

The Nazi Economy

- Hitler came to power after the worst of the Depression – Brüning had gone for deflationary policies and these had promoted an early recovery – his policies were beginning to work – unemployment was on the downturn and Hitler was able to get the credit
- 1933 – 36 dominated by Economics Minister, Schacht – New Plan of 1934 was going to promote exports, reduce imports, strengthen the currency, establish bilateral trade agreements – for a while was economic equilibrium
- 1935 – 46 economic crisis forced Hitler to make a decision about future priorities – introduced the Four year Plan I 1936 – result was a rapid increase in the rate of rearmament
- Accompanying this was a series of measures to create a more disciplined workforce – KdF and SDA

How Did Hitler's Economic Policies Relate to His Schemes For Territorial Expansion?

- Hitler was not an economic theorist – Nazism had no underlying economic component – was fundamentally racist and volkisch and economic factors were subordinate
- Hitler did have ideas though about his economic policy – see in MK and ZB – four main priorities:
 - 1. Wanted to create an autarkic system so Germany would be able to sustain a broader hegemony within Europe
 - 2. To target the lands to the east
 - 3. This involved expansion and therefore conflict so the infrastructure would have to accommodate an increase in military expenditure
 - 4. He needed the support of the German people for this and could not risk depressing living standards too much
- How was he to fit them together? 1920s saw the emergence of the lebensraum policy which was to provide the infrastructure for all Hitler's ideas about the ultimate purpose of economic change – post 1933 got the chance to put in to practice

- Hitler's underlying economic approach changed in the 1920s – were two possible approaches to the establishment of future Nazi economic policy – socialism or nationalistic
- First was championed by Strasser – by 1930 Hitler had made it clear what his views were
- Latter was Hitler's preference – was based on the logical connection between territorial expansion and self-sufficiency – lebensraum and autarky – twin pillars of Hitler's strategy
- Such goals would involve conflict but as Hitler said in MK – the strong would prevail
- Some have dismissed these ideas as the fantasies of an immature politician – wrong to do so:
- Many on the conservative right took them seriously in the 1920s and early 1930s as fitted with the pan German ideas of the Second Reich – Hitler was bale to find converts among the respectable
- Also the eventual shaping of German hegemony in Europe bears a close resemblance to the original prototype – MK may not be a blueprint but also not daydreaming
- Autarky would underpin the future economy – lebensraum would provide the geographical cohesion and rearmament would provide the means of achieving lebensraum – how to do this – two contrasting answers
- 1. One line of argument would stress that the implementation of economic policy became essentially pragmatic – Hitler had to modify his theories on the domestic front just as he did in foreign policy until he was certain of his power base – Schacht's initial policies were therefore based on the immediate requirements of job creation and wage control – Schacht was sensible and established trade agreements with the Balkan states – raw materials for German goods – was tolerated until 1936 but then Hitler wanted to place more emphasis on rearmament than Schacht thought was wise
- By now Hitler was more established and there had been enough of a recovery to allow an acceleration in the rearmament programme – 1937 Hossbach Hitler made it clear that they were to prepare for war – Goering and the Four Year Plan placed the German economy on a war footing with the promotion of self sufficiency and developing substitutes for materials
- Again Hitler had to settle for a pragmatic course – several historians have argued that he could not pursue a policy geared to total mobilisation and total war
- **Klein** – maintains that he still needed the support of the German consumer and had to settle for a compromise – an economy that would allow a limited degree of rearmament but still allowing a reasonable level of consumer affluence
- **Sauer** – balance meant the creation of the plunder economy – the only way in which Germany could grow from limited mobilisation was by steadily expanding its economic base through a series of rapid and specifically targeted conquests – Hitler committed himself to starting war in the near future – Blitzkrieg was an economic device and seemed to work until 1941
- **Hiden and Farquharson** – Hitler did not want to use a Marxist control system or the capitalist system of pre 1929 – what you see is implementing lebensraum which developed a policy of internal economic empire akin to the earlier European policy of mercantilism
- Total war then wrecked the new economic order – once Blitzkrieg failed to work then had trouble
- 2. From the start Hitler moved systematically towards equipping Germany with an economic base capable of achieving lebensraum
- **Berghahn** – the rearmament programme that began in 1933 was nothing less than the deliberate unhinging of the national economy with the intention of recovering the financial losses by exploiting other national economies of Europe within the confines of a German dominated empire conquered by force
- Is true that some of Schacht's policies were a continuation of Brüning's deflationary approach – were tolerated by Hitler who saw them as essential for the establishment of the infrastructure of autarky
- Hence the trading networks with the Balkans would be the first step in the establishment of German hegemony
- Public works – the autobahns – would help the military infrastructure
- Controls on wages – create a disciplined workforce
- Hitler was using the New Plan as the first stage in the move towards total war
- But the process was not to be so easy – Hitler's hands were forced by the economic crisis of 1935 and 1936 in the form of the food shortage – took what he considered to be the only way out – impose further constraints on the workforce and accelerate rearmament to achieve lebensraum and autarky
- Whole purpose of the Four year Plan was to prepare for war – Hossbach showed this

- Hitler was gearing the German economy to the total war that would be necessary to get lebensraum which would be its long-term economic salvation
- There were complications though – outbreak of war with France and Britain in 1939 was premature which meant that the economy could support only Blitzkrieg military strategies – **Overy - total war by default**
- It was not until 1941 that the German economy was sufficiently enlarged to move to a full scale mobilisation of resources – the whole point of total war – this now produced defeat though – original mistiming of Blitzkrieg had prevented the proper build up of resources
- **Overy** – if war had been postponed until 1943- 45 as Hitler had hoped, then German would have been much better prepared, and would also have had rockets, inter-continental bombers, perhaps even atomic weapons. Though Britain and France did not know it, declaring war in 1939 prevented Germany from becoming the super-power Hitler wanted

Do the statistics show that the German people were better off as a result of Hitler's policies?

- 1938 appeared that Germany had solved most of her economic problems and her standard of living was rising – can be supported at superficial level by statistics of the period
- More detailed analysis shows a different picture though – the standard of living was at best static and by some criteria deteriorating
- There was much to support the view that Germany was recovering from the trauma of the Depression: unemployment was in rapid decline from 4.8 million in 1933, 2.7 million in 1934, 2.2 million in 1935, 1.6 million in 1936, 0.9 million in 1937, 0.4 million in 1938 and a mere 0.1 million in 1939
- Much quicker than France and Britain
- At the same time saw an increase in wages: 1933 were 70% of 1928, 75% by 1934, 80% by 1936, 85% by 1938
- People seemed better off then 1933 – 9
- Also part of a general increase in prosperity shown by the steady growth of Germany's national income from 44 billion marks in 1933 to 80 billion in 1938
- Production of some consumer goods also seemed to take off – radio sets, cars, KdF offered concerts, operas, etc, SDA did much to improve labour conditions
- Easy to see why contemporaries thought Germany was undergoing a transformation
- **Fundamental problems with this though** – underlying assumption is that any improvements after 1933 due to Hitler's policies – flawed on two counts:
 1. There is more continuity between the early policies of the 3R and the later policies of the WR than often realised – 1929 a better dividing line – Hitler benefited from Brüning really
 2. By the time that Hitler came to power the worst was already over – Hitler inherited a disastrous situation that was on the mend
- **Also** – the improvement that did occur was not fully transmitted to the workforce as it was not consumer based
- Post 1936 the focus was on rearmament and expanding the armed forces – declining unemployment could be artificially induced – also apparent in the work schemes – forced employment
- Also had a disciplined workforce held to lower wages – pay may have increased relative to the year 1933 but there was no return to 1928 – not really an improvement
- Wage earner was also worse off in terms of the cost of living – this had increased from 71% of its 1928 level in 1932 to 90% in 1939 – in real terms had been better off in 1933 – also the working week had been extended by 7 hours
- Declining wages accompanied by reduced attention to consumer needs – 1933 – 1938 level of consumer goods rose by 69% but industrial goods increased by 389%
- Workers were producing more in terms of heavy industrial goods than consumables
- Flow of trade also not in the consumer's interest – imports in 1932 were 4.6 billion, 5.7 billion for exports though – 1930 had been 12.4 billion and 12 respectively
- Consumer suffered in two ways – tight import controls and huge drop in consumer goods from abroad
- New employee associations – had some benefits and attractions but in line with the aims of the regime
- Workforce strictly regulated down the use of free time – try to prevent revival of consumer habits and also to help with propaganda
- KdF and SDA were no substitute for the TUs
- German workers put in longer hours for a fractional notional increase in wages – no great benefit to them

How Successful Was Nazi Economic Policy?

