

Life in Nazi Germany 1933-9

Young people in Nazi Germany



Flag of the Hitler Youth



Hitler took great trouble to make sure that young people were loyal to him and to the Nazi party.

Hitler placed such importance on the young people because they were the future of his Nazi policies. He wanted to make children believe in the superiority of the Aryan, the 'master race'. He wanted young men to value the ideas of discipline, sacrifice and obedience. The most important was Hitler himself - the Führer. All young Germans were taught to see him as a father figure who should be given unquestioned loyalty from his people.

Education

In schools, textbooks were rewritten to paint a good picture of the Nazis. The teaching of school subjects changed to indoctrinate pupils. History was distorted to celebrate great German victories and all disasters were blamed on the Communists and the Jews. Every subject concentrated on putting across Nazi ideas. For example Biology lessons were devoted to studying the differences between races, explaining the greatness of the Aryan race. An example maths problem can be seen on the right.

Teachers had to belong to the German Teachers League and were made to put across Nazi ideas in their lessons. To make sure they knew exactly what to do, teachers had to go on compulsory training during school holidays.

A

A bomber aircraft on take-off carries twelve dozen bombs, each weighing ten kilos. The aircraft takes off for Warsaw, international centre of Jews. It bombs the town. On take-off with all the bombs on board and a fuel tank containing 1000 kilos of fuel, the aircraft weighed about eight tons. When it returns from the crusade, there are still 230 kilos of fuel left. What is the weight of the aircraft when empty?

The Hitler Youth

Outside school, young people had to belong to youth organisations which taught them loyalty to Hitler and trained them in military skills. There were five organisations for youngsters to join. Together they made up the Hitler Youth Movement:

Age	Boys	Girls
6 - 10	Pimpfen (The Little Fellows)	
10-14	Jungvolk (The Young Folk)	Jungmädelsbund (Young Girls)
14-18	Hitler-Jugend (Hitler Youth)	Bund Deutsche Mädel (League of German Girls)



A Hitler Youth award

GLOSSARY

Indoctrinate - getting people to believe in a set of ideas.

By 1938 some eight million young Germans belonged to the Hitler Youth.

Hitler stated his aims for the Hitler Youth:

B “The weak must be chiselled away. I want young men and women who can suffer pain. A young German must be a swift as a greyhound, as tough as leather and as hard as Krupp's steel.”

When youngsters met in their groups the emphasis was on hard physical training. Every year, Hitler Youth Members had to go to training camps where they learned how to read maps, did sports and gymnastics, and were taught Nazi ideas. Camp training was taken very seriously. On one occasion, a fourteen year old sentry standing guard at the entrance to a camp shot a ten year old boy who could not remember the password.

Boys and girls could enjoy weekend trips, walking and sports. The League of German Girls offered some the chance to break free from the female role model of child-care and devotion to the family:

By Marianne MacKinnon, a member of the League of German Girls

D “I was not thinking of the Führer when I gave the Nazi salute, but of games, sports, hiking, singing, camping and other exciting activities. Many young people like me had a thirst for action and found it in the Hitler Youth. Almost everything took the form of competitions. Not only were there contests for the best performances in sport and at work, but each unit wanted to have the best-kept home, or the most interesting travel album”

Every youngster had a 'performance book' in which marks for athletics, camping and fighting skills were recorded. Those who got the best marks were sent to special schools where they were trained to be the leaders of the future. These 'Adolf Hitler Schools' took boys from the Jungvolk at the age of twelve and gave them six years of tough training before sending them on to university of the army.

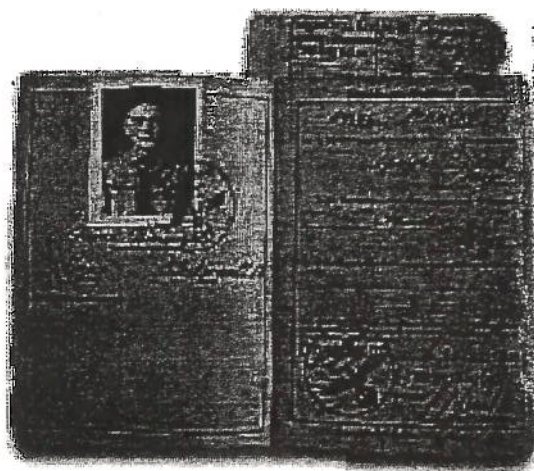
The very best of these pupils went on to schools called Order Castles where they were stretched to the very limit of endurance. At these students were woken in the middle of the night to do open air physical training exercises during the winter. They played war games with live ammunition. They washed in an icy stream two kilometres away from their living quarters. Students who were not injured or killed by their training graduated to be the very models of Hitler's idea of youth - swift, tough and very hard.

