

Difficulties ruling Germany, 1890-1914

German government



This German Empire of 1871 to 1918 is sometimes known as the **Second Reich**, meaning second 'realm'; it was formed in 1871, when a group of smaller states joined together, with the king of the biggest, Prussia, made Emperor (**Kaiser**).

- Of the 25 states **Prussia was far more powerful than any of the others**; it had 2/3 of the total population and half the territory (land). Other states resented this.
- A parliamentary government also developed. There was a Parliament called the **Reichstag**. There were several major political parties; none had a majority so there were many **coalitions**.
- The Kaiser was supported by ministers. The chief minister was called the **Chancellor** (this role was similar to Prime Minister in Britain).

- In 1888 **Wilhelm II** became the Kaiser. He was moody and unstable with violent rages, so did not govern consistently.

Growth of military and industries



When Wilhelm became Kaiser, Britain was arguably the world's most powerful nation; **its navy was twice the size of its two closest rivals added together**. Wilhelm wanted Germany to be as great and powerful. Supported by rich, powerful businessmen, he began to build up Germany's industry, a process known as 'industrialisation'. **By 1913 Germany was producing more iron and steel and twice as much coal as Britain**. In industries such as electrical goods and chemicals, German companies dominated Europe. The success of this industry had made **landowners, business and factory owners very rich**. Alongside the noble army officers, these men were very powerful and had much influence with the Kaiser.

The Kaiser also followed the idea of **Weltpolitik** which meant 'world policy'; he wanted an empire like those of other European countries. Germany began taking over African countries such as Togo and Cameroon. The **Kaiser also started to**



build up the German navy so that it could protect its new colonies and help take over others. A series of naval laws were introduced between 1898 and 1912, including:



- The **First Naval Law of 1898** set up a **fleet of 19 battleships**, 8 armored cruisers, 12 large cruisers and 30 light cruisers to be constructed by April 1904 with 5 million marks given to run the navy per year.
- The **Second Naval Law of 1900** planned to double the size of the naval fleet from **19 to 38 battleships from 1901 to 1917**.
- **By 1906 60% of Germany's revenue** was spent on the navy.
- To fund this naval expansion, the Kaiser **raised** taxes and the **borrowed lots of money**. Germany was left in lots of **debt**.

Social reform & growth of socialism

However, times were changing in Germany. The population was growing quickly (40 million in 1871 to 68 million in 1914). This provided lots of manpower for the growing industries. However **workers were angry at their low wages and poor working conditions**. Trade unions were growing and people were organising strikes to try and convince the Kaiser to improve their conditions.

Many of these ordinary workers began voting for a new political party called the **Social Democratic Party (SPD)**. The SPDs believed in **socialism**; the idea that power and wealth should be shared equally among the people. In 1887 it had just 11 seats in the Reichstag, but by 1903 it had 81. The Kaiser tried to win back support from the workers by introducing acts such as the 1891 Workers' Protection Act.

Impact of the First World War

War weariness

War was initially popular in Germany; many thought it would end quickly. But they were wrong and people in Germany soon started to protest against the war.

For example, in **1915 500 women gathered in front of parliament** and demanded that the men return from the trenches. A year later, in Berlin, 10,000 workers protested against the war.

Defeat and end of monarchy

By 1918, Germany was close to collapse:
- The German people were starving, surviving just on turnips and bread. A deadly flu epidemic was sweeping the country and killing thousands.
- On 28 October 1918, the German navy was ordered out to sea from Kiel in northern Germany to attack British ships. **Sailors on the ships refused to follow orders** because they no longer wanted to fight. News of their mutiny spread; sailors in other ports also refused and soldiers, who had been sent to deal with the protests, joined in. The Kaiser now knew he had lost control so on **9 November 1918**, he **abdicated** and fled to the Netherlands, never to return.



Weimar Republic

Friedrich Ebert, leader of the SPD (now Germany's biggest political party) took on the role as German leader on a temporary basis. He promised to hold **democratic elections** soon when, if Germans wanted him to be their leader, they would get the chance to vote for him; there would be no more Kaisers.



Ebert also ended the war when on **11 November 1918, the Armistice was signed**. This was an agreement to end the war. However many Germans felt they could have won the war and therefore had been betrayed, or '**stabbed in the back**'. As a result politicians including Ebert became known as the **November Criminals**.