- When Hitler was appointed Chancellor 6 million were unemployed – by 1935 there was 2 million, by 1939 there was a shortage of labour
- Reducing unemployment was a key to Nazi success but remember that Hitler had broader aims – top priority was to expand the military might of Germany and prepare to go to war

Economic Developments – An overview

- Initial aim was to tackle the Depression and restore full employment – feeling of optimism needed but also recovery would enable more resources to be used to rebuild military might – prelude to territorial expansion – self sufficiency vital
- Hitler wanted to create a *Wehrwirtschaft* – war economy
- Economy was to expand vital war materials, develop substitutes for imports and train the workforce for skills transferable to war production
- Other Nazis stressed the importance of fostering the economic interests of the Mittelstand and others favoured the corporatist state

Aims: Economic growth to a) build up Germany's military might and b) win support
So:

R E C O V E R Y	Policies: Reflate the economy via government spending e.g. public works; subsidies to private firms; rearmament orders
	↓
	Led to
	Problems: Balance of payments deficit as: economic recovery led to rising demand for consumer goods; rearmament led to increased demand for raw materials Danger of inflation as there was increased demand; increased money supply
	↓
	So tackled by
	Policies: 1934 New Plan: controls on currency and bilateral trade agreements Government control of wages, prices
	↓
	Led to
	Problems: Disagreements over priorities: Schacht favoured boosting exports, slower rearmament; Goering and Hitler favour rapid rearmament
↓	
So tackled by	
R E A R M A M E N T	Policies: 1936 Four Year Plan: prepare for war; autarky by expanding domestic productions, developing substitutes, expanding abroad, e.g. Austria, Czechoslovakia; extended government controls; expanded rearmament
	↓
	Led to
	Problems: By 1939 danger of economy overheating as there were labour and raw material shortages and some prices were rising
	↓
So tackled by	
W A R	Initially successful Blitzkrieg 1939 – 1941 with foreign countries plundered for their resources After the failure to knock out the USSR, the regime tried to organise a Total War Economy 1941 – 1945 with a big increase in production

How Did the Nazis Stimulate Economic Recovery 1933 – 1936?

- Hitler appeared to inherit a difficult situation – Depression had destroyed the previous regime; Germany was short of essential raw materials and did not enough foreign currency to pay for imports; exports were hit by a slump in world trade; confidence had been lost; investment was low; 6 million unemployed
- But all of this gave Hitler the opportunity to make an impact – also remember that the worst of the Depression was over by the time he became Chancellor
- New government took action on a broad front to create jobs – increased public expenditure and investments; tried to stimulate consumer demands; extended the public works scheme; gave tax concessions and special grants; destroyed the independent trade unions; subsidies for hiring more workers; pressurised some out of employment – Jews, women and some no longer eligible to register for relief
- Schacht was Economics Minister – also President of the Reichsbank – particular skill was developing ingenious ways of meeting Germany's economic needs – **deficit financing** – the use of Mefo bills to finance the increased public expenditure without causing inflation; government controls on wages and prices; benefited from the ending of reparations payments

Germany's balance of trade problem

- By 1934 the revival of the economy was causing concern because of a balance of trade deficit – gold and foreign currency reserves running low
- Schacht devised the New Plan in 1934 to regulate imports; bilateral trade agreements (barter)
- New Plan helped overcome the immediate trade problems of 1934 there was still the problem of increased demand sucking in imports especially as the pace of rearmament grew

How significant was the drive for rearmament 1936 – 39?

- 1936 marked a major turning point in the Nazi economy – how to progress now?
- Schacht was increasingly concerned at the distortion of the economy due to rearmament – wanted to encourage exports and slow the pace of arms expenditure
- Hitler was impatient with his caution – Goring now in charge and the Four year Plan in 1936
- Plan aimed to make Germany ready for war within four years – priority given to rearmament; autarky; development of raw materials and machinery production
- The Office of the Four Year Plan extended throughout the economy, issuing a set of regulations controlling foreign exchange, labour, raw materials, prices, wages, etc. – trying to create a managed economy

How successful was the policy of autarky?

- Aim was to increase Germany's production of key commodities – iron and food; develop ersatz (substitute) products, e.g., developing Buna (artificial rubber) from acetylene and using coal to produce oil
- Took 6 tons of coal to produce 1 ton of oil
- By 1939 Germany was still dependent on foreign imports for in-third of its raw materials, especially iron ore, oil and rubber
- Conquering other countries for resources now became an option

What was the impact of Germany's drive for rearmament?

- Rearmament became the main focus of Germany's economy
- Hitler's stress on military requirements was another sign of the radicalisation of the regime
- Hitler was not wholly able to subordinate all other areas to the rearmament drive as the tension between 'guns and butter' existed
- **Guns or butter** – relates to the tension between putting economic resources into rearmament and supplying consumer goods, especially food fats to the German consumer – controversy about: first assumed that could give priority to guns as was a totalitarian regime; others argue that Hitler was wary of squeezing domestic consumption too far and that he was concerned to ensure good supplies of both
- **Mason** has argued that this need to try and supply both hindered the rearmament programme and made Germany less prepared for war than it would have been otherwise
- **Others** argue that war preparation was an insignificant part of the economy 1933 – 39 and Hitler was only planning for a minor war
- **Overy** has argued that the key point is to distinguish between the period 1933 – 36 when public works and a revival in consumer demand was more important in economic recovery and the period after 1936 when rearmament needs predominated as Hitler geared the whole economy to war

Was there an economic crisis in Germany in 1939 and did it push Germany into war?

- **Mason** has argued that the German economy was under great strain from the pressures of rearmament – Hitler's expansionist aims meant that the pace of rearmament could not be slowed
- The regime felt sufficiently secure to be able to demand the sacrifices necessary from the civilian population in terms of wage reductions, food shortages and conscription of female workers to continue rapid rearmament within Germany's existing resources
- As it was there was a danger of major social unrest led by workers – the only way out was a war of plunder

Mason v. Overy

Mason's case rests on the following assessment of Germany's economic problems in 1939	Masons' thesis has come under considerable attack, most notably from Overy
The excessive pace of rearmament, combined with a massive programme of prestige public building construction, meant the economy was overheating	Mason is a Marxist (albeit an unconventional one) and this perspective makes him likely to exaggerate the degree of working-class rejection of the government. He has concentrated on 'history from below' with several subjective statements about ordinary people's feelings, whereas the evidence from decision makers does not support the view of concern over a crisis
There were growing shortages in 1938-9 of raw materials, of and consumer goods, foreign exchange and skilled labour	
These shortages and the competing demands of different sectors of the armed forces were slowing the pace of rearmament	
There was upward pressure on wages due to labour shortages	
Sectors of agriculture were in crisis with structural labour shortages, declining dairy production and a damaging price freeze	The Nazi leadership did not seem aware of a crisis in 1939. Detailed study of economic statistics and the various aspects of the rearmament shows problems but not a crisis. Production and investment were growing and the regime was using a variety of controls to direct the economy. State controls, for example of wages and prices, were holding back inflation
There was a growing balance of payments problem as resources were moved away from export industries but imports were still growing	
There were worries about how to finance the growing public finance deficit	
At the Hossbach meeting in 1937 Hitler referred to mounting inflation, food shortages and lack of foreign exchange	There is little evidence of social unrest. According to Overy the decision for war caused, rather than was caused by, a crisis, as the expected local war became a general war, and the regime had to adjust to a long-term war when the economy was not ready
Schacht who was increasingly critical of the priority given to rearmament had earlier argued that the economic problems were leading to war	
Economic decision to tackle these problems were made more difficult due to the governments' fear of popular unrest	Overy argues that the context of the international situation and Hitler's aims were crucial factors in the decision for war in September 1939, rather than domestic ones
Elements in the military and economic elite were thinking of replacing Hitler	

How were the major areas of the economy organised during the 3R?

- ☛ **Agriculture** – government took early measures to help the peasants with higher prices and the cancellation of debts – was more concerned with the larger more efficient estates whose food production was vital for autarky and waging of war
- ☛ Also wanted to avoid high prices in order to keep wage rates steady
- ☛ Initially, protection and controlled prices helped farmers, but later they served to keep prices below market level and were resented
- ☛ Arable farmers benefited from subsidies but livestock farmers were hit by shortages and the high cost of fodder – much of it imported
- ☛ Farmers were increasingly harmed by a flight from the land and extra labour had to be drafted in
- ☛ Land values rose but production failed to meet growing demand
- ☛ Had **Reich Food Estate** – all involved in agriculture had to join; regulated production, imports, wages, prices; gave subsidies
- ☛ 1928 – 38 production up 20%, imports down
- ☛ Nazi Ideology – Blood and Soil – peasants backbone of Germany – **Reich Entailed Farm Law** – but still saw decline of small farms
- ☛ **Industry** – brought under state supervision for interests of national unity
- ☛ All firms were members of the Reichsgruppe for Industry – part of the Reich Economic Chamber
- ☛ State controlled most resources but industry remained largely privately owned
- ☛ Large firms had to join cartels and they expanded to meet government requirements
- ☛ Over 300 000 small businesses went bankrupt
- ☛ **Transport** – massive autobahn scheme; was confusion in the railway with overlapping administration
- ☛ **Foreign Trade** – no major growth in the 1930s
- ☛ **Government Finances** – needed to spend large amounts to revive the economy and prepare for war – increased taxes; Mefo bills; other forms of credit – general confidence in the expanding economy and strong government allowed the government to attract the loans necessary to maintain a growing budget deficit

Who gained most from the Nazi economy?