During the later 1930s, after membership became compulsory, discipline was tightened even more. Some opposition groups grew, but were harshly dealt with.

A German mother describes her son's training

“A twelve mile march was considered nothing special for boys who are trained until they can make a march of fifty miles without any food other than concentrated rations they carry in their packs. Nupp was recovering from a heavy cold but he was not excused the hike. He had a severe relapse as a result... Later the doctor confided to me that often after one of these lengthy marches he had as many as thirty boys in hospital.”

C



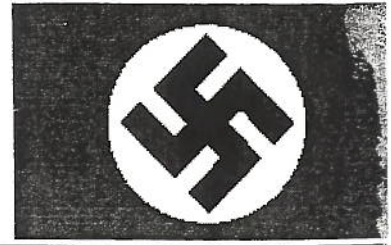
An example of a Hitler Youth performance book

GLOSSARY

Endurance - stamina, potential
Compulsory - had to be done.

Life in Nazi Germany 1933-9

Workers and work



When Hitler came to power in 1933, six million Germans were unemployed. His most important task was to find them jobs. During the election he had promised voters 'work and bread' if he ever became leader.

A

Reichsarbeitsdienst (RAD)

Hitler's first action was to set up a National Labour Service. This organisation gave men jobs in public works schemes. These were jobs such as digging drainage ditches on farms, planting new forests, or building schools and hospitals. The biggest public works scheme was the construction of a network of motorways. Men in the RAD had to wear military uniform, live in camps and were only given pocket money as wages. But for many thousands of men that was better than life with no job - they got free meals and were made to feel proud as they were helping build Hitler's new Germany.



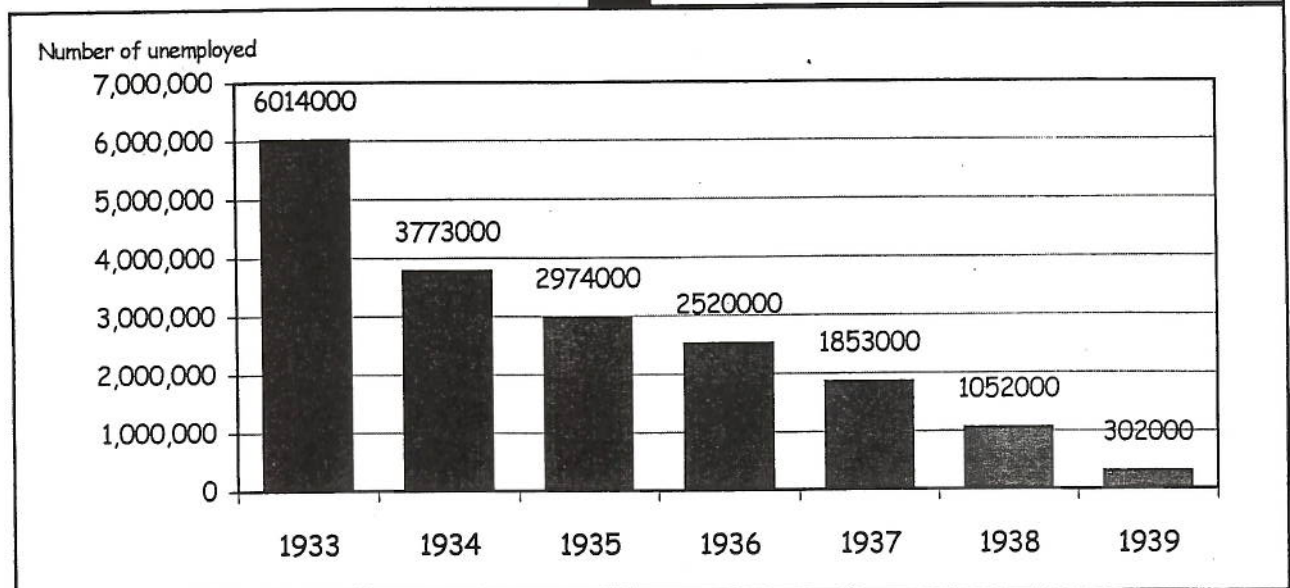
Nazi Propaganda poster for the Reichsarbeitsdienst (National Labour Service)