Amidst all this instability Germany needed a new political system; a new constitution was created which made Germany much more democratic:

President (head of state): elected by the people every seven years.

Chancellor (the prime minister): chosen

by the President but must have (and keep) Reichstag support.

Reichstag (the parliament): elected by the people by proportional representation (proportion of seats = proportion of votes).

The people (electorate): all Germans over 20 could vote for the President and members of the Reichstag.

One exception to these democratic principles was **Article 48** which said that in a crisis, the President could rule the country directly using emergency powers. This proved to be a very important power in later years.



In late January 1919, Ebert held the election that he had promised. His own party, the SPD, won the most votes and Ebert was elected President. On 11 February 1919 the newly elected politicians met to discuss how to run Germany. Because of all the recent violence in Berlin, they met in another German town called Weimar. This was the start of the **Weimar Republic**.

Treaty of Versailles & economic ruin

After the war Germany was facing financial ruin. It had borrowed a lot of money from abroad. Meanwhile **60,000 war widows and two million children were now without fathers**; war pensions would cost the government a fortune in the future. German factories were also exhausted by the war from producing guns, bullets and shells.



In January 1919 representatives from the victorious countries met at the **Paris Peace Conference** to discuss terms for Germany's punishment. It was dominated by the Big Three - David Lloyd George (PM of Britain), George Clemenceau (leader of France) and Woodrow Wilson (US President). Germany was not invited to negotiations. In **June the Treaty of Versailles was signed**; 440 Articles that set out the terms for Germany's punishment, including:
- Germany had to accept **full blame** for starting the war.

- Germany had to pay **reparations** to the other countries, for the cost of the damage (set at **£6.6 billion in 1921**). They were to pay this in yearly instalments for 66 years.
- Germany's **army** was to be reduced to **100,000 men**.
- Large areas of German land were to be given to neighbouring countries, including **Alsace-Lorraine** to France; **Posen** to Poland and the **Saar** area, with its rich coalfields, given to France for 15 years.
- All **colonies were to be handed over** to France and Britain as 'mandates'.

The leaders of Germany had no choice whether or not to sign the treaty; refusal would have resulted in an invasion by the Allies. However back home in Germany the treaty was greeted with shock and disbelief.



Reparations & occupation of the Ruhr

In 1922, Germany found that they could no longer pay the huge reparations outlined in the Treaty of Versailles. The French and Belgians did not believe this and decided to take what they were owed by force. Over **60,000 French and Belgian troops marched into the Ruhr**, a rich, industrial area of Germany in January 1923. They took control of every factory, mine and railway in the region. In response the German government ordered workers in the Ruhr to not fight back but instead go on strike, **known as passive resistance**.

Hyperinflation



The government decided to **continue paying their striking workers**; after all they were only following their orders. To make matters worse, Germany was running short of money because the Ruhr was not producing coal, iron and steel to sell to other nations. To tackle this problem the government began to **print large amounts of money** to pay the striking workers, but these workers began to spend their money quickly so shopkeepers raised prices to try and gain

higher profits. The government began to print more money to help people keep up with the rising prices, however the faster the government printed money, the quicker the prices went up and the quicker people spent their wages. This resulted in **hyperinflation**; the government had printed so much that it had lost its value and by 1923, German money was worthless:

- People with savings in the banks were the biggest losers. Some people had saved all their lives to get 1000 marks in the bank. By 1923, this would not even buy them a loaf of bread.
- + People who borrowed money were the winners as they now found it very easy to pay off their debts. A person who had borrowed 10,000 marks in 1920 could now pay off their debt with one banknote.

Weimar democracy: political change and unrest, 1919-1923

In post-war Germany, as well as economic problems, the new government faced a series of political challenges from groups did not want Ebert, or the new democratic republic.

The Spartacist Uprising



The **Spartacist League** believed in Communism and wanted Germany to be run by small councils of workers and soldiers, not by a large parliament. On **6 January 1919**, the Spartacists tried to take over Berlin. They roamed the streets while armed and tried to take over important buildings. Ebert asked for help from a group of 2000 tough ex-soldiers known as the **Freikorps** (Free Corps) to attack the Spartacists. After three days of brutal street violence, the Freikorps recaptured the buildings and arrested the leaders; the revolt had failed. Its leaders **Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht** were later executed.