- ☛ **Nazism and big business** – relations between the Nazis and the economic elite were good
- ☛ Major landowners benefited from the growing demand for food
- ☛ Industrialists benefited from the smashing of the TUs and the government expansion of the economy
- ☛ Business were prepared to tolerate an unheard of degree of intervention
- ☛ Private ownership of firms not threatened

- Some firms which were geared to exports less keen – coal firms were more hostile
- Others benefited – Daimler-Benz; IG Farben
- Only when Germany was being invaded did they desert Hitler by refusing to sabotage industry
- **Nazism and the Mittelstand**- from 1928 had voted in large numbers for Hitler
- Initially had appeared to be favoured with the Law to Protect the Retail Trade in 1933 – placed special taxes on large stores and banned new department stores
- Tight credit, influence of big business, slowness of official agencies in paying bills – many went bankrupt and overall role in the economy declined
- Number of independent artisans fell from 1 645 000 in 1936 to 1 500 000 in 1939
- Peasants got some protection from creditors and some gained from the Reich Entailed Farm Law but suffered from labour shortages and resented restrictions – life on the farm remained hard with long hours, low incomes and poor facilities
- **The 3R and the workers** – Workers benefited from increased employment
- Although there was a wage freeze some employers got round this with bonuses and insurance schemes – some gave motorcycles as a non-wage perk
- Getting around the restrictions was an important skill – many highly successful
- Living standards harder to look at though – hard to generalise as much variety in different industries
- Workers in the armaments industry tended to be better off but wages in consumer and agriculture lagged
- Often took home more from overtime not higher wages
- Rapid improvement in employment and the small rise in living standards meant that many Germans felt they had a better life under the Nazis
- Generally workers lost freedoms but gained from improved facilities – no political power as the TUs suppressed
- Workers had to carry a pass book from 1935 and could be directed to wherever they were needed in 1938
- Was some compensation in the DAF and Trustees of Labour
- **DAF** – Deutsches Arbeitsfront – headed by Ley and 22 million joined by 1939 – provided a range of facilities and intended to restore social peace
- Organised the Volkswagen scheme – 5 marks a week to get a car – no one actually got a car
- **KdF** – Kraft durch Freude – Strength Through Joy – improve leisure opportunities
- **Trustees of Labour** – 12 trustees with officials in charge of an area created in 1933 – appointed by and responsible to the Ministry of Labour – had the power to set wages, fix holidays and regulate working conditions – supervised the operation of the Councils of Trust
- **Councils of trust** – created in 1934 to replace the WR works councils – discussed output, safety, etc.
- **Reichsarbeitsdienst (RAD)** – 1935 six months compulsory labour service for all men 19 – 25 - live away from home, low pay and supposed to help create the national community
- **NSBO** – National Socialist Factory Cell – declined in significance – DAF

Was Nazis Economy Policy Ideologically Driven?

- Once in power Hitler showed he had an instrumental view of the economy – was a means to achieve his ends
- Initial priority was to revive the economy and even prepared to over-ride his anti-Semitism in the interests of economic revival
- Hitler's political aims of military might and autarky had major implications for the economy though
- Rearmament and autarky were the key objectives – were to some extent mutually contradictory
- Nazis believed in a strong state – increase in regulation, Reich Food Estate, Reich Economic Chamber
- Although the role of the state in the economy increased considerably in the 3R, to justify the description of managed economy have to say was for practical and not ideological reasons

**'What Methods did Hitler use to achieve his Economic Aims?
How Successful was he?'**

When Hitler came to power in 1933, the Germany economy was in a desperate state and still reeling from the effects of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles and the 1929 Wall Street Crash. Hitler decided that a revival of the economy was a necessity in order to achieve his ideological aims for the future of Germany. He even stated that 'the needs of the state, varying according to time and circumstances are the crucial factor', and Hitler believed that Germany was a great state, and therefore needed a strong economy in order to achieve her potential, which arguably Hitler perceived, as world power. There were four basic aims for the economy. Firstly, Hitler wished to tackle the depression which Germany was suffering from, and to generate employment, as unemployment was close to six billion in 1930. This policy also had other advantages, as by reducing unemployment, a climate of optimism would be generated in Germany and Hitler would be able to consolidate the power of his regime. The other principal aim for the economy was to create a *Wehrwirtschaft*, a defence economy in order to fulfil the desire for territorial expansion and *Lebensraum*. Therefore, war resources would need to be made (a job for the unemployed) and substitutes for imports would need to be found in order to achieve self reliance, which was termed autarky. Another minor aim was to aid the economic interests of the *Mittelstand*, which was where Hitler's strongest opposition lay. It is apparent that although Hitler wished to fulfil the destiny of Germany, this was to be done on his own terms.

One of the methods used by Hitler to achieve his economic aims was the creation of employment, which would thereby reduce state benefits, increase public expenditure and investment and stimulate consumer demand; all crucial for a healthy economy. Public Works Schemes were begun which meant the building of *Autobahns* and homes. This meant that a large number of jobs were created. Tax concessions and grants were provided, which stimulated demand to further strengthen the economy. More jobs were created in government bureaucracy and subsidies were given for hiring workers in the private sector. In terms of employment, Nazi ideology was most definitely not neglected, shown by the fact that jobs for Jews and married women became limited. Likewise, the RAD (Youth Service) took young people off the unemployment register and then all 18-25 year old males were removed from conscription in 1935 and placed in military service. This meant that the numbers in the armed forces grew from 100.000 in 1933 to 1.400.000, in order to prepare for the arguably inevitable war, thereby partly fulfilling the aims of a *Wehrwirtschaft*.

Other developments included the appointment of Schacht as Minister of the Reichsbank in 1933 and then as Economics Minister in 1934. Schacht had strong links with the elite, which meant that this appointment would not only hopefully improve the German economy, but also please the elite and thereby theoretically strengthen Nazi power. Schacht introduced the policy of deficit financing, which was the governmental spending of more money than it was receiving in order to boost the economy. This was achieved through the introduction of factors such as *mefo* bills, which were issued to industry in return for goods, which were then repaid with interest. *Mefo* bills, although a risky means of financing an economic revival, were responsible for the funding of approximately half of Germany's rearmament programme. The historians Noakes and Pridham emphasise, that this means of financing the *Wehrwirtschaft*, would result in a 'serious economic crisis'.

Some methods however, clearly helped the strengthening of the German economy. In 1932, Brüning successfully negotiated the ending of reparations payments and suspended debt repayments. This would no doubt, ironically aid the development of a *Wehrwirtschaft*. Bilateral trade agreements were made, for example with the Balkans which meant Germany had access to the raw materials needed for rearmament. In terms of achieving autarky, bartering was introduced to gain goods without the use of currency, and the 1934 New Plan meant that imports

could be regulated. Crucially, in 1936 the Four Year Plan was introduced and Goering was made head of the Office of the Four Year Plan, the aim of which was to make Germany prepared for war within four years time and once again priority was placed upon rearmament and autarky. Targets were created which industry had to meet; a policy which can be likened to that in Soviet Russia.

In terms of the success of the economy, whilst there were indeed successes there were also failures. The aim of employing the nation was a success, with only 0.2 million unemployed by 1938, and 0.8 million more employed in 1938 than in 1928; so not only did the Nazis drastically reduce unemployment, but they also succeeded in the fact that more were employed than under the Weimar government. However wages for the employed steadily decreased as a percentage of national income. The aim of achieving a *Wehrwirtschaft* was also a success and a failure, depending on how viewed. Autarky in basic food groups such as bread and vegetables was very close to being achieved, the production of goods nearly tripled between 1933 and 1938, national income nearly doubled and again, beat that of Weimar and crucially, Germany was indeed prepared enough to achieve European dominance by 1941. However, it should be pointed out that due to the policy of deficit financing government expenditure was nearly twice that of its revenue. Other failures are that as late as 1939, Germany was still reliant on foreign imports for a third of her raw materials needed to sustain a *Wehrwirtschaft*, especially iron, and Four Year Plan targets for oil and rubber were not met. Also in existence was the debate known as 'guns or butter' which divided the government over the issue of whether the people should be provided with all they needed, i.e. butter, or that *Wehrwirtschaft* would be pushed forward even further, i.e. guns. This emphasises that although there were successes in war preparation, the people may have suffered, as will be discussed later.

The successes of Hitler's economic aims varied according to demographics. The protection of the economic interests of the *Mittelstand* did not really come about. Two laws, the 1933 Law to Protect Retail Trade meant that special taxes were placed on large stores, and the Reich Entailed Farm Law protected peasants and farms from creditors, yet there were no real benefits for the middle classes. Many went bankrupt, including artisans, whose number decreased, not helped by the cartelisation process. Long hours, low incomes and generally poor conditions own farms meant that the *Mittelstand* did not make the expected gains. SOPADE noted that 'the small businessmen are in a condition of gloom and despondency', so it can be said that overall the Nazi economy failed the *Mittelstand*. It would seem that the elite and big business were the social group who experience the greatest benefit from the new German economy. The income of big business increased by 116%, as rearmament benefited rich industrialists. Two examples of this success are the Daimler-Benz Aeroplane Company, which was state funded and their production rose by 800% and the IG Farben chemical company also benefited. The historian Hiden states that 'profits went above all to the industrialists, who were prepared to collaborate actively with the regime', indicating that success depended upon working with the Nazis such as by working long hours to reach targets. Conversely, this group had to tolerate more government intervention and therefore lost their political influence, which resulted in them becoming suspicious of the regime. In this way although the elite and big businesses benefited from this change to the economy, which for them was a success, the Nazi's lost popularity with this group. The greatest improvement due to the economy for workers was employment and 'Councils of Trust' which represented their views in order to create a feeling of a *Volksgemeinschaft*, despite the abolition of trade unions. The Strength Through Joy movement provided incentives for good work and the Beauty of Work campaign financed the improvement of facilities. The Nazi Ley even went as far as acknowledging that 'without the German worker, there is no German nation'. Yet, perhaps this only meant when creating a *Wehrwirtschaft*, as the general lifestyle of workers decreased, as they ate much less enjoyably and healthily, with less wheat bread and beer. By 1939 workers were under the control of the government who could direct them in any way they wished and employment was used against them, when they complained about the poor conditions.

The successes and the failures of the economy can all be seen and historians seem to hold this view. Overy states that whilst there was an 'exceptional decline of the depression years' the achievement was 'not very remarkable' and the 'longer term prospects for growth were more muted'. Likewise Noakes and Pridham say that successes of the economy were that it was 'without mass opposition' and there was a 'distinct improvement' in people's lives, mainly due to employment. However, crucial points are also made by them. They say that a defence economy 'had not been realised' as the economy still relied on some foreign imports and due to deficit financing, the economy was 'operating beyond its capacity'.