The attack on unemployment

The results of Hitler's attack on unemployment look very impressive at first sight:

B

Unemployment in Germany 1933 to 1939



Yet the drop in unemployment was not all due to the creation of new jobs. Soon after the Nazis came to power many Jews and women were forced out of their jobs. Although their jobs were given to unemployed people, the names of the Jews or women who became unemployed were not recorded on the unemployment registers! Thus the figures do not tell the whole story.

The most important reason for the fall in unemployment during these years was rearmament. Hitler planned to make Germany a strong and independent country. To do this he needed to build up the size and strength of the army.

In March 1935 he started compulsory military service for young men, and set up an air force. The army quickly grew from 100,000 in 1933 to 1,400,000 men in 1939. More men in the army meant 1,300,000 less unemployed. To equip this new army 46 billion marks was spent on weapons and equipment. Thus thousands more were given work creating the tools of war.

As Hitler wanted an independent Germany, he had to make the country self-sufficient in food and materials. He ordered Germany's scientists to find artificial substitutes for food and materials imported from other countries. They quickly developed all sorts of substitutes: wool and cotton from pulped wood, make-up from flour, coffee from acorns and so on. As all these things could be made in Germany, many unemployed found work in new industries.

The German Labour Front

Within months of coming to power, Hitler abolished trade unions. The 'German Labour Front' took their place. It was run by Dr. Robert Ley - he claimed that he understood workers and would

Dr. Robert Ley

“ ...not only keep everything which exists ... [but also] ... build up the rights and protection of workers even further.”

C

”

There *were* some improvements for workers - bosses were not allowed to sack workers on the spot. However, workers were also banned from leaving a job without the government's permission and only a few government run labour exchanges (job centres) could arrange new jobs.

Even worse than this, Dr Ley abolished the right of workers to bargain for higher wages and he made strikes illegal. He also removed the restriction on the number of hours a person could be made to work. By 1939 many Germans found themselves working 60 - 72 hours a week.

Not many complained though. This was not just because they were afraid of what might happen if they did complain. By 1936 the average factory worker was earning 35 marks a week - ten times more than the dole money which six million people were receiving in 1932.



From the BBC History website - www.bbc.co.uk/history

“ Men were forced to go into the Labour Service at the age of eighteen. This lasted for six months and was one of the methods that the Nazis used to cut unemployment. In the Labour Service men worked building roads, digging ditches and reclaiming land. Most of the work was manual. This meant that they toughened up for the army. They lived in camps and marched to work every morning. They were only paid about 50 pence a week, but meals and accommodation were provided.”

D

GLOSSARY

Rearmament - building up your armed forces, constructing materials needed for war.

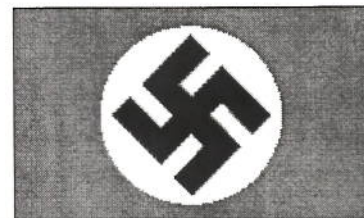
Independent - able to look after yourself, not needing any help.

Self-sufficient - having everything that is needed, not requiring any imports.

Trade Union - organisation of workers to demand rights for workers.

Life in Nazi Germany 1933-9

Leisure Time



Hitler and the Nazi Party aimed to control every part of people's lives, and that even included their free time. A huge party organisation called 'Strength through Joy', known as the KDF, had the job of organising leisure activities for people.

"Kraft durch Freude"

The motto: "Strength through Joy"

The KDF was run by Dr Robert Ley, the leader of the German Labour Front. He worked out that there are 8,760 hours in a year. He said that the average German spent one third of the time sleeping, and a quarter of the time at work. He calculated that there were 3,740 hours of free time.

