

AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR I and THE RISE OF NAZISM: 1918–1933

Corresponds to *State of Deception* Section I: **SELLING NAZISM IN A DEMOCRACY, 1918–1933**

Note the important events that occurred during the democratic period.

- **The Treaty of Versailles was signed in France, June 1919:** Many Germans were shocked and angered over the terms of the treaty, which deprived Germany of any significant military power. Having lost World War I, Germany had to accept full responsibility for starting the war, pay heavy reparations, and forfeit 13 percent of its territory.
- **The ratification of the Weimar Constitution in August 1919:** In the wake of losing World War I, a national assembly drafted a democratic constitution. This was a new and unfamiliar form of government for Germans. Fearing the unknown, the delegates agreed to the inclusion of Article 48. In case of state emergency, Article 48 allowed the government to rule by presidential decree and to suspend basic rights and constitutional protections of individuals without parliamentary consent.
- **Inflation and the world economic crisis:** In order to finance World War I, the German government sold bonds. After the Treaty of Versailles, the government printed paper money to pay back the bondholders and make reparation payments. These and other measures generated a catastrophic inflation that peaked in 1923. After a short period of stability, the US stock market crash of 1929 and the world economic crisis that followed forced German banks to close and unemployment to skyrocket.
- **Hitler is imprisoned at Landsberg Prison in 1924:** Hitler tried to overthrow the government in November 1923. His trial for high treason in 1924 brought him additional fame and followers. He used his jail time during the rest of that year to dictate his political ideas in a book entitled *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*).
- **President Hindenburg appointed Hitler as chancellor in January 1933:** The German Nationalists and the traditional elites felt they needed the popular support that the Nazis could mobilize in order to create a functioning government and that they could better control Hitler if he were a part of the coalition government. President Hindenburg appointed Hitler as chancellor and the Nazi Party assumed control of the German state.
- **The Reichstag Building was torched on February 27, 1933:** A lone arsonist set fire to the Reichstag, Germany's parliamentary building, just a month after Hitler became chancellor. The Nazis and their Nationalist coalition partners demanded emergency legislation, and stoking popular fears, claimed that the arson signaled the beginning of a Communist uprising. Convinced by these arguments, President Hindenburg invoked Article 48, and the Nazi-Nationalist government issued the Reichstag Fire Decree. It suspended all basic civil rights and constitutional protections, providing the basis for arbitrary police action and restricting access to alternative sources of information. German police and Nazi paramilitary groups targeted, terrorized, and indefinitely incarcerated political opponents. Government decrees severely restricted freedoms of the press, the creative arts, literature, and theater. Many Germans willingly accepted or actively supported these extreme measures in favor of order and security. Right-wing propaganda and demonstrations played on fears of a Communist revolution spreading from the Soviet Union.

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<p>Note the emotional response of the German people to these events. What were their grievances, fears, and hopes during the democratic period?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shock: Many veterans and other citizens were shocked by Germany’s defeat and the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. ▪ Anger and frustration: In a country plagued by unemployment, people were embittered by the loss of territory and demoralized by ineffective government. ▪ Fear: Unaccustomed to a democratic system, people feared a Communist revolution spreading from the Soviet Union. They were also fearful of rapid changes and the country’s uncertain future.
<p>Note examples of propaganda messages you see used by the Nazis to win votes as they competed with other parties for power.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mein Kampf: Hitler’s political autobiography, written while he was in prison. ▪ Mass rallies and parades: including the Nuremberg rally, the parade in Berlin (January 1933), and the Hitler Youth rally in Berlin. ▪ The Nazi swastika: like those handed out at the Braunschweig Nazi Party rally. It was a bold and eye-catching symbol. ▪ Newspapers: The Nazi Party recruited members, organized events, and published newspapers to spread its message. ▪ Posters: Political parties, including the Nazis, would plaster posters on large kiosks. ▪ Speeches: Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda chief, used speaking opportunities to reach a wider audience. <p>Important quote: <i>“One must govern well, and for good government, one must also practice good propaganda.”</i> —Joseph Goebbels</p>
<p>Note the different types of media used by the Nazis to deliver their messages to citizens in the German democracy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Newspapers and radio were popular means of communicating information. The Nazi Party produced several newspapers to spread its message. Radio was the latest technology; the Nazis used it to reach a broader audience. ▪ Hitler traveled across Germany by plane to deliver speeches. This was a new technology that Hitler used to reach as many communities across Germany as possible. ▪ Rallies and parades were staged in communities across Germany. ▪ Posters and pamphlets remained extremely important in distributing messages.

BUILDING A “NATIONAL COMMUNITY”: 1933–1936 and FROM CITIZENS TO OUTCASTS: 1933–1938

Corresponds to *State of Deception* Section II: **PROPAGANDA AND PERSECUTION IN A DICTATORSHIP, 1933–1939**

Note the important events that occurred as the Nazis established a dictatorship.

