

What was it like to live in nazi germany



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Although Adolf Hitler was a very confident man even he knew that there would be some opposition to his plans. Therefore he decided to focus a lot on persuading the youth of Germany to support him. By teaching them Nazi beliefs and ideas Hitler believed that these beliefs would stay with them for the remainder of their lives and would then be fed to the next generation. It was the future which Hitler was concerned about, and Germany's youth was the future.

Young people do not have as much knowledge or experience as adults and they are easily persuaded by propaganda so they will always be very important as they are easy targets. Also, Hitler could get rid of any present opposition by simply killing those who threatened him. But if he was going to succeed in the long run he would have to have full support, and therefore he had to make sure he had support of the young generation. When the Nazis came into power a young person's life changed dramatically, every aspect of their lives was now very much linked with Nazism.

Hitler wanted children to be so loyal to him that they should treat him like a God. He wanted them to be more loyal to him than to their own parents. He told children to report their parents if they were in any way opposed to his ideas. This caused much conflict between parents and children.

Education Education was very much influenced by Nazi propaganda and instead of being a school as such, it was more of a place to promote Nazism.

Every lesson helped promote Nazi ideas and beliefs. In history children would learn about Germany's terrible history and how the 'November Criminals' had destroyed the country. They learnt how traumatic the 1920's were and

how badly the Weimar government had dealt with the problems. In biology pupils were taught how they were superior in intelligence and strength over other races or 'sub human' Jews or Slavs of Eastern Europe. In Geography they would learn about how harsh the Treaty of Versailles was to Germany and in Physics and Chemistry young people learnt how to make weapons and explosives. Even in maths the Nazis managed to portray their resentment of the Jews.

Below is a maths problem given to the pupils to work out: '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 bombs on board and a fuel tank containing 100 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?' (Source 1, see end) The sentence about the Jews is totally irrelevant to the question, however it is emphasising to the pupils how bad the Jews are.

All these subjects would encourage and persuade young people to believe in Nazism and would make people believe that to be loyal to Hitler was the right thing to do. 'But my magnificent youngsters! Are there finer ones in the world? Look at these young men and boys! What material! With them I can make a new world.' (Source 2, see end) This speech would make youngsters feel proud and they would be encouraged to like Hitler as he sees them as very important people and because of this it will make the youngsters be honourable and loyal to Hitler. The Hitler Youth Movement It was not only at school where youngsters were being indoctrinated with Nazi ideas. Hitler set <https://assignbuster.com/what-was-it-like-to-live-in-nazi-germany/>

up the 'Hitler Youth Movement' which was a number of youth organisations that taught young Germans Nazi beliefs and also trained them to become strong and fit.

These groups, which took place during out of school times, attracted many young people as it was a chance to go away without their family and learn new skills and to meet new people. Many parents liked the idea too. All other youth organisations were banned by the Nazis and therefore the Hitler Youth Movement grew in members. In 1936 Membership to the Hitler Youth organisations became compulsory, and even though there were still some children who refused to join, by 1939 the majority of Germany's youth were members. The main aim of these organisations was to make youngsters believe in Nazi concepts, but the Nazis also used these organisations to train young men and boys so that they would become strong and effective soldiers.

They would go on frequent marches and cross country runs in whatever conditions befell them. They would camp outdoors in terrible conditions so that they would be prepared for such conditions when they joined the army. They would also spend long hours practising how to shoot. The girls would also be trained hard in order for them to become fit and healthy women. This would enable them to produce strong and fit soldiers for the future. Girls also learnt how to maintain rifles and how to make ammunition.

How did young people react to the Nazi regime? As one you can see the lives of young people in Germany changed dramatically when the Nazis came into power. All aspects of their lives were geared towards Nazism. It is hard to

know whether youngsters enjoyed and benefited from this. At the time I think that the majority of youngsters would have favoured this dramatic change in lifestyle as Hitler made them feel like very important people and they were told that they were the master race.