The Kapp Putsch

In **March 1920**, **Dr Wolfgang Kapp** gathered around 5000 members of the

Freikorps (ex-soldiers) and took over the capital city, **Berlin**. He aimed to eventually take over the whole country and make the army strong again. President Ebert and the rest of the government fled from Berlin. However Kapp did not have the support from the workers and they all went on strike, resulting in no gas, water, electricity or trains. After only 100 hours as Germany's newest leader, Kapp, gave in and fled abroad. Ebert and his government then returned to the capital.



The Munich Putsch (aka Beer Hall)

On **8 November 1923**, Hitler interrupted a meeting in a **beer hall in Munich** where Gustav von Kahr, the head of the Bavarian government, was speaking (Bavaria is a region of Germany; Munich is its biggest city). Hitler fired a bullet into the ceiling and said he was taking over Bavaria. He locked Kahr and his companions in a small room. Waving a gun at them, Hitler forced them to agree to support him. He then let them go home. The SA took over the army headquarters and the offices of the local newspaper.



The next day on 9 November 1923, Hitler and other Nazis arrived in Munich on what they thought would be a triumphant march to take power. However, Kahr had secretly called in police and army reinforcements. There was a short scuffle in which the police killed 16 Nazis. Hitler fled, but was arrested two days later. **He was put on trial and sentenced to five years in prison**. While in prison he decided that in the future the Nazis should seek power through elections, and not by putsch (coup).

Recovery under Stresemann, 1924-29

Gustav Stresemann became Chancellor of Germany in 1923, and was later Foreign Minister. Many believe that he rescued Germany.

Economic recovery

- **Introduction of new currency, 1923:** the

Rentgenmark replaced the old worthless marks. This stabilised prices and the economy.

- **The Dawes Plan, 1924:** the USA agreed to loan 800 million marks to Germany and reparations payments were to spread out over a longer period of time.
- **The Young Plan, 1929:** reparations payments were reduced to £2.2 billion and Germany was given longer to pay.

By early 1929 Germany appeared to be much more prosperous; for example Germany was second in the world (behind the USA) in terms of its amount of industrial output.

However, unemployment was rising (it was 6% by 1928) and the economic benefits were not equally shared across German society; for example farmers were in fact poorer throughout the 1920s.

International reputation



- **Locarno Treaties, 1925:** Germany, France and Belgium agreed to respect borders set out in the Treaty of Versailles.
- **Kellogg-Briand Pact 1928:** Germany was one of 62 countries that agreed to settle disagreements without invasion.
- **League of Nations 1926:** Germany was allowed to join the League of Nations; this restored its 'great power' status and boosted German pride.

However, Stresemann had to accept the Treaty of Versailles and some Germans (particularly right-wingers) felt he was weak and had given in to Germany's enemies.

Cultural revival



Under the Kaiser there had been strict censorship. When it was removed under the Weimar government, painters, writers, musicians and architects enjoyed their new freedom, especially in cities such as Berlin. Clubs and cinemas thrived and German culture - for example the work of artist Paul Klee and film maker Fritz Lang - became internationally famous.

Growth in Nazi support 1928-32

In 1928, the Nazis had only 12 seats in the Reichstag; by July 1932 they had 230 seats and were the largest party.



Great Depression:

In 1929, the American Stock Exchange collapsed, and caused an **economic depression**. America called in all its foreign loans, which destroyed Weimar Germany. Unemployment in Germany rose to 6 million. Unemployed, hungry and desperate, many turned to extreme political parties which offered simple solutions to their problems.

Hitler's appeal

From 1924 the Nazis put forward their 25-Point Programme which had **broad social and geographical appeal**, including policies that were **socialist**: for example proposing state ownership of public industries and **nationalist**: that all German-speaking people should be united in one country and the Treaty of Versailles abolished. There were also **racist** clauses: Jews should not be German citizens and immigration should be stopped. **Facism** was also key; this was the idea of a strong central government.

The Nazis **did not appeal to working men**: who voted Communist (however these were generally limited to the cities) and **intellectuals** such as university students and professors.