In conclusion, the economy can be said to have been neither a great success nor a great failure, but rather a combination of the two which differed greatly depending on demographic. For example, it is clear that on the whole, big businesses benefited greatly from rearmament. In terms of reviving the economy, Hitler placed emphasis on what he believed to be the needs of the nation, as opposed to the needs of the people and demands from other party members, shown by the guns and butter debate. This can be used to argue that Hitler was resolute that Germany had to be strengthened principally in a militarily sense. Rearmament and autarky were always contradictory, as Germany had need of more raw materials than she possessed, which would mean looking overseas. Therefore, not all the aims of Hitler's new economy could ever be realistically achieved and some failure would have to occur even before any of the policies had been put into action.



HITLER AND THE THIRD REICH, JANUARY 1933 - APRIL 1945

I. **NB.** The Swastika was adopted as the Nazi symbol in 1920, in black in a white circle on a red background. Hitler never said exactly where he got the idea of using this holy Aryan and Hindu good luck sign, but it had been used by earlier political groups, and had been a motif in the chapel at the school he attended at Lambach outside Linz.

The Third Reich was the name of a book, published in 1923, by Müller van den Bruck, advocating a return to an ideal agricultural past. From 1940, Hitler discouraged the use of the "third", as his was the only real Reich.

Deutschland über Alles (Germany first of all): the music was written in 1797 by Haydn and the words in 1841 by the Breslau professor, Hoffmann von Fallersleben. It was adopted as the national anthem by the socialist President Ebert in 1922. Until 1918, the anthem had been "Heil dir im Siegerkranz" ("Hail to thee in the victor's wreath"), sung to the tune of "God save the Monarch".

The title "**Führer**" (Leader) was suggested either by the journalist Dietrich Eckart (1868-1923), or by Rudolf Hess (see III.I. below) during Hitler's imprisonment 1923-24. It was obviously modelled on Mussolini's title, "Duce", the Italian for leader.

The goose-step was common in Eastern Europe and Russia, as it instils discipline and warmth.

Gleichschaltung (co-ordination) was the Nazi term for the process whereby the Party leaders would impose their power and ideas on the whole country's political, economic and social system.

The concept of Aryan superiority was the work largely of the Frenchman, Joseph, Count **Gobineau**, who advanced the idea in his 1853 book, "*Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*". According to this, the Germans were the purest and therefore most superior of the descendants of the superior Aryans, who had advanced into Europe in about 2,000 BC. The idea of a "Master Race" (Friedrich Nietzsche) was a development of Charles Darwin's theories on evolution and the survival of the fittest, which he had outlined in 1859 in his book "*On the Origin of Species*".

II. Adolf Hitler 1889-1945. (cf. Mussolini 1883-1945; Lenin 1870-1924; Stalin 1879-1953; Mao Zedong 1893-1976.)

1. His early life to his appointment as Chancellor in January 1933.

i. **Hitler was born above the Gasthof zum Pommer** (the Pomeranian Inn) in Braunau-am-Inn in Austria, the son by the third wife (Klara, née Pölzl, who died in 1907) of Alois Hitler (who died in 1903). Alois Hitler was a customs official, who had trained as a cobbler, but had held various jobs, including farming, before joining the customs service, and serving in Braunau, Passau and Linz. Alois, according to Hitler, was a drunken, menacing brute, with whom he was generally on bad terms. Adolf was the third of four children by Klara (only a sister, Paula, survived) and had three other half-siblings; his half-sister, Angela, was the only relation for whom Hitler had any feelings. (She acted as housekeeper for him for a time. In Vienna, she helped to defend Jewish students.) In 1925 he renounced his Austrian citizenship, but German naturalization was arranged only in 1932.

(Alois was born in 1837, before his parents Maria **Schicklgruber** and Johann Hiedler were married in 1842. Alois was brought up by Johann's brother, who in 1876 got Johann eventually to legitimize Alois. Thus Alois Schicklgruber became Alois Hiedler, which he spelt Hitler. It was not uncommon for Adolf Hitler's opponents to call him Schicklgruber, for the name has a comic ring. According to Hans Frank, the Nazi Governor General of Poland, before his

execution, Maria's son Alois was by the son of the Jewish household where she was a maid; however, there were no Jews in the area, so Frank must have got it wrong.)

ii. **In 1905, Hitler left school**, having attended the *Realschule* in Linz and then in Steyr, not the Gymnasium, which was for those considered suitable for attending university. He had made little effort and received mediocre reports. Between 1905 and 1907, he stayed at home sketching, and dreaming of becoming a great architect, and living off his mother's comfortable pension. In 1907, he went to Vienna, where he failed to gain acceptance to the Academy of Fine Arts. He stayed in Vienna, eking out a living by working only when he had to, for example, as a commercial artist, producing posters and post-cards, or clearing snow; this contrasts with the myth he spread later about working hard while struggling to become an artist. In Vienna, he lived in doss-houses run by the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) and Salvation Army, all the time reading widely and picking up his basic ideas. From the Social Democrats, he learnt how crowds could be manipulated. He also picked up anti-Semitic ideas, partly from Karl Luger's Christian Socialists (lower middle class) and Georg von Schönerer's Pan-German Party, which were both anti-Semitic, and which therefore made anti-Semitism "respectable", and partly from anti-Semitic magazines, although he later claimed he was not influenced by these sources and had drawn his own conclusions. In 1909, he bought back copies of a pamphlet called "*Ostara*", which was produced between 1907 and 1910 by one Lanz von Liebenfels; the pamphlet used the Swastika as a sign of racial superiority and Lanz von Liebenfels flew a Swastika flag from his castle, Burg Werfenstein.

iii. **The advent of the First World War in 1914 transformed his life.** In 1914, he enlisted in a Bavarian infantry regiment as a messenger, becoming a lance-corporal and gaining the Iron Cross twice (1914 - Second Class; 1918 - First class, which was unusual for a corporal); although the details are a mystery, he was clearly courageous. When the First World War ended in November 1918, he was near Stettin (now Szczecin in Poland), recovering from the effects of a gas attack.

iv. **After the War, which he had enjoyed, he attended a counter-agitation course at Munich University.** This brought him to the attention of the army, for which he worked until April 1920, investigating political parties and instructing soldiers against socialism. The military leaders had been especially alarmed by the attempted communist coup in Munich in April and May of 1919. In September 1919, he was instructed to join and investigate the **German Workers' Party, the DAP**, (Deutsche Arbeiter Partei). This party, with a nationalist and socialist programme, and but one of a number of small parties representing extremist malcontents, had been founded in January 1919 by Anton Drexler, a locksmith, and Karl Harrer, a reporter. Hitler became member number 507 (the numbers being started at 500 to make membership look better) and soon there were 40 members. Hitler discovered his forte, political organization, and in 1921 became party leader. Already, in February 1920, National Socialist had been added to the party name, changing it from the DAP to the NSDAP (the National Socialist German Workers' Party), mockingly abbreviated by opponents to Nazis, a name which stuck. The NSDAP united the nationalism of the Nationalist Party (which was also anti-Semitic and anti-socialist), with the mass manipulation and interest in socialism of the Austrian Christian Socialists and Social Democrats.

v. **In 1923, on 8th and 9th November, Hitler and the Nazis mounted their abortive Munich Beerhall Putsch (coup d'état)**, an attempt to kidnap the leading Munich authorities, who were right wing, and push them into a march on Berlin. When Gustav von **Kahr**, Bavarian State Commissioner, and General Otto von **Lossow**, commander of the armed forces in Bavaria, managed to escape, Hitler decided to try to take over the government buildings. By the morning of 9th November, it was clear that the opposing forces were too strong, and Hitler wanted to call things off. However, Field Marshal Ludendorff insisted on continuing, having previously thrown in his lot with the Nazis. The police opened fire on the 2,000 or so Nazi marchers, killing 16. Hitler, who had quickly dived for cover, was arrested. He turned his trial into an indictment of the Weimar Republic (the usual name for the post-1918 German Government) and its failures, and received a five-year sentence. In the event, he served only nine months, in considerable comfort, in Landsberg Gaol, and used the time to dictate to his secretary Rudolf Hess the first part of *Mein Kampf* ("**My Struggle**"), in which he set out his beliefs and goals.

The idea of the putsch was not completely hare-brained. The Munich authorities were right wing, and the Nazi plan, which had been to get the Munich authorities to march on Berlin, had a good chance of being put into operation. That a march on Berlin might prove successful was suggested by the right-wing Wolfgang Kapp Putsch of 1920, which nearly succeeded, failing only when the Socialists called a general strike and Kapp lost his nerve.

vi. **On his release in 1924**, Hitler had to reorganize the party, which had disintegrated without him, and with the apparent success of the Weimar Republic. By the end of 1929, before the effects of the Wall Street Crash had begun to bite in Germany, membership had risen to 178,000 (cf. 27,000 in 1925). However, in 1932, the party was weakened by the withdrawal of the brothers, Otto and Gregor Strasser; Otto formed his "Union of Revolutionary National Socialists" and demanded that socialists should leave the Nazi Party.

vii. **In January 1933, Hitler became the German Chancellor, by constitutional and, more or less, legal methods.**

2. 1939-April 1945

i. **After 1939, Hitler was seldom seen in public.** He relied on reports, and Martin Bormann, head of the Party Office from May 1941 and then from April 1943, Hitler's secretary, increasingly decided whom and what Hitler saw.

ii. **On 19th December 1941**, with military failure in Russia, he made himself field Commander-in-Chief, trying to run the war directly.

iii. **He was lucky to survive the July 1944 Stauffenberg Bomb Plot**, especially as the plot could have succeeded had its leaders in Berlin been prepared to act, even though Hitler was not dead. During a meeting at Hitler's East Prussian headquarters at Wolf's Lair near Rastenburg (now Ketrzyn in Poland), Colonel Count Klaus von Stauffenberg excused himself, having left under the table a briefcase in which there was a bomb. Of the 24 men present, four were killed when the explosion occurred and all the others were injured. Hitler suffered from shock, burns on his right leg and damage to his right ear, which upset his balance for a time. As a result of the Plot, some 10,000 were investigated for involvement (cf. 10,000 Nazis were investigated after the war by the victorious United Nations Allies), of whom some 5,000 were executed. Stauffenberg had been shot the very evening of the plot.