In reward for their loyalty to the Führer they were given the opportunity to meet many new people and to learn lots of skills from the Hitler Youth Movement. In general I believe life improved for youngsters in Nazi Germany. Opposition from youngsters However, not all youngsters agreed with Nazi beliefs and therefore did not join the Hitler Youth Movement. The ‘Swing movement’ were mainly made up of middle class teenagers who went to parties where they listened to English music and danced American dances. They accepted Jews in their groups.

Another group of youngsters who were opposed to Hitler’s beliefs were the ‘Edelweiss Pirates’. They did not take the same name across the whole country, in each city they took up a different name but the Nazis identified them as the ‘Edelweiss Pirates’. These youngsters were made up of working class teenagers. Like the Hitler Youth they sang songs but they changed the lyrics of songs to mock Germany. Unlike the Hitler Youth the Edelweiss Pirates included both girls and boys and were much freer in their attitude towards sex. Quite frequently these teenagers attacked and taunted groups of the Hitler Youth whenever they came near each other.

These two groups were not opposed to Nazi politics but they were opposed to the way the Nazis were taking control of young people’s lives in Germany. They believed they should have more freedom than the Nazis allowed them

and unlike Hitler's plan of going back to traditional values of Germany, these groups were becoming more modern. What was it like to be a woman in Nazi Germany? As we have already seen one of Hitler's main aims was to build a strong and large army. Because women could not fight Hitler believed the woman's role should be to produce as many able bodied soldiers for the future as possible.

In order to encourage women to breed he made the Law for the Encouragement of marriage. This law would loan a newly wed couple one thousand marks. After that the couple would be able to keep a certain amount of the money depending on how many children they produced. The more children you had, the more money you got to keep.

Once you had your fourth child, you would be able to keep all the money. The Nazis used propaganda to help persuade women to stay at home and have a big family. Posters, radio broadcasts and Nazi-controlled films helped convince women to agree with Nazi beliefs. Hitler's campaign of attempting to increase the population succeeded; the birth rate rose from 1.

5% in 1933 to 2% in 1939. As the demand for more future soldiers increased, even pregnancies outside of marriage were supported. This role of women in Nazi Germany was a return to the traditional role that the Weimar Republic had begun to change. Unlike the rest of the western world where women were beginning to acquire more rights, Hitler was making sure that this trend would not reach Germany. Hitler summed up the woman's role in life when he said that woman should stick to the three 'k's; 'Kinde, Kirche' and 'Kuche.' (Children, church and cooking.

) Therefore, life for a woman in Nazi Germany became more restricted and they were even forbidden from having modern fashions that the rest of the western world were enjoying like wearing make-up, trousers or having short hair. Despite these restrictions some women were happy with their role, believing that instead of having jobs, which was preventing men from working, they should support their husband by being a good housewife. This, they believed, was benefiting and helping their country. However, life in Nazi Germany became quite restricted for women. Everything they did was built around being able to produce more children.

Despite there being some women who were happy with their role, many women saw this return to old ways as a restriction to their freedom. Workers in Nazi Germany During the 1933 election campaigns Hitler had promised to solve the unemployment problem within four years. This promise was a big step to him winning power. In 1933 six million Germans were out of work and so therefore, when he won the election, the unemployment problem was his first task. Hitler wanted to build a large and strong army and as there were six million unemployed men many of these joined the army. It was not just soldiers that Hitler needed to build a big army, but he also needed men to produce weapons and ammunition.

Already Hitler had reduced the number of unemployed in a very short amount of time. Public work schemes such as building new schools, houses and hospitals, extending or building new railways and planting new forests not only created more jobs but also improved the state of the country. The biggest public work scheme was the network of motorways (autobahns) that were built throughout the whole country. Between 1933 and 1938 over 3000

kilometres of autobahns were built. These were only a few projects that were introduced in order to help reduce unemployment. The men who worked on these schemes were from an organisation that Hitler set up when he came into power called the National Labour Service (RAD).