However they **were popular with the middle-class** who had decided that the country needed a strong government; **wealthy businessmen** frightened by the increase in support for the communists; **nationalists** who blamed the legacy of the **Treaty of Versailles** for causing the depression and in **rural areas**, in particular amongst farmers and farm labourers.

Role of the SA

In 1921 Hitler assembled a large group of unemployed young men and former soldiers, known as the Storm Troopers

(Sturmabteilung) or SA, as the Nazi Party's private army. They gained the nickname '**Brownshirts**', after their brown shirted uniforms. Their role was to protect party meetings, march in Nazi rallies and intimidate political opponents by breaking up their meetings. After the failure of the Munich Putsch, the SA was reorganised. It intimidated voters into voting for the Nazi Party. By 1933 the SA had 2 million members.

Propaganda



Hitler was a great speaker with an extraordinary power to win people over. Nazi propaganda was controlled by Joseph Goebbels, with three key themes:

The Führer cult: Hitler was portrayed as Germany's saviour – the man who would rescue the country

Volksgemeinschaft (people's community):

the idea that the Nazis would create one German community
Scapegoating the Jews (and others): Jews were often portrayed as sub-human, or as a threat to both the racial purity and economic future of the country.

Failure of Weimar democracy

Throughout the economic depression Germany suffered from weak governments. By 1932 President Hindenburg had to use **Article 48** to pass almost every law. Events which led to **Hitler becoming Chancellor in January 1932**:



1932:

April - Presidential election. Hitler came second to Hindenburg, who won 53% of the vote to Hitler's 36.8%.

May - Brüning resigned as Chancellor. Hindenburg appointed **Franz Von Papen** as his replacement.

July - in Reichstag elections the Nazis became the largest single party with 230 seats, but still did not have a majority. Hitler demanded to be made Chancellor but Papen remained.

November - Von Papen called for another set of elections to try to win a

majority. The Nazis lost 34 seats but remained the largest party with 196 seats.
December - Von Papen resigned. Hindenburg appointed **Kurt Von Schleicher**, an army general, as Chancellor. Von Schleicher tried to split the Nazis by asking a leading Nazi called Gregor Strasser to be his Vice Chancellor. Hitler forced Strasser to decline.

1933:

January - Von Papen and Hindenburg finally turned to Hitler, and decided to appoint him as **Chancellor** with Von Papen as Vice Chancellor. They believed they could control Hitler and get him to do what they wanted. However Hitler immediately set about making himself absolute ruler of Germany using Article 48.

Creation of dictatorship 1933-34

By August 1934 Hitler had declared himself Führer - the sole leader of Germany. During this time he eliminated all sources of opposition to himself, both within the Nazi Party and in Germany as a whole. He convinced President Hindenburg to call a new Reichstag election for March 1933. This set off a series of events that ended with Hitler becoming dictator:

Reichstag Fire and Reichstag election, 27 Feb - 5 Mar 1933

Events: on 27 March the Reichstag building was set on fire. A Dutch communist, van der Lubbe, was caught red-handed in the burning building. Days later in the election 44% of the population voted for the Nazis, who won 288 seats in the Reichstag. But this was still not an overall majority; Hitler had to join with the nationalists to form one.



How this helped Hitler to gain power: although the Nazis didn't gain an overall majority, once all communist deputies had been arrested and other parties had been intimidated by the SA, he was able to pass the **Enabling Act**.

The Enabling Act, 23 March 1933

Events: the Reichstag voted by the

required two-thirds majority to give Hitler the right to make laws without the Reichstag's approval for four years.
How this helped Hitler to gain power: it gave Hitler absolute power to make laws, which enabled him to destroy all opposition to his rule. This removed the Reichstag as a source of opposition.

Trade unions abolished, 2 May 1933

Events: trade unions were abolished and their leaders arrested. The state took over the role of looking after the working class.
How this helped Hitler to gain power: Hitler knew that he needed the workers to be on his side but he could not allow trade unions to exercise the power they had over the working classes.

Political parties, 14 July 1933:

Events: other political parties were banned: only the Nazi party was allowed.
How this helped Hitler to gain power: this removed other parties as a source of opposition. It made Germany a one-party state and destroyed democracy in the country.