This was the most serious of several assassination attempts. For example, in November 1939 at the annual 1923 Putsch celebration at the Bürgerbräukeller beerhall in Munich, a bomb went off, after Hitler had already left, injuring 63 and killing 7. In March 1943, General von Treschkow and Lieutenant Schlabrendorff planted a bomb on Hitler's plane; the bomb failed to go off, and was later recovered. However, Hitler seemed to have a charmed life; this, no doubt, increased his belief that destiny favoured him.

iv. **By 1945, Hitler was in poor health.** From 1941, Dr. Morell was treating him for sclerosis of the heart. In 1943, Hitler began to suffer from a shaking left leg and shaking hands and at least from 1945, he was being treated for Parkinson's disease. In 1945, his right eye was closing, his back was bent and he had difficulty in walking. The drugs provided by Dr. Morell to keep him working long hours and to cure his stomach pains, which came at times of tension, probably did not help his health either.

v. **In April 1945, in the Berlin chancellery bunker**, with Berlin about to fall to Russian troops, he married his mistress Eva Braun and committed suicide. He shot himself in the head and Eva Braun took a cyanide pill, after which the bodies were set on fire, Hitler having ordered a Germanic funeral pyre (for details, see "The Last Days of Hitler" by Hugh Trevor-Roper). The Russians never revealed the details, but they apparently quietly disposed of the charred remains of the body to prevent the creation of a rallying point for a Nazi revival. Hitler had designated Admiral Doenitz as his heir, but he was arrested and given 10 years at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials.

3. Personality.

i. **He was a great orator**, almost hypnotizing his audience and achieving "the personalization of politics" (J.P. Stern), that is, making individuals in a crowd think he was speaking directly to them. He was a very skilful politician and diplomatist.

ii. **He had an excellent memory.** It was a myth that he was hard-working, but he could work hard, if he had to. He was a romantic day-dreamer, relying very much on intuition: "I go the way Providence dictates with the assurance of a sleep-walker." He had a fanatical, messianic belief in himself and, after 1939, became increasingly unbalanced mentally. He was irrational, with obsessive hatreds, of Jews and Socialists especially: thus, in the closing stages of the war, valuable transport was used to take Jews to extermination camps, rather than for the war effort.

iii. **He was vain, for example, having a typewriter with print 3 times the normal size, so that he could read without glasses.** He was stubborn and prone to rages; only the American William Shirer in his "Berlin Diary" relates the story of Hitler being so angry that he ate the carpet, but his opponents did call him the *Teppichfresser*, the carpet eater, or carpet pacer. He was selfish and egoistic, even failing to return to Linz when his mother was dying and trying to cheat his sister out of her share of the pension. He was ruthless, for example, ordering the extermination of Jews, Gypsies, and "social undesirables" and the total destruction of Leningrad, declaring that he did not care what happened to the civilians, and instructing that captured commandos should be executed. "He is more pitiless than Attila", was Mussolini's comment after the Night of the Long Knives.

iv. **He led a simple, ascetic life**, apart from a weakness for chocolates and cream cakes. He was also fond of animals and at the front, always walked his dog, Blondie. He was a loner, not even on "du" (the intimate German for "you", comparable to "tu" in French) terms with Heinrich Himmler. Possibly he did not marry Eva Braun earlier, as this would upset his image of the public servant devoted to the people.

v. **He was an opportunist and gambler**, ready to take risks. He could see and exploit the weaknesses of others.

4. Aims

i. Factors.

a. **Unlike Mussolini**, who had no exact idea of what he wanted, Hitler had clear policies.

b. **However, there is much disagreement among historians as to exactly what Hitler's aims were.**

c. **There is much disagreement also over the extent to which *Mein Kampf* (written 1924 and published in 1925) and his *Second Book* (called *Hitler's Secret Book* in the English translations) 1928 are exact blueprints**, and how far he was an **intentionalist**, that is, he had clear, fixed intentions and plans, and how far a **functionalist**, that is, an opportunist, for whom ideology played only a minor role. (These words were coined by Tim Mason in 1981 in *Intention and Explanation in Der Führerstaat*, edited by Gerhard Herschfeld.)

Hitler (in a letter to the *Kreisleiter* – local party leaders - on 29 April 1937) wrote that "I always go as far as I dare and never further". He also said that he avoided fights and trials of strength but outmanoeuvred the enemy and then delivered the knock-out blow. Thus A.J.P. Taylor took the view that he was primarily an opportunist and Norman Stone considers him "a creation of his own success".

Others, including Alan Bullock (in his 1952 classic *Hitler, A Study in Tyranny*.) consider him "determined and clear in his aims but opportunistic in method" (Gerhard Weinberg, University of North Carolina) and *Mein Kampf* a basic outline, although not an exact blueprint as, for example, while envisaging expansion east and racial superiority, it anticipates co-operation with Great Britain and eschews a two-front war.

d. **The goals were not new.** Hitler's heroes were Frederick II the Great, 1740-86, whose picture was above where Hitler died, and Bismarck, whose picture hung above Hitler's desk in the Chancellery.

e. **Hitler was a "student of Vienna"**, and as such, ignorant about the Mediterranean, the US and the world in general, and interested in Eastern Europe, Russia and Jews.

ii. **According to Alan Bullock**, Hitler's driving impulse was a lust for power, not for power's sake, but to carry out his grandiose vision of reordering the world. According to Joachim Fest (in his 1974 biography), Hitler was driven by fear of being overwhelmed, by the

chaos after 1918, by intelligent foreigners (who had "dominated" life in Vienna), by the bourgeoisie, by socialism and communism, by Russia, by Jews (perhaps 20% of the early Bolsheviks had Jewish origins), and by Americans (in his *Secret Book* 1928, he wrote: "only German domination of Europe could prevent the threatening world hegemony of the North American Continent", which he attributed to the fittest emigrating there. Admittedly, by 1932, Hitler seems to have changed his view about the US, describing it as a "conglomerate of disparate elements", controlled by gangsters, Jews, Negroes, and on the brink of social revolution).

iii. **The rejuvenation and union of all Germans** (not Germanics; that is, France, Spain and Italy were not to be included, as some wanted. Race, not nationality was the basis) into a 1,000-year Reich; Speer was instructed to design buildings which would also make impressive ruins in 1,000 years! Oddly, however, Hitler seems not to have been interested in the Germans in the South Tyrol, which Austria had had to surrender to Italy in 1919.

iv. **Expansion east for Lebensraum** (living space), which would give food and raw materials for an increased population, and security, autarky in war, and power.

v. **"Weltmacht oder Niedergang"** ("World power or destruction". This was the title of a book by Friedrich von Bernhardi in 1912) and a New Order in international relations. Under him, Germany would dominate Europe, sharing world domination with the British Empire and the US. A later German generation would presumably assert German domination over the other two.

vi. **War** (but limited, not total like 1914-18), to show German superiority and to take the Germans to their peak. Hitler drew no distinction between war and peace, seeing peace as the continuation of struggle by other means, a sort of cold war, using propaganda, and brinkmanship.

vii. **Save the world from Jewish/Bolshevik domination.** In *Mein Kampf*, he wrote of "the victorious sword of a Master-Race taking the world in the service of a higher culture".

viii. **Avenge the humiliation of 1918 and restore Germany** to what he considered its rightful place, militarily, economically, and culturally.

5. His main beliefs

i. **The superiority of the Nordic Aryans**, who were at their purest in Germany, other Germanic tribes, like the Franks of France, having been diluted by intermarriage. Other races, especially Slavs, Jews, and Negroes, were inferior.

ii. **Anti-Semitism.** He blamed the Jews for German (and world) misfortunes. Jews, as part of their effort to dominate the world, were responsible for socialism and communism on the one hand, and for the domination by big business on the other.

iii. **Anti-socialism and anti-communism.** He disliked their democratic belief in equality and their internationalism.

iv. **Life was "a world of everlasting struggle**, where one creature feeds on the other, and where the death of the weaker implies the life of the stronger" (*Mein Kampf*), that is, "social Darwinism". "Whatever goal man has reached is due to his originality and his brutality" (1928 speech). "War is life. War is the origin of all things" (1932). Admittedly, according to Hermann Rauschning in *Hitler Speaks*, 1939, Hitler asked "Why should I demolish him (the enemy) by military means, if I can do so better and more cheaply in other ways?".

v. **He possibly believed that he spoke for the German people.** He spoke of the way he embodied the will of the German people, whom he seems privately to have despised, calling them, according to Hermann Rauschning (in *Hitler's Table Talk*), the "stupid flock of German sheep". "To be a leader means to be able to move masses" (*Mein Kampf*).

6. His methods.

Violence; propaganda; opportunism. (Rauschning related that Hitler said he would sign anything if it was useful, and break any agreement when it suited.)