These men lived in camps and had to wear a military uniform and they only got paid pocket money as wages. However, this was a great improvement for many of these men's lives. Because Hitler wanted a strong and independent army, Germany would not be able to rely on imported goods. Therefore Hitler encouraged scientists to invent substitutes for food and materials that were imported from different countries. Because these substitutes had to be made in Germany, this created even more jobs for the unemployed.

Unemployment fell dramatically between 1933, when there were six million unemployed and in 1939 when there was just over three hundred thousand unemployed. However, this was not all due to the fact that new jobs were being created. Although the unemployed took over many of the jobs that the Jews previously had, the names of the Jews who, as a result of this, lost their jobs, they were not recorded and so Hitler's achievement in reducing unemployment is not as good as it looks. The German Labour Front

When Hitler came to power in 1933 he abolished trade unions. Instead he set up the German Labour Front and put a former chemist called Doctor Robert Ley in charge.

In general, there were very few improvements for workers. No one could leave a job without having permission from the government and only government-run labour exchanges could arrange new jobs. Doctor Ley made

strikes illegal and no workers could ask for higher wages. There were also no limitations on how many hours a person could work.

However there was one improvement. Bosses could not sack a worker with immediate effect, he had to get permission from the government as well. Despite the lack of improvement in conditions for workers, there were few that complained. The average worker in Germany in 1936 was earning thirty five marks a week which was ten times the amount that the six million unemployed were earning in 1932. Another factor for few complaints was that they were afraid of loosing their jobs.

As we have seen before with women in Nazi Germany, the workers' lives became more restricted than before the Nazis came to power. Many German workers were working up to seventy two hours a week. There was no room for complaint, so the workers had to accept the conditions and just get on with their job and be happy that they were employed. Despite these harsh conditions the Nazis dramatically cut the number of unemployed.

The Church Hitler had promised not to harm the Church once he came to power. However, he would not let the church stand in the way of his ideas and any opposition from the church would be punished. In 1938 the Archbishop of Vienna was attacked by Nazis after he preached an anti-Nazi sermon. It was not only the Catholics who were badly treated by the Nazis. A protestant leader was arrested by the Gestapo and sent to a concentration camp for seven years after he too gave an anti Nazi sermon. Did Hitler keep his promises about the Church? Hitler's promise about not harming the

Church was not kept, or at least not interpreted in the same way by us as Hitler interpreted it.

Hitler was thinking of a new kind of church; the ' National Reich Church' which was set up in 1936. However, this was much different from the other churches of the time. Hitler banned the printing and sale of the Bible. Only Nazi members were allowed to speak and the cross and all religious objects were removed. Instead of the Bible there was a copy of ' Mein Kampf', and the only other object on the alter was a sword. This shows us a lot of what Hitler thought of religion.

Did most people in Germany benefit from Nazi Rule? One cannot say that in general people benefited or did not benefit from Nazi rule. This is because some did benefit from the Nazis, and others did not. The six million unemployed in 1933 would definitely say that life improved for them. Over five million were given jobs and even though conditions for workers were not very good, at least they were working and were earning more money. The Nazis had also brought political stability to Germany.

However, both the political and unemployment achievements came at a very high cost. Every aspect of a German's life was affected by Nazism. Many rights of the German citizen were taken away, there was just one political party and no toleration at all for any political opposition. Trade unions were banned, the workers had to work for much longer hours than before the Nazis came and most were paid less. The media, films and music were censored and education, the church, youth organisations and the courts

were heavily influenced by Nazi propaganda and their beliefs. Freedom of speech vanished immediately.

However, these restrictions that German people experienced were nothing compared to the lives of minority groups in Germany and in particular the Jews. Why did the Nazis persecute the Jews? The Nazis believed that the German people were a master race (Aryans) and that they were superior to all other racial groups. They believed they were superior in intelligence and strength to other human beings such as Eastern Europeans, black people and the Jews, who were looked upon as the 'lowlife'. Hitler hated the Jews for several reasons. Many Jews were very clever and therefore had very well paid jobs and successful businesses. This picture of Jews sitting comfortably at home while the rest of the country were fighting for their country in the First World War angered Hitler as he did not see Jews as racially pure Germans, and they were doing no good for the country.

