

History

Changing life in Germany

How did Nazi economic and social policy affect life in Germany?

Tackling economic problems



How can the economic problems be solved?

Measures to reduce unemployment

Unemployment was a major problem in Germany, with at least 6 million Germans unemployed. During the 1932-33 election campaigns Hitler had promised the people **Work and Bread**.

Hitler's intentions:

1. Reduce unemployment
2. Create jobs through rearmament (avenge the Treaty of Versailles and prepare to expand Germany)
3. Create an economically **self-sufficient** Germany (*Autarky*).

The person responsible for implementing these ideas was financial expert and President of the Reichsbank, Hjalmar Schacht.

He was sacked in 1936, and **Herman Goering** replaced him, with the **Four Year Plan** (1936-40).

The National Labour Service

The previous government had started many work schemes to reduce unemployment. One of these schemes was the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* (or the **RAD**, Reich Labour Service). In July 1935 the Reich Labour Service Act was passed, which **forced every man aged between 18 and 25 to:**

- complete 6 months training at the RAD
- wear military uniform
- live in camps
- receive pocket money only (**no wages**)
- do military/physical exercise every day.

The RAD's work included:

- planting forests
- digging ditches on farms.

June 1933 - The Unemployment Relief Act

- Build a network of motorways (*Autobahn*)
- Build hospitals

All this work was done manually, so more workers were needed. This meant it would take more time to do the work and created work for 80,000 over the following five years.

Document

Summary: The RAD
(PDF file 255 kb)

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Rearmament

Rearmament [**Rearmament:**
Creating arms, increasing the army despite the fact that this had been prohibited in the Treaty of Versailles.

] created new jobs - manufacturing

arms, supplying raw material and manufacturing military equipment, eg tanks and submarines.

The intention was:

- to increase the army from 100,000 to 300,000
- to increase the navy and the number of submarines
- to construct two battleships
- to increase the air force.

Background

Remember that the Treaty of Versailles had prohibited all this, but from 1935 onwards Germany was **openly** rearming – every man aged between 18 and 25 had to spend two years in the armed forces.

The effect of this was:

1933 – 100,000 members in the armed forces

1939 – 1,400,000 members

The majority of Germans were glad to get secure and fairly safe jobs. Industrial workers had regular work, although they had lost their rights.

Whilst large businesses were prospering, small businesses and the middle classes were squeezed out of

the market. The government provided aid to farmers, told them what they should grow and how much to grow, and dictated their prices.

The economy grew as the country prepared for war and rearmament.

Result: A reduction in unemployment

By 1939 there were fewer than 350,000 people unemployed. The SS would persecute the unemployed, calling them 'lazy'.

But, who weren't included in these statistics?

Women

Jews

Men aged 18-25 (conscription/military service for two years)

In order to be economically self-sufficient, Germany searched for artificial ingredients to replace things like oil, rubber, textiles and coffee. This was not a success. Agriculture suffered due to a shortage of workers and machinery. Germany continued to import a lot of goods such as butter, oil and vegetables. In 1939, it was importing 33 per cent of its raw materials. There was a shortage of food in Germany.

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Trade unions and the DAF

Workers' trade unions ensure that workers get fair wages and working conditions. Hitler didn't like trade unions. He believed that they supported socialism and communism.

Trade unions were banned in Germany in May 1933. Their money was taken away from them. Their leaders were

arrested.

The German Labour Front was established in their place, or the **DAF**. Every worker in Germany was now a member of the same trade union, which was controlled by the Nazis. The DAF managed discipline, wages and working hours.

Results

Working hours were increased.

Wages were frozen.

It was impossible to show disapproval about this.

Strength through Joy Movement (KdF)

The workers had to be kept happy, and the Strength through Joy Movement, or the **KdF**, was established to provide workers with leisure opportunities. It was a popular movement which developed into a business company.

Through the KdF the state was able to control the individual, got everyone to conform and managed their leisure time. It was a way of removing social barriers. In the past, only the rich could afford a holiday.

The purpose of the KdF

To support the Führer and thank him

To keep everyone happy after abolishing the trade unions

The KdF's activities

Cheap cruise holidays

Volkswagen Beetle

Travel opportunities

Building health clubs

Organising coach trips

Trips to the theatre/cinema

Skiing/sailing

Sports

Dr Robert Ley was in charge of the KdF, and one of its popular schemes was the Volkswagen - the people's car. It was possible to pay for the car in instalments, and the buyer would only receive the car after they had paid the balance in full. When the Second World War started in 1939, the car factories had to turn their attention to manufacturing arms. As a result, many Germans lost their money, and there were demonstrations against Ley.