7. As a military commander.

i. **Opinions are divided**, but he was not the ignorant meddler he is often said to have been. He was well-versed in military matters and could quote at length experts like Karl von Clausewitz (1780-1831).

ii. **Sir Basil Liddell Hart**, the military historian, considered him one of the greatest strategists. General Strawson, one-time Chief of Staff to SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, the NATO High Command), considered him a great strategist, but not a good field commander; above all, like Stalin, he was very reluctant to withdraw.

8. It is impossible to gauge accurately, but probably his popularity increased after 1933 and only began to decline when defeat came. He gave people new purpose and pride. One sign of popular confidence was that within a year of 1933, the birth-rate had increased by 22% and in 1938 was at an all-time high (admittedly partly because of propaganda to increase the population). In 1935, in a free vote, the Saar area decided overwhelmingly for reunion with the Reich. In 1945, many German prisoners still expressed confidence in Hitler. Admittedly, under Hitler, the suicide rate went up and there were 7 known assassination attempts.

9. How totalitarian was Hitler?

i. **He could not (at least until the later stages of the war) ignore public opinion.** Thus, in September 1939, he had to rescind his wage cut decree. In August 1941, he gave way to public opinion, led by the churches (especially Count Galen, Roman Catholic Bishop of Munster) and halted the euthanasia programme begun in 1939. Although an atheist (with a belief in Providence), he had to retain religion; in 1944 newspapers were ordered to replace the word "God" with "Providence", but chaplains were retained in the army to the end. He was also aware that brutal measures against Jews were not popular, and extermination camps were in secluded areas.

ii. **The army's loyalty was in doubt**, but it was only in 1944, after the July Bomb Plot, that the Gestapo and the SS gained authority over the armed forces. In 1938, Werner von Fritsch was replaced as Commander-in-Chief by the sycophant Walter von Brauchitsch, but only after the army had rejected General Walter von Reichenau as he was too Nazi.

iii. **He had limited economic control.** In 1936 Germany officially went onto a War Economy, but only with Albert Speer becoming Rüstungsminister (Supply Minister) in 1942 was there anything like firm central control. Even then, Speer had great difficulty, as he had incomplete power, and the local Nazi leaders (Gauleiters) often refused to carry out his orders.

iv. **Gleichschaltung (the co-ordination of everything) was a myth.** Hitler's word was law, but generally he left matters to his lieutenants, and there was little co-ordination. After April 1943, Martin Bormann decided whom and what Hitler saw, and unpleasant facts were concealed. Hitler also divided and ruled, aware that competing organizations reduced the risk of resistance to him. For example, Hjalmar Schacht was the Economics Minister, but the 4-Year Plan in 1936 was put under Hermann Goering. The Army High Command and Hitler's High Command were not always co-ordinated.

III. Nazi leaders. ("Ruthless gangsters", A.J.P. Taylor. "A gang of criminals", Gerhard Ritter.)

1. **Rudolf Hess (1894-1987).** He was born in Alexandria, Egypt, the son of a German merchant. He studied in Munich and then served in the same regiment as Hitler in the First World War. He became Hitler's secretary, and deputy leader until 1939 when he was replaced by Goering. In May 1941, perhaps with the goal of restoring his prestige, he parachuted near Glasgow, apparently hoping to win the British to peace. He was sentenced in 1946 to life imprisonment in Spandau in Berlin. He was dull, but loyal.

2. **Hermann Goering (1893-1946),** a Bavarian, served as a pilot in the First World War, and became the last commander of the crack Richthofen Squadron. In 1922, he heard Hitler speak and joined the party; he was an SA (Sturmabteilung, meaning Storm troopers, the Nazi private army) commander, and was wounded in the 1923 Putsch (the treatment left him addicted

to morphine) and imprisoned. In 1928, he was elected to the Reichstag (Parliament); in 1933 he became Minister without Portfolio under Hitler; in 1935 he was put in charge of the Luftwaffe (the Air Force). In 1936, he was given charge of the Four-Year War Economy Plan. In 1938, he was put in charge of Jewish operations and in July 1941 ordered Reinhard Heydrich of the SS (Hitler's bodyguard, short for Schutzstaffel, meaning protection force) to prepare for a "complete solution". He was captured in 1945 by American forces, and put on trial, but managed to poison himself. He was the most capable of Hitler's henchmen, and the only one at the post-war Nuremberg War Crimes Trials of Nazi criminals who behaved like a leader.

3. Heinrich Himmler (1900-45) was also a Bavarian. The First World War ended before he had finished his officer training. He studied for a diploma in agriculture, worked for a fertilizer firm and then as a poultry farmer. He joined the Party, becoming deputy leader of the SS (Schutzstaffel, originally Hitler's body-guard) in 1927 under Erhard Heiden, and then in 1929 SS leader. In 1934, he replaced Goering as Gestapo (Secret Police) Chief and by 1936 controlled all the police. He was responsible for the concentration and then the extermination camps. In 1943, he became Minister of the Interior; in 1944, although he had no military experience, he became Commander of the Reserve Army, and then, in December, Commander-in-Chief (C.-in C.) Rhine Army Group; in January 1945, he was made C.-in-C. Vistula Army Group. He was not sadistic, but was neutral about deaths (although he complained about Goering's cruelty in hunting). He was efficient, ascetic, honest (unlike Goering). He had appalling racial theories; about the Jews, he said "We shall soon be deloused". He had a reputation for loyalty, and was called "Reichsheini" and "der treue (the true, reliable) Heinrich", but he was very ambitious and built a virtual state within Germany, with SS divisions running factories, doing intellectual research (for example, into myths and race), providing soldiers (the Waffen SS - Weapons SS), running the various camps, and serving as police. He was the most powerful man after Hitler. He hoped to be accepted as the German leader in 1945, but was arrested and poisoned himself while being strip-searched.

4. Josef Goebbels (1897-1945), a Rhinelander, earned a doctorate (in German studies), having studied at Heidelberg, Bonn and 6 other universities. (His father was a clerk in a textile works in Rheydt, in the Rhineland, but he won a grant from "The Catholic Society" to study at university.) Polio at the age of 5 had left one leg 4 inches shorter. Hitler and the Nazi Party alone seemed to offer purpose, power and respect, although he first toyed with communism. From 1928, he was in charge of propaganda, becoming Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda in 1933, although he never had anything like complete control of the dissemination of information, having to share it especially with Max Amann, who was in charge of publishing. He was fanatical, anti-Semitic (although Jewish academics had helped him), and tough (alone of the Nazi leaders, he chose to commit suicide, along with his wife and children, at Hitler's side in the Berlin bunker). Hitler disapproved of his extra-marital relationships.

5. Martin Bormann (1900-?), from Saxony, headed the party chancellery after Hess's flight in 1941 and in April 1943, became Hitler's secretary. He was brutal, hated, and feared. He was powerful behind the scenes, deciding whom and what Hitler saw, and so virtually running Germany. He was possibly killed during the fighting for Berlin April 1945, but perhaps escaped. (A forensic expert identified a skelton unearthed in Berlin in 1972 during construction work "with near certainty" as those of Bormann. However, in 1993, a document dating from 1961 was found in the archives of the Paraguayan secret police claiming that Bormann died in Asuncion in 1959 and was buried in a local cemetery.)

6. Joachim von Ribbentrop (1893-1946) was born in Wesel in the Rhineland, the son of an army officer. He married the daughter of a sparkling-wine maker and became a wine salesman. He met Hitler in 1932 and offered his services, becoming unofficial adviser on foreign affairs. Between 1936 and 1938, he served as ambassador in London and then from 1938 to 1945 was Foreign Minister. He was hanged after being condemned at Nuremberg.

7. **Hjalmar Schacht (1877-1970)**, from Schleswig, is often called "**Hitler's Colbert**" (Colbert was Finance Minister to Louis XIV of France, 1643-1715). He was brilliant in economics (in which he had a doctorate) and served as President of the German Reichsbank 1923-30 and 1933-39, and Minister of Economics 1934-37. He was a nationalist but never a member of the Nazi Party. He opposed Hitler's plans for war, and in 1944 was arrested following the July Bomb Plot. He was one of the three (out of 22) acquitted at Nuremberg (along with Franz von Papen and the radio broadcaster Hans Fritzsche) but he was lucky to escape the death penalty.

8. Others.

i. **Wilhelm Frick** was Minister of the Interior 1933-43, and the Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia. He was a faceless civil servant, and was executed after being tried and condemned at Nuremberg.

ii. **Fritz Sauckel** was Plenipotentiary General for the Allocation of Labour 1942-44 (that is, in charge of the slave-labour programme). He was hanged in 1946 after being tried at Nuremberg.

iii. **Julius Streicher** was a virulent anti-Semite, infamous as editor of *Der Stürmer* (*The Storm Trooper*), the anti-Jewish newspaper. He was hanged in 1946 after being tried at Nuremberg.

iv. **Alfred Rosenberg**, the leading Nazi ideologist, was editor of *Der Völkische Beobachter* (*The National Observer*). (According to Goebbels, he "almost managed to become a scholar, a journalist, a politician, but only almost".) He was hanged in 1946.

v. **Hans Frank**, a lawyer and early Nazi party member, became Reich Commissioner for Justice in 1933 and then, in 1939, Governor-General of Poland, supervising the enslavement of the Poles. He was hanged in 1946, having failed in his suicide attempt.

vi. **Albert Speer** was Hitler's architect, and from 1942 the very efficient Minister of Supply. He was sentenced to 20 years in gaol in 1946 for using slave labour.

vii. **Ernst Kaltenbrunner**, an Austrian lawyer, became an SS General and then, on the assassination of Heydrich (-see viii. below), head of the RSHA (Reich Security Head Office) controlling: the SS intelligence service; the SD (Sicherheitsdienst); the Gestapo (Secret Police); and the Kripo (Criminal Police). He was hanged 1946.

viii. **Reinhard Heydrich**. He was the most powerful figure in the SS after Himmler, and the chief instigator of the attempted extermination of Jewry. His assassination in June 1942 by members of the Czech resistance working from England resulted in the Nazi reprisal of the massacre of the inhabitants of Lidice and the destruction of the village.

ix. **Baldur von Schirach** was leader of the Hitler Youth from 1931 and from 1940 Gauleiter of Vienna (where he was responsible for the deportation of Jews). He was sentenced to 20 years at Nuremberg.

x. **Adolf Eichmann**, the efficient, Rhenish, head of the Central Office for Jewish Emigration, was responsible for the rounding up and deportation of Jews. He was captured in 1960 in Argentina by Israelis and executed in Israel in 1962.

xi. **Dr. Josef Mengele** was in charge of the terrible experiments on prisoners in Auschwitz. He escaped to Brazil and died there in 1979 while swimming.

xii. **Heinrich Müller**, the Head of the Gestapo under Himmler, disappeared at the end of the war and his fate is unknown.

xiii. **General Wilhelm Keitel**, Chief of the High Command, and General Alfred Jodl, Chief of Operations, were both executed in 1946 after trial at Nuremberg.