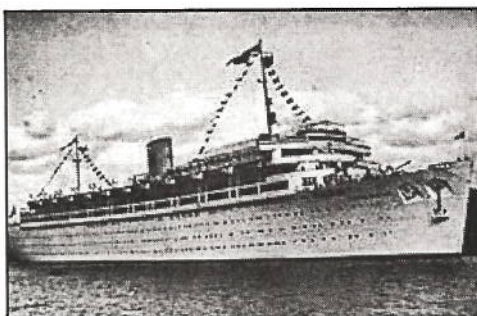
Dr Ley wanted to make sure all this free time was not wasted. He said people who had nothing to do would become bored and frustrated in their free time. This meant they would become bored and frustrated workers. Dr Ley felt that if people were happy and contented, with lots to do with their free time, they would be much more likely to work hard at their jobs.

How does the motto explain the idea?

Kraft durch Freude

Auch Du kannst jetzt reisen!

The Nazi motto 'Kraft durch Freude' gave rise to state-sponsored field trips for German workers to mountain retreats, beach resorts, Baltic Sea cruises, and even visits abroad.



The Wilhelm Gustloff, built in 1938.

This was built by the Nazis as a 'Strength through joy' liner. It was actually the world's first purpose built cruise ship.

The KDF arranged massive leisure programmes for German workers. The largest of these plans provided workers with cheap holidays. Doctor Ley had two 25,000 tonne lines built to take workers on ocean cruises at bargain prices. A cruise to the Canary Islands cost 62 marks - about two weeks wages!



The Canary Islands = two weeks' wages!

Most workers could afford this, but only loyal and hardworking Nazi Party members were given places on the cruise ships. Thus Hitler and the Nazis gave people a clear reason to work hard and be a 'good Nazi'.

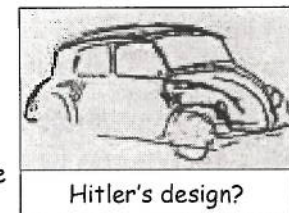
For those who could not get a place on a cruise ship, there were walking holidays in the mountains for 28 marks a week, or, in winter, skiing holidays in Bavaria. The price included travel, board and lodging, ski hire and skiing lessons from an instructor. Holidays in Switzerland were offered for 65 marks and tours of Italy for 115 marks. The KDF offered affordable but enjoyable holidays. It made people support the Nazi regime even more.

Entertainment

Most forms of entertainment were controlled by the KDF. Seven million people took part in KDF sports matches each year, and there were mass outings to the theatre and the opera. The KDF had its own orchestra, which toured the country. It visited and played music in areas where orchestras did not usually go.

The Volkswagen

According to Hitler, in the summer of 1932, while at a restaurant, he sketched a prototype for a car. In a time where only the richest people could buy a car, Hitler stated that all people should be given the chance to own one. This prototype became the Volkswagen Beetle.

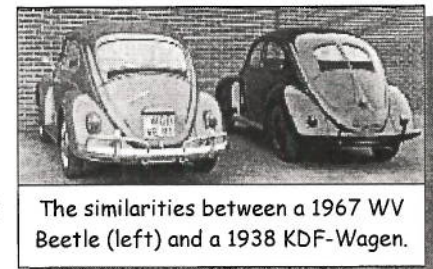


Some historians think that someone else entirely came up with the idea - that an Austrian engineer called Ganz was responsible. They suspect that when Hitler discovered Ganz was Jewish, his designs were taken away and Hitler's version of the prototype became the 'official' history.

Whatever the origin of the idea, Hitler ordered that a People's Car (in German 'Volkswagen') should be built that anyone could afford. The final car was designed by an Austrian engineer, Ferdinand Porsche, who is supposed to have been told by Hitler that "it should look like a beetle". The car was officially unveiled in 1938 and heralded as a triumph of Nazi Germany.

The price of a 'beetle' was set at 990 marks - equal to 35 weeks wages. To help workers buy a car, Doctor Ley started a hire-purchase scheme. Workers paid 5 marks a week until 750 marks were in the bank. Then they would be given an order number entitling them to a car as soon as it was made. No customer ever received their car. Even though workers paid millions of marks into the hire-purchase scheme, the Volkswagen factory was turned into a weapons factory as soon as the Second World War started in 1939.