Another reason was that Hitler believed that the Communists and Jews were responsible for many historical disasters and because there were many Communist leaders who were Jewish, this added to Hitler's argument. Another reason Hitler is believed to have hated the Jews is for religious reasons; it is alleged that Hitler blamed the Jews for Jesus Christ's death. (Source 3, see end) He also claimed that the Jews were the cause of Germany's economical crisis. Some Germans believed that the Jews were responsible for the 'Treaty of Versailles' because Jewish bankers had stopped funding Germany in World War One.

Before gaining power few people supported Hitler's anti-Semitism views. However, once in power, this no longer mattered to the Nazis and Hitler wasted little time in punishing the Jews. Persecution begins As soon as Hitler had seized power he passed a law banning Jews from working in the Civil service and organised a boycott of Jewish shops and businesses. As well as civil servants, lawyers, teachers and judges were dismissed and their belongings were burnt in public. The Nazis restricted the number of Jewish students entering schools and universities and fixed the number to just 5%. By 1939 the German people had been bombarded with anti-Jewish propaganda for six years which led to many Germans supporting the Holocaust.

All Jewish shops and businesses were marked with the Star of David to show everyone they were Jewish. In 1935 Jews were no longer allowed to be citizens, they were often refused service in shops and were bullied in school before they were segregated. Jews were banned from marrying or having sex with a pure blooded German. In 1938 a young Jewish man killed a German diplomat in Paris. In response to this the Nazis used this as an excuse to take revenge on Jews in the what we call the 'Night of Broken Glass'.

Fifty five SS men invaded the home of Jewish businessmen and burnt them down along with many synagogues. Ninety one Jews were killed. Hitler claimed this was a reaction of normal German people, but in fact it was just fifty five SS men dressed in normal clothes. The Night of Broken Glass shocked and alarmed many people, but anyone who protested was also brutally murdered. This sent a clear message throughout Germany that people would have to tolerate the Nazis and any opposition would not be

accepted. How did the coming of the war change life in Germany? Germany's blitzkrieg tactics won them immediate success during the first few years of the Second World War, and this quick success came at a low cost to Germany.

As a result of such easy victories Germany had more raw materials, they had more land and they also had slave labourers to do work for them. This caused much optimism amongst the German population and many had high hopes of Germany becoming a rich and powerful country just as Hitler had wanted. However, when the Russian winter of 1941 and early 1942 struck the German army on the Eastern front suddenly the Germans began to experience the effects of losing a war. As more supplies were demanded factories had to work for longer hours and food rations were cut even further. The moral of the German people was diminishing by the week. At the beginning of 1942 Albert Speer, the armaments minister, was told to prepare the country for 'total war'.

However, things got even worse for German civilians. The allies wanted to stop Germans from producing more supplies so they bombed factories. They also wanted to weaken the German's moral even further so that they would be forced to surrender, so they bombed cities. In February 1945 Dresden and Berlin were bombed, leaving the cities in ruins, 135, 000 dead and millions starving and homeless.

As one might expect opposition to the Nazis grew dramatically during the last year of the war. Despite the majority of Germans being desperate for the war to end, with over three million civilians dead, major shortages of basic

foods and many cities bombed to ruins, Hitler did not give up. The Allies knew that there was something terrible happening to the Jews, but they were not aware of the scale of it. This is because what happened in the Concentration and death camps was kept secret and the Nazis made propaganda films showing how good the conditions were in these camps. As the Germans began realizing that they were not going to win the war a great effort was made to try and cover up the terrible atrocities that they had done to the Jews.

Railways that had been built to transport the Jews into the Death camps were ripped up but this did not help very much at all because when the Allies found these camps they found thousands of abandoned starving Jews with diseases such as tuberculosis.