Night of the Long Knives, 30 June 1934

Events: the SA was starting to become too powerful with Röhm demanding that the SA take over the army, so the SS (Hitler's personal body guards) murdered around 400 members of their members, including Rohm.

How this helped Hitler to gain power: this destroyed all opposition to Hitler within the Nazi Party and gave more power to the brutal SS.

Hitler became Führer, 19 Aug 1934:

Events: when Hindenburg died, Hitler declared himself jointly president, chancellor and head of the army. Members of the armed forces had to swear a personal oath of allegiance not to Germany, but to Hitler.

How this helped Hitler to gain power: this formally made **Hitler the absolute ruler of Germany**.



Experiences of Germans under Nazis

Nazi Germany was a totalitarian state, meaning all aspects of Germans' lives were controlled by the government.

Economic changes

How Hitler increased employment

- **Public works programmes:** Hitler began a huge programme which included building hospitals and schools. Construction of autobahns (motorways) created work for 80,000 men.
- **Rearmament:** rearmament is the process of building up a new stock of military weapons. It was responsible for the bulk of economic growth 1933-1938.
- **Introduction of the National Labour Service (NLS):** this meant all young men spent six months in the NLS and were then conscripted into the army.
- **Invisible employment:** many groups of people were not included in employment statistics; Jews were sacked and women encouraged to become housewives.

Autarky

The policy of autarky attempted to make Germany **self-sufficient**. In 1937 Hermann Göring was made Economics Minister. He introduced the Four Year Plan to prepare Germany for war in 4 years. He made tighter controls on imports and subsidies for farmers to produce more food, but these were not very successful. By the outbreak of WWII Germany was still importing 20% of its food and 33% of its raw materials.

Who did/didn't benefit from changes

- + **Big businesses:** by 1937 they controlled over 70% of production. Rearmament from 1935 onwards boosted profits of big weapons companies.
- **Small business:** rules on opening and running small businesses were tightened, which resulted in 20% of them closing.
- + **Farmers:** by 1937, agricultural prices had increased by 20% and agricultural wages rose quicker than those in industry.
- + & - **industry workers:** rearmament now meant it was critical that workers were productive and under control. The Nazis



set up three organisations that would manage German workers:

- 1) **The Labour Front** replaced the trade unions and set wages.
- 2) The **Strength Through Joy** scheme gave workers rewards for their work including theatre trips and sometimes free holidays.
- 3) The **Beauty of Labour** organisation encouraged Germans to view work positively and factory owners to improve conditions for workers.

Standards for German workers in non-arms industries did not really improve under the Nazis; from 1933 to 1939 wages fell and the number of hours worked rose by 15%.

Impact of WWII

World War Two began on 3 September 1939. The vast majority of Germans reluctantly supported the war and signed up to play their part in the war effort.

Rationing: many Germans feared a repeat of the shortages experienced during WWI. Rationing of food was introduced on 27 August 1939; entitlements depended upon the importance of individuals to the war effort, whilst Jews' food entitlements were set below Aryans'.

Area bombing: from 1942 'area bombing' by Britain began with both civilian and military areas targeted in large industrial cities by incendiary bombs (designed to cause fires). Over the next **3 years 61 German cities were attacked.**



Refugees: the area bombing campaign from May 1942 onwards targeted the industrial Ruhr region, creating thousands of refugees as whole cities were flattened or burnt down.

Employment: around 13.7 million German men served in the army during the war, and many women volunteered to replace them. Forced labour was also widespread with hundreds of thousands of civilians and prisoners of war exploited.

Social policies



Women

Marriage and family: Hitler wanted a high birth rate so that the Aryan population would grow. He tried to achieve this with the **Law for the Encouragement of Marriage** which gave newlywed couples 250 marks for each child they had. The **Mother's Cross** was also awarded to women who had lots of children.

Employment: measures were introduced which strongly discouraged women from working, for example the **Law for the Reduction of Unemployment**. However, as the economy grew, more were needed in the workplace; 1933-1939 numbers in employment grew by 2.4 million.

Appearance: women were expected to follow traditional German peasant fashions; plain costumes, hair in plaits or buns and flat shoes. Make-up, trousers, and smoking in public was frowned upon.

