these included camping and hiking trips, sports activities, and evenings together in special youth “homes.” Almost all activities were competitive and meant to encourage fighting and heroic deeds.

Above all, the Hitler Youth organization worked to foster military values and virtues, such as duty, obedience, strength, and ruthlessness. Uniforms and drilling became

The Nazi State, 1933–1939

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* was a term linguists used to identify people speaking Indo-European languages. The Nazis misused the term and identified 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:

“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.”

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

The State and Terror Nazi Germany was the scene of almost constant personal and institutional conflict. This resulted in administrative chaos. 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.

For those who needed coercion, the Nazi totalitarian state used terror and repression. 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.

a way of life. By 1938, training in the military arts was also part of the routine. Even boys 10 to 14 years old were given small-arms drill and practice with dummy hand grenades. Those who were 14 to 18 years old bore army packs and rifles while on camping trips in the countryside.

The Hitler Youth had a female division, known as the League of German Girls, for girls aged 10 to 18. They, too, had uniforms: white blouses, blue ankle-length skirts, and sturdy hiking shoes. Camping and hiking were also part of the girls' activities. More important, however, girls were taught domestic skills—how to cook, clean houses, and take care of children. In Nazi Germany, women were expected to be faithful wives and dutiful mothers.



Many German children were proud of being part of the Hitler Youth.

CONNECTING TO THE PAST

- 1. Explaining** What ideals and values did the Hitler Youth promote?
- 2. Analyzing** How did the Hitler Youth help support the Nazi attempt to create a total state?
- 3. Writing about History** Do organizations like the Hitler Youth exist today in the United States? How are they similar or different?

Three Dictators: Mussolini, Stalin, and Hitler

	Benito Mussolini (1883–1945)	Joseph Stalin (1879–1953)	Adolf Hitler (1889–1945)
Country	Italy	USSR	Germany
Political Title	Prime Minister	General Secretary	Chancellor
Date in Power	1922	1929	1933
Political Party	Fascist Party	Communist Party	National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP, or Nazi)
Type of Government	Fascist	Communist	Fascist
Source(s) of Support	Middle-class industrialists and large land owners	Party officials	Industrial leaders, landed aristocrats, military, and bureaucracy
Methods of Controlling Opposition	Secret police (OVRA), imprisonment, outlawing other parties, propaganda, censorship of the press	Purges, prison camps, secret police, state-run press, forced labor camps, executions	<i>Schutzstaffeln</i> (SS) police force, propaganda, state-run press, terror, repression, racial laws, concentration and death camps
Policies	Support for Catholic Church, nationalism, antisocialism, anticommunism	Five-Year Plans for rapid industrialization, collectivization of farms	Rearmament, public projects to put people to work, anti-Semitism, racism, Social Darwinism, extreme nationalism

Chart Skills

Mussolini, Stalin, and Hitler all came to power after World War I.

- 1. Making Comparisons** Compare the governments of Mussolini, Stalin, and Hitler. How were they similar?
- 2. Identifying** What methods do people in a democracy use to express their opposition to government policies? Why would these methods not have worked under these dictators?

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.

Economic Policies 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 6 million people in 1932, dropped to 2.6 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.

Spectacles and Organizations Mass demonstrations and spectacles were also used to make the German people an instrument of Hitler's policies. These meetings, especially the **Nuremberg** party rallies that were held every September, had great appeal. They usually evoked mass enthusiasm and excitement.

Institutions, such as the Catholic and Protestant churches, primary and secondary schools, and universities, were also brought under the control of the Nazi totalitarian state. Nazi professional organizations and leagues were formed for civil servants, teachers, women, farmers, doctors, and lawyers. In addition, youth organizations taught Nazi ideals.

Women and Nazism Women played a crucial role in the Aryan state as bearers of the children who, it

was 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, it was 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.

In September 1935, the Nazis announced new racial laws at the annual party rally in Nuremberg. These **Nuremberg laws** excluded Jews from German citizenship and forbade marriages between Jews and German citizens. In 1941, 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—the *Kristallnacht*, or “night of shattered glass.” In a destructive rampage against the Jews, Nazis burned synagogues and

“The broad mass of a nation . . . will more easily fall victim to a big lie than to a small one.”

—Adolf Hitler



destroyed some seven thousand Jewish businesses. At least a hundred 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.”

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

SECTION 3 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

- Define** Reichstag, concentration camp.
- Identify** Adolf Hitler, National Socialist German Workers' Party, *Mein Kampf*, lebensraum, Enabling Act, Aryan, Heinrich Himmler, Nuremberg laws, *Kristallnacht*.
- Locate** Munich, Nuremberg.
- Summarize** the steps that Hitler took to become the sole ruler of Germany.
- List** the rights taken from the Jews by the Nazi government.

Critical Thinking

- Analyze** How did mass demonstrations and meetings contribute to the success of the Nazi Party?
- Organizing Information** Use a table to describe the policies and programs used by the Nazis to create a Third Reich. Identify the goals for each policy or program.

Policy/Program	Goals

Analyzing Visuals

- Examine** any two photos from this section. Compare and contrast the two photos. How do you think they relate to Hitler’s vision of Nazi Germany?

Writing About History

- Expository Writing** Find a library book by a German who lived under Nazism. Read several chapters on the author’s life. Write a report about whether that person could have resisted the government and why.