How did Nazi economic and social policy affect life in Germany?

The treatment of women and young people

During the Weimar Republic, women:

- received a high standard of education
- could earn good wages in good jobs
- could vote.

All this changed during the reign of the Third Reich. Only men had the right to make decisions.

The three Ks

1. *Kinder* – children
2. *Kirche* – church
3. *Küche* – kitchen

There was a great deal of propaganda celebrating the image of the mother and the family unit.

German women were not allowed to wear make-up and

couldn't colour or perm their hair.

Women in 1919

voted

good jobs eg
doctors

in government

good wages

Women in 1933

no make-up

no permed hair

gave up their jobs to men

stayed at home to bring up the
children

The Unemployment Relief Act, 1 June 1933

Provided a matrimonial loan of 1,000 Reichsmark when a couple got married on the condition that:

- the wife had been in a job for 6 months and would leave that job
- the husband didn't earn more than 125 Reichsmark per month.

If the married couple had four children, they could keep all the money they had borrowed.

Result – more couples married young, but the average family had two children.

On 12 August 1938, which was Hitler's mother's birthday, the *Mother's Cross* [**Motherhood Cross**: *An award for mothers who had given birth to many children.*] was awarded to women who had given birth to many children.

The Mother's Cross

Medal Number of children

Bronze 5

Silver 6/7

Gold 8+

Lebensborn: It was against the law for healthy mothers to have an abortion. *Lebensborn* was established in 1936, where members of the SS could meet an Aryan girl with the aim of increasing Germany's Aryan race.

Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring: sterilising women who were 'unsuitable' to have children, eg non-Aryan women.



A gold Mother's Cross

Every women's society in Germany was abolished and merged as one under the **German Women's Enterprise**, which was controlled by the Nazis. Its work was to organise Mother Schools, to train women in how to be parents and housewives.

Women and work

1921 – women banned from having jobs in the Nazi party

1933 – no women in professional posts, eg doctors, solicitors, civil servants

1936 – no women as judges, prosecutors or members of a jury (as women were controlled by emotion)

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The treatment of young people

Controlling education

Up until 1933, the provincial governments were responsible for the majority of schools. When the Nazis came to power,

Berlin's Minister of Education, **Bernhard Rust**, became responsible for education in Germany. Every pupil had to stay in school until he or she was 14 years old, then it was optional. There were separate schools for girls and boys. The number of Physical Education lessons doubled, but Religious Education was abolished.

Conditioning – every subject was presented from a Nazi perspective. Textbooks were re-written. History books emphasized Germany's military success. Jews and Communists were blamed for the Recession.

The aim of education was to:

- separate Jews from other children
- encourage hatred towards the Jews
- prevent Jews from getting an education.

The scheme was a success. Jews would be portrayed as bad, ugly and selfish people in textbooks and children's stories. Books such as *The Poisonous Mushroom* warned German children against the Jews. By the time children were 8 years old, they strongly believed that Jews were bad people.

In Biology lessons, children would learn about the features of the Supreme Race, or **the Aryans**.

The Nazi Teachers' Alliance – every teacher had to be a member of the Nazi Teachers Alliance. Pupils were encouraged to tell the authorities if their teachers didn't teach them the new curriculum.

- Bernhard Rust: The Minister for Education
- Book-burning ceremonies, 1933: getting rid of ideas that didn't correspond with Nazi ideology
- Teachers: members of the Nazi Teachers' Alliance
- Timetable: physical education, history, geography,

German, biology

Lessons: Nazi ideology – **conditioning**

Special schools: to prepare future leaders

Education before 1933: controlled by the provincial governments

The Nazis' objectives: to prepare for the future – a thousand years

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The Hitler Youth Movement

The young people of Germany were important to the Nazis if they wanted the Third Reich to last for a thousand years. As was the case with the adults, the Nazis wanted to control the young people's leisure time.

1925 – The Hitler Youth Movement established

1932 – Membership: 108,000

1936 – Hitler Youth Act passed, giving the movement the same status as the home and the school. It was difficult to avoid being a member of the Hitler Youth Movement.

Parents would not be able to get a promotion at work unless their children were members.

1939 – Membership: 8 million

Activities of the Hitler Youth Movement

Boys

Military skills

Shooting

Map reading (preparing to be future members of the armed forces)

Girls

Mothers
Nothing academic

Back to Revision Bite