IV. Hitler's acquisition of power, 1923-33.

A. Sequence of events.

1. November 1923, the abortive Munich (Beer Hall) Putsch.

On 8th November, 1923, at a public political meeting held at the Bürgerbräukeller in Munich, Hitler, from 1921 leader of the Nazi Party (which had been formed in 1919 by the locksmith Anton **Drexler** and the journalist Karl **Harrer**), supported by Goering and

600 storm-troopers of the Nazi private army, the SA (short for Sturmabteilung, meaning Storm Section) captured Gustav von **Kahr**, the General Commissioner, that is, government leader, for Bavaria, and General Otto von Lossow, the Bavarian military commander, and announced that he had formed a government with General Erich Ludendorff. Ludendorff in fact knew nothing about the Putsch, but later went along with Hitler. The plan was that Bavarian forces would then march on Berlin to overthrow the Weimar Republic. Kahr and Lossow agreed to co-operate with Hitler, possibly out of conviction, but probably to extricate themselves from a difficult situation. Having as a result escaped, they then turned against Hitler.

Hitler was no doubt influenced by: -

the March 1920 Kapp Putsch in Berlin, when the banker Wolfgang Kapp and General Walther von Luttwitz nearly succeeded in seizing power.
Mussolini's acquisition of power 1922.
the unpopularity of the Weimar government after the French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr in January 1923, following German default on reparations payments.
the communist risings in Germany in October 1923.
the fact that on 9th November 1799, Napoleon had seized power.

During the night of 8th-9th November, Ernst Röhmer and his SA Brownshirts (the storm troopers), seized control of the War Ministry Offices and set up barbed wire and machine guns. Then, although it became clear that Kahr and Lossow were not in fact supporting him, Hitler decided against withdrawal, being persuaded by General Ludendorff that the army would never fire on him, and instead mounted a march by 2-3,000 Nazis on 9th November, with the goal of seizing power in Munich. A shot, fired by whom is unknown, brought an exchange of fire between the Nazis and the police barring the way, and 16 Nazis and 3 policemen were killed. The putsch could still have succeeded as Ludendorff bravely pushed his way through the police, but no one followed his example. Hitler was arrested and received the remarkably light sentence of 5 years, of which he served only 9 months.

2. It was only after 1929 that Nazi fortunes began to rise.

Between 1924 and 1929, the Nazi Party had an average of 13 seats only in the Reichstag (Parliament). Hitler was not one of them, as he was an Austrian until 1932, by which time he had his eyes set on being German Chancellor or President.

In September 1930, the Nazis won 18% of the vote and 107 seats in the elections for the Reichstag (the German Parliament). In July 1932, they took 230 out of 608 seats (37.3% of the vote), becoming the largest single party. In the Länder (state) elections in April 1932, the Nazis had been victorious in Prussia (2/3 of Germany) with 36%, Bavaria 32.5%, Hamburg 31%, and Württemberg 26.4%. Admittedly, Hitler had been defeated in the Presidential elections earlier in April, receiving 13,500,000 votes (32.5%) to Hindenburg's 19,250,000. The Communists (100 seats) and the Social Democrats (121 seats) had also done well in the July 1932 elections.

3. In late 1932, the Nazis seemed to be in decline. In the November 1932 elections, the Nazis won only 196 seats out of 584 (33% of the vote), although they remained the largest single party. The party was also very short of funds. The famous historian Arnold Toynbee in 1932 thought that "the one thing you could count on was that the Nazis were on the downgrade", and described "dejected-looking young men in brown shirts, rattling money-boxes timidly and without response, in the faces of unheeding passers-by". In the circumstances, it was only the determination and leadership of Adolf Hitler that kept the party going.

4. Yet, on 30th January 1933, Hindenburg appointed Hitler Chancellor, following "backstairs intrigue" (Bullock). "There appeared a 'deus ex machina' in the shape of General Schleicher" (Bullock), President Hindenburg's confidant.

i. **In May 1932, General Kurt von Schleicher** helped bring the resignation of General Wilhelm Groener, Defence Minister since 1928, a strong character and one of the few army leaders loyal to the Weimar Republic. In April 1932, pressed by the states,

Groener had declared the SA and SS illegal, in view of the likelihood of a Nazi putsch. Ernst Röhm, the Sturmabteilung leader, in fact wanted a putsch, but Hitler ordered adherence to the ban (which left the organization intact for revival later).

Hitler did not want to be brought to power by Röhm. Moreover, there was no guarantee that Röhm would not use the putsch to make himself and the socialist wing of the Nazis the rulers of Germany. In addition, an attempted putsch might bring a civil war, which could easily be lost; Hitler had bitter memories of 1923 and although the SA was 300,000 strong, and the army only 100,000, the police had to be taken into account, as did the low standard of many in the SA. Even if they won, civil war would weaken Germany. Hitler was also aware of the German love of legality.

General Schleicher, who feared a left-wing takeover and wanted to win over the Nazis, joined the Nazis in their denunciation of Groener. Amid uproar in the chamber, Groener, ill at the time, resigned, May 1932.

ii. **In May 1932, Schleicher brought the resignation of Chancellor Heinrich Brüning.** Brüning, of the Catholic Centre Party, and in office since March 1930, was a strong, effective chancellor, ruling by a mixture of support in the Reichstag and decree. Brüning was unpopular with the industrialists (he kept prices down), the Junkers [the country squires] (he planned to take over insolvent estates), the nationalists (he failed to get French agreement to a German customs union with Austria, and construction of a German fleet) and Schleicher, who considered that the only solution to Germany's problems was inclusion of the Nazis in government, a step opposed by Brüning. Schleicher persuaded President Hindenburg that Brüning no longer had the support of the army, and that Lieutenant Colonel Franz von Papen, attached to the Centre Party, would make a better chancellor, as he would obtain co-operation with the Nazis; the Nazis had proved amenable to Schleicher's proposals, as Schleicher offered them an end of the ban on the SA and SS (the ban was ended in June 1932) and elections, in which the Nazis expected to do well. Thus, on 30th May 1932, at Hindenburg's request, Brüning resigned, amid general surprise, especially as the nonentity (but secretly ambitious) von Papen became chancellor.

iii. **In December 1932, Schleicher engineered the fall of von Papen.** Von Papen had failed to bring about a coalition: Hitler refused to join the government; Alfred Hugenberg and the Nationalists refused their support, as they had not been consulted beforehand; the Catholic Centre Party denounced von Papen for his part in overthrowing Brüning; prominent people refused to serve in his cabinet. Thus, while Brüning had had some support in the Reichstag, von Papen had had to rule entirely by decree and his "Cabinet of Barons" was clearly out of touch with German public opinion. He also proved too independent for Schleicher's liking, and too reluctant to make concessions to Hitler to get Nazi support.

Schleicher feared that there would be civil war if the Nazis were not won over, and if von Papen went ahead with his plans to revise the constitution (to provide for a new electoral system) and to rule in the meantime by decree. In Prussia alone, between 1st June and 20th July 1932, there were 461 political demonstrations, in which 82 died and 400 were seriously injured; the clashes were predominantly between Nazis and Communists. Like the NSDAP, the SPD, the Social Democratic Party, had its paramilitary organization, the **Reichsbanner**. The KPD (Communist Party) paramilitary force was the **Rotfrontkämpferbund** (League of Fighters of the Red Front).

On 2nd December 1932, Schleicher became Chancellor, having used his waning influence with Hindenburg, and hoping to split the Nazis. In the event, he failed to persuade Nazis like Gregor Strasser to join his government.

iv. **On 30th January 1933, Hitler became Chancellor, following a deal with von Papen.** Not surprisingly, Schleicher had proved no more successful in governing, and had lost the support of Hindenburg because of his intrigues and failure. Von Papen, anxious to get his own back on Schleicher and to regain power, at last agreed to Hitler's demand that he, Hitler, be chancellor, and persuaded Hindenburg to accept the upstart corporal. It was assumed that power would tame Hitler and the Nazis, and that the experienced von Papen would dominate the government, especially as von Papen would hold not only the post of Vice-Chancellor, but the key post of Minister-President of Prussia; in addition, Hitler's powers would be limited by those of the President, and the fact that only three of the cabinet of eleven would be Nazis, and moderate

ones at that (Goering Minister without Portfolio, and Wilhelm Frick, Minister of the Interior, who did not control the police) holding relatively unimportant positions.