Youth

Young people were very important to Hitler and the Nazis and they have to ensure German children were thoroughly **indoctrinated** into Nazi ideology.

Hitler Youth (boys): membership for boys 10 and over was made compulsory in 1936. Its aim was to prepare German boys to be future soldiers; they wore military-style uniforms and activities centred on exercise and rifle practice, as well as political indoctrination.

League of German Maidens (girls): its aim was to prepare German girls for future motherhood; they wore a uniform of blue skirt, white blouse and heavy marching shoes. They undertook exercise, but most activities developed domestic skills such as sewing and cooking.

Education



All teachers had to join the Nazi Teachers' Association, which vetted them for political and racial suitability. The

curriculum was also changed with Biology used to teach Nazi racial theories of evolution in **eugenics** and five one-hour sports lessons every week.



Religion

Hitler saw Christianity as a threat and a potential source of opposition to Nazism because it emphasised peace. To secure more control of the Churches a protestant state **Reich Church** was set up under the leadership of the Nazi Bishop Ludwig Müller. In 1933 Hitler also agreed a **Concordat** with the Pope, which said that he would not interfere in the running of the Catholic Church if it stayed out of political matters. Eight hundred Pastors of the Confessional Church and 400 Catholic priests arrested and sent to concentration camps. In 1937 Hitler was forced to return control of the Church to the old Protestant leadership, in return for a promise that the Church would stay out of politics. Meanwhile, attendance at Catholic churches increased substantially under the Nazis, suggesting attempts to reduce the influence of religion in Germany was unsuccessful.

Racial policies and persecution

The Nazis' racial philosophy taught that **Aryans** were the master race and that some races were '**untermensch**' (sub-human). There were many groups who were targeted for persecution, including Slavs (Eastern Europeans), gypsies, homosexuals and the disabled - but none more so than the Jews.

Nazi policies against these groups included **sterilisation** and **euthanasia**; 1939 to 1941 with over 100,000 physically and mentally disabled Germans killed in secret between 1939 and 1941. **Concentration camps** were also used; 85% of Germany's gypsies died in these camps during WWII.

Persecution of the Jews



The group most heavily targeted for persecution by the Nazis were the Jews of Germany. From 1933 there was a gradual

increase in persecution:

1933

- Jewish businesses boycotted
- Books by Jewish authors publicly burnt.
- Jewish civil servants, lawyers and teachers were sacked.



1935

The **Nuremberg Laws** formalised anti-Semitism into the Nazi state by stripping Jews of German citizenship, outlawing marriage between Jews and Germans and removing political rights.

1938

- Jews had to add Israel (men) or Sarah (women) to their name.
- Jewish children forbidden from school.
- **Kristallnacht (night of the broken glass) on 9 November:** the SS organised attacks on Jewish homes, businesses and synagogues.

The Final Solution

The Nazis persecuted Jews in Germany and across territories they had invaded.

Phase one - Polish ghettos – the invasion of Poland in autumn 1939 brought three million more Jews under Nazi control. They were confined to ghettos and camps in terrible conditions; hundreds of thousands died of starvation and disease.

Phase two - mass killings begin - during the German invasion of the USSR (June 1941), four SS units '**Einsatzgruppen**' units were created. Their task was to round up Jews and other opposition groups and execute them. It is estimated around 1.2 million were executed. The Nazis decision to make the extermination process more efficient led to phase three.

Phase three - extermination camps - death camps were set up; the biggest and most notorious camp was Auschwitz-Birkenau. Jews arrived at the camps and were separated into two groups: those fit enough to work and those to be killed immediately; they were ushered into what they thought were showers, but were gassed to death. It is thought around six million Jews were murdered.

Propaganda and censorship

The **Ministry of Enlightenment and Propaganda, led by Dr Joseph Goebbels**, aimed to indoctrinate people into obeying the Nazis and idolising Hitler. Its methods included:

Censorship of the press: all newspapers were controlled by the government and could only print pre-approved stories

Radio broadcasts: radios were sold very cheaply and all radio output was controlled by Goebbels' ministry through the Reich Broadcasting Corporation.

Mass rallies: these public displays of support for Nazism involved music, speeches and demonstrations of German strength. The biggest one was held each year in August at Nuremberg.