- **1933 Boycott of Jewish Businesses:** On April 1, 1933, the Nazis carried out the first nationwide, planned action against Jews in Germany: a boycott of Jewish businesses. Signs reading “Don’t Buy from Jews” and “The Jews Are Our Misfortune” were posted on local businesses. Though of limited success and lasting just a day, the boycott marked the beginning of a nationwide campaign by the Nazi Party against the entire German Jewish population.
- **Hindenburg’s Death in August 1934:** After securing agreement from the army, Hitler abolished the office of president, declaring himself führer and reich chancellor, leader of the nation, and head of the government. No longer did government or military officials swear allegiance to a constitution; they now swore an oath to Hitler as the supreme leader of the German nation.
- **Remilitarization:** Huge public works projects, such as a network of highways (autobahn), strengthened the economy and facilitated the remilitarization of Germany. These projects and the employment they spawned encouraged hope for the future and strengthened popular faith in the Nazi government. In 1935, Germany openly defied the 1919 Treaty of Versailles by reinstating military conscription and full rearmament.
- **Introduction of Race Laws:** In Nazi ideology, “superior” races must battle “inferior” races or be corrupted by them. Such racist ideas were taught in schools. The Nazis labeled groups that had endured centuries of prejudice and hostility—such as Jews, Slavs, blacks, and Roma (also called Gypsies)—as “racially inferior.” The German government enacted hundreds of laws to define, segregate, and impoverish German Jews. In September 1935, the Nazi Party gathered in Nuremberg for its annual rally. New race laws were introduced by Hitler and read by Parliament President Hermann Göring. Most important, the decrees stripped Jews of German citizenship and the rights guaranteed by citizenship. By 1938, Jews were isolated and segregated from German society, eliminated from most opportunities to earn a living. German Jews become “foreigners” blamed for Germany’s suffering under the parliamentary republic and depicted as waiting to undermine Germany again. German Jews were excluded and were labeled as “Germany’s Misfortune.”
- **Invasion of Austria:** In March 1938, German troops moved into neighboring Austria. Germany shredded another provision of the Versailles Treaty, as Hitler’s homeland was incorporated into Germany. Shredding another provision of the Treaty of Versailles, German troops moved into neighboring Austria in March 1938. Hitler’s homeland was incorporated into Germany.
- **Kristallnacht—“Night of Broken Glass”:** On November 9-10, 1938, the Nazi Party orchestrated an outbreak of anti-Jewish violence throughout greater Germany. Nazi thugs killed at least 91 Jews during the violence and vandalized over 7,000 Jewish-owned businesses. Germans cynically referred to the violence as *Kristallnacht*—“Night of Broken Glass”—for the shattered windows of Jewish-owned stores that littered the streets.

Corresponds to *State of Deception* Section II: **PROPAGANDA AND PERSECUTION IN A DICTATORSHIP, 1933–1939**

<p>Note the emotional response of the German people as the Nazi regime was established. What were their grievances, fears, and hopes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hope: German people believed that Hitler and the Nazis would lead the country’s return to its former glory. ▪ Anger: As Germany began to rearm and rebuild the economy while taking steps to eliminate the Jews from German society, many Germans were willing to accept and even believe Nazi claims that that the Jews had been the source of Germany’s troubles. ▪ Fear: After years of economic instability, political deadlock, and a sense of cultural and moral decline, people feared further economic misery and its social and political consequences.
<p>Note examples of propaganda messages used by the Nazis to promote their successes and target Jews in the dictatorial context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staged Events: The March 1933 ceremonial reopening of Parliament—orchestrated by Joseph Goebbels—aimed to link the Nazi government to Germany’s imperial past and portray the Nazis as saviors of the nation’s future. The achievements of Hitler and the Nazi government that benefited Germans were highly publicized. ▪ Film: Produced by the Nazi Party, the newsreel of the reopening of Parliament was carefully edited to emphasize the apparent support of the army and the traditional elites for the new government. Another example is Nazi films produced to spread racist ideas and pseudo-scientific theories for measuring and valuing racial characteristics. ▪ Music: In September 1935, the Nazi Party gathered in Nuremberg for its annual rally. It opened with a traditional hymn that added solemnity and a sense of continuity with the past. The Nazis used music as a vehicle to unify people and stir nationalist feelings. ▪ Posters and Banners: Posters demonizing Jews and calling for boycotts could be seen across Germany. Banners were hung at city centers stating “Whoever buys from Jews is a traitor to the nation!” ▪ Community Events: Public displays of antisemitism reinforced a climate of hostility toward Jews in Germany, or at the least, indifference to their treatment. After 1935, antisemitism was a regular part of carnival parades and floats. <i>Kristallnacht</i> was a display of nationwide violence during which Nazi thugs damaged and destroyed more than 250 synagogues and over 7,000 Jewish businesses. ▪ Newspapers: <i>Der Stürmer</i> was a fiercely anti-Jewish newspaper that ran headlines such as “The Jews are our misfortune,” and also ran stories accusing Jews of killing Christian children for blood rites, for causing World War I, for spreading Communist influence, and for advocating elements of moral and cultural decline. ▪ Academia: School materials, charts, articles, pseudo-scholarly studies and texts were produced to validate and support Nazi racial policy. <p>Important quote: “My sister and I used to slink by those huge banners that were all over the city. And we used to just try not to see them, thinking if we didn’t see them, they weren’t there. But they were there. That just, little by little, that really took over.” —Gerda Haas, Holocaust survivor</p>

Corresponds to *State of Deception* Section II: **PROPAGANDA AND PERSECUTION IN A DICTATORSHIP, 1933–1939**

Note the different types of media used by the Nazis to sway people’s thinking once the dictatorship was established.