The factory was heavily bombed during the war, but was reopened by the British and production of what became the world's best selling production car officially began.



As can be seen from this worksheet, the Nazis believed very strongly in the 'Strength through Joy' programme. After the depression it gave Germans further reasons to be proud with Hitler's new Germany. The Nazis controlled leisure time, making sure that those who helped Nazi Germany were those who got all the benefits. There was no such programme for those were not part of the Nazi regime . . .

The Nazis and Racism: The Nazis were racists. They believed that some 'races' were better than others. Racism is a type of hatred. Hatred can easily lead to violence. When the Nazis gained power in 1933 their racist beliefs were well known but few people expected them to use violence against the people they ruled. Before WWII broke out, however, the first steps towards the Holocaust had been taken.

Source A: Letter from Hitler to Josef Hell, 1922

If I am ever in power the destruction of the Jews will be my first and most important job. As soon as I have the power I shall have gallows after gallows erected. Then Jews will be hanged one after another and will stay hanging until they stink.

Source B: The abhorrent pictures below are from a book published in 1938 called *Der Giftpilz*, the German word for toadstool. It was aimed particularly at children, and was sometimes used in schools. The caption under each picture is translated above each picture.

How a German Peasant was Driven from House and Farm: "Daddy, someday when I have my own farm, no Jew will enter my house..."



The Jews, whom the farmer hated, were driven from his house and farm. He said to his children: "When I have my own farm, no Jew will enter my house..."

The Experience of Hans and Else with a Strange Man: "Here, kids, I have some candy for you. But you both have to come with me ..."



Here, Hans and Else were given candy by a strange man. He said to them: "Here, kids, I have some candy for you. But you both have to come with me ..."

Source C: The Berlin Olympics 1936

Jesse Owens at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. The Nazis used the games as an opportunity to put the Third Reich on show. But when Jesse Owens, a black American athlete, won 4 gold medals, Hitler refused to congratulate him.



Jesse Owens and Team mate

Jews In Nazi Germany

The Jews were frequently referred to in "**Mein Kampf**" and Hitler had made plain his hatred for them. References to the "filthy Jew" litter the book. In one section, Hitler wrote about how the Jews planned to "contaminate" the blood of pure Germans:

"The Jewish youth lies in wait for hours on end.....spying on the unsuspecting German girl he plans to seduce.....He wants to contaminate her blood and remove her from the bosom of her own people. The Jew hates the white race and wants to lower its cultural

level so that the Jews might dominate."

Once in power, Hitler used his position to launch a campaign against the Jews that culminated in the Holocaust.

Hitler blamed the Jews for all the misfortunes that had befallen Germany

- the loss of the First World War was the result of a Jewish conspiracy
- the Treaty of Versailles was also a Jewish conspiracy designed to bring Germany to her knees
- the hyperinflation of 1923 was the result of an international Jewish attempt to destroy Germany

During the time when Germany was seemingly recovering under Stresseman, what Hitler said about the Jews remained nonsense listened to by only the few. During the impact of the Great Depression, though, when people became unemployed and all looked helpless, Hitler's search for a scapegoat proved a lot more fruitful.

After January 1933, the Jews became the "Untermenschen" - the sub-humans. Nazi thugs stopped Germans from shopping in Jewish shops. By 1934, all Jewish shops were marked with the yellow Star of David or had the word "Juden" written on the window. SA men stood outside the shops to deter anyone from entering. This was not necessarily a violent approach to the Jews - that was to come later - but it was an attempt to economically bankrupt them and destroy what they had spent years building up.

On buses, trains and park benches, Jews had to sit on seats marked for them. Children at schools were taught specifically anti-Semitic ideas. Jewish school children were openly ridiculed by teachers and the bullying of Jews in the playground by other pupils went unpunished. If the Jewish children responded by not wanting to go to school, then that served a purpose in itself and it also gave the Nazi propagandists a reason to peddle the lie that Jewish children were inherently lazy and could not be bothered to go to school.

In 1935, the Nuremberg laws were passed. The Jews lost their right to be German citizens and marriage between Jews and non-Jews was forbidden. It was after this law that the violence against the Jew really openly started. Those that could pay a fine were allowed to leave the country. Many could not and many shops refused to sell food to those who remained. Medicines were also difficult to get hold of as chemists would not sell to Jews.

'Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour', September 1935

THE NUREMBERG LAWS 1935

1. Only a person of German or similar blood is a citizen of the Reich (Germany). A Jew is not a citizen of the Reich. He has no vote. He may not hold public office.
2. Marriage between Jews and citizens of German blood is forbidden.
3. Sexual relations outside marriage between Jews and German citizens are forbidden.
4. Jews are forbidden to display the national flag or the national colours.

The campaign against the Jews stopped for a short duration during the **Berlin Olympics** - but once the overseas press had gone, it started up again. It reached a pre-war peak in 1938 with **Kristallnacht - The Night of the Broken Glass**.

In November 1938, a Nazi 'diplomat' was shot dead by a Jew in Paris. Hitler ordered a seven day campaign of terror against the Jews in Germany to be organised by Himmler and the SS. On the 10th November, the campaign started. 10,000 shops owned by Jews were destroyed and their contents stolen. Homes and synagogues were set on fire and left to burn. The fire brigades showed their loyalty to Hitler by assuming that the buildings would burn down anyway, so why try to prevent it? A huge amount of damage was done to Jewish property but the Jewish community was ordered to pay a one billion mark fine to pay for the eventual clear-up. Jews were forced to scrub the streets clean.



A Jewish Synagogue burning after Kristallnacht, November 1938

The **Second World War** - and the chaos this brought - gave Hitler even more freedom to bring death and destruction to Jewish communities throughout Europe.

Historians are still divided over whether the Germans supported these Nazi actions or whether fear made them turn a blind eye. In the immediate aftermath of Krystalnacht, an anonymous German wrote to the British Consul in Cologne stating that

"The German people have nothing whatsoever to do with these riots and burnings." Christopher Isherwood, a British writer living in Germany, witnessed the arrest of a Jew in a cafe by the SA where everybody simply looked away - but to create a scene would have provoked a violent response from those doing the arresting. The fear of the concentration camps was such that most felt compelled to remain silent despite the fact that they did not approve of what was going on.

Activities

1. What Does Source A tell us about Hitler's beliefs? Why is the date of this letter important?
2. Describe how the lives of German Jews were affected by measures taken by the Nazis in the 1930s. What evidence is there that they became second class citizens?
3. a) 'Jews were not the only target of Nazi racism in the 1930s.' Explain this statement using Source C.

b) What evidence is there on these pages to suggest that Jews were the main target?

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Young people in Nazi Germany



Flag of the Hitler Youth

- 1 Using the first two paragraphs, explain why Hitler placed importance on the young of Germany.

Education

- 2 How were schools changed by the Nazis?
- 3 What was done to make sure teachers followed Nazi policy?
- 4 How does the maths question in Source A reflect Nazi ideas (you should identify two ways)?
- 5 Rewrite the maths question so it does not indoctrinate children.

Hitler Youth

- 1 What was the Hitler Youth?
- 2 Create your own table showing the five organisations of the Hitler Youth.
- 3 Using your own words, explain Hitler's aims for the Hitler Youth (see source B).
- 4 Why do you think Hitler had these aims?
- 5 How seriously was the Hitler Youth taken by those involved?
- 6 Using source C, explain what made the Hitler Youth appealing to children.
- 7 How does Marianne's description (source C) differ from Hitler's reasons for taking care over young people?
- 8 What was the performance book?

Using your knowledge

- 1 Imagine you have been chosen to go to an 'Order Castle'. Write an account of a week explaining what you did and what happened to your colleagues.

Make sure you include:

- Nightly activities
- Exercise: when? how difficult?
- Washing facilities
- Being stretched to the limit of your endurance.
- Your ideas why you are going through such an ordeal.

It could be a diary, a letter or even written as your memoirs. Make sure you cover everything about the Order Castles!

- 2 Using all your previous work, try to explain why a modern historian wrote:

"The Nazis indoctrinated the children - all aspects of their life were controlled by the Nazis. Children were carefully groomed to become perfect Nazis."

You need to write at least three detailed paragraphs explaining your ideas, backed up with evidence from your previous work. Try to explain the words that the historian has chosen to