Sports events: Berlin hosted the 1936 Olympics, which the Nazis saw as an opportunity to showcase the success of the regime and demonstrate the superiority of the **Aryan** race.

However the performance of African-American athlete Jesse Owens undermined this.

Loudspeakers: in public places also blared out Nazi propaganda with much of the information reinforcing messages of Aryan racial superiority

Nazi culture and the arts

Art: 'Aryan art' replaced the modern art from the Weimar period.

Architecture: the most important architect of the period was Albert Speer, who designed the Nuremberg stadium.

Literature: Nazis ceremonially burned thousands of books in 1933 that were viewed as representing ideologies opposed to Nazism. These included books by Jewish and communist authors.

Film: the Nazi Party gradually took over film production and distribution. The Nazi leaders often used film stars, like Lil Dagover, to help promote the popularity of the party in Germany.

Music: the Nazis were strongly opposed to jazz music, which they believed was degenerate and the Gestapo regularly raided illegal jazz clubs.



Control

The Police State

In order to maintain his power Hitler needed organisations that could control the population to ensure absolute loyalty to the Führer. Three key organisations led the control through spying, intimidation and imprisonment:

1) Schutzstaffel (SS): led by Heinrich Himmler, the SS was the most important of these organisations and oversaw the others. Initially set up as Hitler's personal bodyguard service, the SS was fanatically loyal to the Führer. It later set up concentration camps where 'enemies of the state' were sent.

2) Gestapo - This was the Nazis' secret police force, its job was to monitor the German population for signs of opposition or resistance to Nazi rule.

3) Sicherheitsdienst (SD) - This was the intelligence gathering agency of the SS responsible for the security of Hitler and other top Nazis and led by Himmler's right hand man, Reinhard Heydrich.

Nazi control of the legal system



The party's control of the legal system made opposition to the regime very difficult indeed. All lawyers had to join the **Nazi Lawyers' Association and judges** had to swear an oath of loyalty to Hitler and were expected to act always in the interests of the Nazi state. Standard punishment for crimes were abolished and so **local prosecutors could decide what penalties to impose** on those found guilty. These changes more than halved the number of criminal offences between 1933 and 1939, whilst the number of crimes that carried the death penalty increased from 3 to 46.

Opposition and resistance

Historians tend to define 'opposition' in Nazi Germany as any acts which openly defied the regime, while resistance is taken to mean active attempts to overthrow Hitler and the Nazis. However, it is also acknowledged that the regime

was widely accepted and enjoyed much popular support; many Germans were happy to trade the freedom and democracy of Weimar for the certainty and security Hitler brought.

Opposition from the Churches: many Protestant pastors, led by Martin Niemöller, formed the **Confessional Church** in opposition to Hitler's Reich Church. Niemöller was held in a concentration camp during the period 1937-1945 and 800 clergymen were sent to camps. Despite the Concordat some Catholic priests also opposed Hitler; 400 were arrested and sent to concentration camps. In 1937, the Pope also attacked Hitler as 'a mad prophet with repulsive arrogance' in his message '**With Burning Concern**' which was read in every Catholic Church.

Opposition from the young: the main youth opposition group was the **Edelweiss Pirates**, they reacted to the discipline of the Hitler Youth by daubing anti-Nazi slogans and singing pre-1933 folk songs. In 1942 over 700 of them were arrested. In 1944, the Pirates in Cologne killed the Gestapo chief, so the Nazis publicly hanged 12 of them. The **White Rose group** was formed by students at Munich University in 1943. They published anti-Nazi leaflets and marched through the city in protest at Nazi policies. Its leaders, brother and sister Hans and Sophie Scholl, were arrested and sentenced to death. During the war, '**Swing Youth**' and '**Jazz Youth**' groups were also formed of young people who rejected Nazi values, drank alcohol and danced to jazz.

Opposition from workers: perhaps the most widespread opposition came from ordinary German workers, often helped by communists, who posted anti-Nazi posters and graffiti, or organised strikes. For example workers went on strike over high food prices in 1935 and during the Berlin Olympics in 1936.

1944 bomb plot: Hitler escaped death after a bomb, planted by Colonel Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg, exploded at his headquarters in Rastenberg, East Prussia.