- Film became a more widely used form of communication. The Nazis carefully orchestrated the ceremonial reopening of Parliament and the newsreels were edited to give the impression that the German Army and other traditional elites supported the new government. US newsreels focused on the fanatical enthusiasm of the German people.
- Nazi racial ideology was taught in schools. Scientists and medical professionals applied pseudo-scientific theories for measuring and valuing racial characteristics. Teachers taught bogus theories in classrooms across Germany, theories that the public widely accepted as fact.
- The establishment of the Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment meant that all forms of culture and communication were tightly controlled by the state, including newspapers and radio broadcasts.
- Posters and pamphlets remained an important form of communication throughout Germany and Austria.
- Public banners and signage segregated Jews and non-Jews on park benches and other public spaces. Others denote Jewish businesses or plastered antisemitic slogans across market squares.

WORLD WAR II AND THE HOLOCAUST: 1939–1945

Corresponds to *State of Deception* Section III: **PROPAGANDA FOR WAR AND MASS MURDER, 1939–1945**

Note the important events that occurred during the wartime period.

- **Invasion of Poland:** Until 1939, Great Britain and France sought to avoid war by making concessions to German expansionist demands. However, on September 1, 1939, a massive German force invaded and conquered Poland within one month. Two days later, after Germany failed to respond to their demands to withdraw, Britain and France declared war on Germany. World War II had begun.
- **Invasion of Western Europe:** In April–June 1940, Germany occupied Denmark and Norway. In May, the German armed forces attacked France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Belgium. In June, Paris fell. The French acknowledged defeat and signed an armistice. The swift and unexpected victory over France avenged Germany's defeat and humiliation in World War I, propelling Hitler to a new level of popularity and trust among the German people.
- **Invasion of the Soviet Union:** In June 1941, the German Army—with more than three million soldiers—invaded the Soviet Union to wage a war of annihilation that targeted tens of millions of civilians. German authorities declared Communist officials and party members as lethal enemies and killed them outright in the tens of thousands. After September 1941, the German occupation authorities deliberately reduced food rations to Soviet prisoners of war and civilians in the Soviet cities below survival levels, causing the death of millions of Soviet soldiers and civilians by starvation, exposure, and associated disease. In addition, German SS and police shot hundreds of thousands of captured and disarmed Soviet soldiers.
- **Establishment of Ghettos:** Under conditions of war and military occupation, the Nazi regime pursued its political and racial goals with more radical measures. German authorities exploited existing anti-Jewish attitudes among Eastern European populations. German authorities segregated those identified as Jews from the non-Jewish population by forcing them into tightly packed areas called ghettos. Jews in the larger ghettos were imprisoned behind brick walls and barbed wire.
- **The "Final Solution":** In July 1941, Hermann Göring—Hitler's second in command—authorized all necessary preparations for the "final solution of the Jewish question" in German-controlled Europe.

Corresponds to *State of Deception* Section III: **PROPAGANDA FOR WAR AND MASS MURDER, 1939–1945**

<p>Note the emotional response of the German people as war progressed. What were their grievances, fears, and hopes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anger: German authorities exploited existing anti-Jewish attitudes among local populations in the occupied lands. Through the use of propaganda, German authorities were able to focus the anger and frustration of the populations under occupation onto local Jewish communities. ▪ Fear: People living in occupied lands feared the German occupiers. They also feared for their survival, both individually and as nations.
<p>Note the examples of propaganda messages used during wartime.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Posters: In occupied communities, many posters portrayed the German invasion of the Soviet Union as a crusade against what Nazis believed were the ultimate evils: Judaism and Communism. ▪ Military Training: Labor corpsmen were given racial instruction about the “Jewish Conspiracy.” ▪ Film: See throughout this section footage of Jews in ghettos, being deported, and being harassed.
<p>Note the different types of media used by the Nazis to sway people’s thinking during war.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On the Eastern front, racist political instruction was incorporated into the training for all types of German occupation forces. ▪ In 1944, foreign newspapers reported what soldiers encountered when liberating concentration camps. In 1945, General Dwight Eisenhower, commander of the Allied forces, ordered all soldiers to see the camps and bear witness so no one could later deny these places of death existed. ▪ In US movie theaters, news depicting Nazi atrocities made moviegoers witnesses of Nazi crimes.