B. Factors

1. **The First World War.** The armistice and the humiliation of the Versailles Diktat (the 1919 treaty was dictated by the victors to Germany) helped bring Hitler support. The war was instrumental in Hitler's discovering his ability as a political organizer. The war left large numbers of dissatisfied men, skilled in violence and ready to use it; above all, there were the Freikorps (bands of demobilized soldiers, whose number had included Ernst Röhm), a training and recruiting ground for the SA.

2. **The weakness of the Weimar Republic.**

i. **The Republic was generally unpopular**, as it was associated with defeat and the Versailles *Diktat*.

ii. **The 1919 Weimar constitution, Article 48**, allowed chancellors, with the consent of the President, to rule by decree in an emergency; this was the basis of Hitler's power, and in theory the Weimar Republic continued until Hitler's defeat in 1945. The proportional representation electoral system, while very democratic, made it hard to form governments, as there was a large number of parties. Thus, between 1918 and 1933, there were 15 governments, excluding Hitler's.

iii. **The Germans lacked experience in working a democratic system.** Erich Fromm, in *Fear of Freedom*, suggested that many Germans welcomed Hitler's "guided democracy", which left them with the façade of democracy, but did not require them to decide anything. Indeed, conservatives regarded Hitler's success as a victory for mass democracy; Hitler was the "People's Kaiser", the man of the trenches and of the people, the little man struggling against the big battalions of privilege, the man who would help the people and, at the same time, restore greatness.

iv. **It was unfortunate that Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, who was aged (born 1847), not politically astute**, and a monarchist, had been elected President in 1925. It was also unfortunate that Gustav Stresemann (1878-1929) died when he did, for he was the one outstanding politician of the Weimar Republic.

3. **The economic crisis after 1929.**

i. **Unemployment** between 1925 and 1929 averaged 1,500,000 out of a workforce of 25,000,000 (and a population of 64,000,000). By the end of 1929, it had risen to 2,850,000; 5,000,000 in the summer of 1930; 6,000,000 by December 1930; and 6,500,000 by December 1932; however, by January 1933, it had fallen to 6,000,000.

ii. **While the German depression was linked with US loans drying up, and the post-1929 world depression**, the seriousness of the German depression was Germany's own fault. Successive Weimar governments had made little effort to pay off reparations, and had unwisely tied the German economy to US loans, which had dried up; the situation then worsened in 1931, following the collapse of the Danat Bank in July 1931, whose failure, following speculation in the Australian wool market, prompted a run on the banks.

iii. **The Depression helped the Nazis to power** but not because workers turned to the Nazi party. Only about a quarter of Nazi party members in 1930 were workers, and most workers looked to the Social Democrats (mainly the skilled and well-paid) and the KPD (Communist Party - mainly the unskilled, unemployed and poorly paid). The real significance of the Depression was that it prompted the peasants, farmers, artisans, and the middle and upper classes to turn increasingly to the Nazis, often as the only defence against "Bolshevism", as the depression caused urban workers to turn to socialism and communism.

4. **The nationalist ferment after 1929. To some historians, this was more important in bringing Hitler to power than the economic problems.**

i. **In 1929, the German Foreign Minister, Gustav Stresemann,** persuaded the French and British to evacuate their forces from the Rhineland, which prompted a surge of nationalist feeling.

ii. **At the same time, there was a crisis over the Young Plan, June 1929.** The Plan reduced German reparations by about three-quarters, extended the repayment period (fixed in 1921 at 42 years) to 58½ years (that is, 1988) and arranged a schedule of payments. The Plan caused great popular protests that no reparations should be paid at all, and brought Hitler the co-operation of Alfred Hugenberg and the Nationalists, Franz Seldte of the Stahlhelm and Heinrich Class of the Pan-German League. Hugenberg's wealth and publishing empire were very useful to Hitler.

5. Hitler's ability and his readiness to use violence were crucial. He was an outstanding orator and, in the years 1932 to 1933, made astute political decisions, especially rejecting any position other than Chancellor, and any attempt to seize power by force. His determination kept the party going in the dark days of late 1932. He was widely regarded as the only person capable of controlling the anti-parliamentary right.

The party appealed to all sections of society; the peasants, artisans, civil servants, small businessmen, workers and bosses, admittedly with varying degrees of success. The young, especially students, were attracted to the party by the promise of jobs (if only in the SA) and action; by the simplicity of the party; by the sense of belonging and the pageantry; and by the appeal of the rallying cry "Deutschland erwache" (Germany awaken). The army, industry and Junkers (the country squires) put pressure on President Hindenburg to accept Hitler, who (temporarily) brought together radicals and reactionaries, egalitarians and elitists.

In Vienna, before the war, Hitler had learnt from the Social Democrats (SDs) how easily crowds could be manipulated. Karl Lüger's Christian Socialist Party had shown the appeal of anti-Semitism, although Hitler moderated the Nazi anti-Semitic stance, realising that extremists like Julius Streicher were not widely popular.

6. The ability of Hitler's aides, especially Goebbels, Goering, and Röhm.

i. **Hermann Goering**, who had great ability and charm, and a wide range of acquaintances, became Hitler's contact man in Berlin and in the Reichstag, to which he was elected in 1928, and of which he became President in August 1932.

ii. **Ernst Röhm**, head of the SA, was an able organizer, who also had useful contacts with the army. Fear of the SA seizing power was one reason why Hitler was accepted as Chancellor.

iii. **Josef Goebbels** was an outstanding orator, propagandist and campaign director, who excelled at organizing mass rallies and processions.

iv. **Max Amann**, a former sergeant-major, but a capable businessman, ran the party's publicity machine. The main party organ was the newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter* (*National Observer*). Gregor Strasser was, with Hitler, the organizer of the party machine. Wilhelm Frick, by profession a civil servant, and 1919-23, one of Hitler's protectors in the Munich police, was a good administrator, who knew the machinery of the German civil service.

7. The co-operation of Alfred Hugenberg. Hugenberg was a bigoted, reactionary nationalist, and former director of the industrial giant, Krupps, who had made a fortune out of the 1923 hyper-inflation, and bought up a propaganda empire of newspapers, which was useful to Hitler. Hugenberg also provided Hitler with money and useful contacts, such as Dr. Albert Voegler, General Director of Vereinigte Stahlwerke (United Steelworks), and Hjalmar Schacht, the economist. Hugenberg lacked mass support and came to see in Hitler his means to influence the masses. However, it was Hitler who used Hugenberg and gained most from the co-operation.

8. Communists, the Church, and German industrialists.

i. **Instructed by Stalin through the Comintern**, Ernst Thälmann, KPD leader, refused to co-operate with other parties to prevent Hitler from gaining power. Nor did they

- or the Socialists (SPD, led by Otto Wells) - use the weapon of the general strike (cf. in 1920, President Ebert, a socialist, had called a general strike to deal with the Kapp Putsch); Hitler had gained power legally, and it was questioned if, in the midst of depression and unemployment, workers would respond to a call to strike.

ii. **Stalin had miscalculated** and, until 1934 (when Hitler made his non-aggression pact with Poland) considered that Hitler in power in Germany would be to Soviet advantage, as it would make capitalism unpopular and preoccupy the French and the British, making impossible an anti-Soviet alliance.

iii. **The Catholic Church, and the Catholic Centre Party**, led by Monsignor Kaas, failed to stand up to Hitler. There was no repeat of the Kulturkampf (struggle for civilization) which had been waged against Bismarck in the 19th century. (Less opposition would have been expected from the Lutherans, whose traditional policy was non-interference in politics.)

iv. **German business in general was slow to turn to Hitler.** Hitler, despite his admiration for 19th century bourgeois morality, had made no secret of his contempt for the bourgeoisie, and the Nazi programme seemed to promise nationalization at the least. Frau Helene Beckstein, of the piano company, had helped Hitler from the early days, but only slowly after 1929 did industrialists like Georg von Schnitzler of IG Farben and Fritz Thyssen of Thyssen Steel support the Nazis, as they did other parties. Hitler, with Hugenberg's help, had managed somewhat to calm the fears of big business, and present the Nazis as the best defence against socialism. However, it was only in February 1933 that Gustav Krupp began to support the upstart Hitler, initially, like many businessmen, as a sort of insurance, although he soon became an ardent supporter.

9. **The example of Mussolini**, "that great man across the Alps" (Hitler).

10. **The acquisition of power was remarkably peaceful**, despite Nazi glorification of violence, and in contrast to the events of 1918-1919. Above all, Hitler restrained the SA, being aware of the German love of legality, and not wanting the SA to bring him to power.

11. **The army and police** were generally sympathetic towards the Nazis.

12. **Local leaders** "knew exactly what needed to be done .. and they did it, apparently without more than generalized direction from above ... Mass meetings made individuals, alienated by an industrial society, feel part of a strong whole, and the movement gave a purpose to life." "Men and women fell into the arms of the new Reich, like ripe fruit from a tree. Others stood by, to let the Nazis have a chance." (G. Mosse in *Nazi Culture*).

13. **"Hitler's accession 1933 brought no sudden or serious change in German daily life and institutions.** Most took to the Swastika as they would to new paths in the Black Forest". (R. Grünberger in *A Social History of the Third Reich*).

V. The extension of Nazi power after January 1933: the removal of opposition, "the Second Revolution", "Gleichschaltung", the establishment of a totalitarian regime.

A. Factors.

1. **The Nazi goal was the imposition of Nazi power and ideas on the whole country's political, economic and social systems.** In Nazi terminology, the process for achieving this was called "Gleichschaltung", usually translated as co-ordination.

2. " ... earlier despots intent on butchery .. lacked the technical and administrative resources available to the modern death-dealing tyrant" (Phillips in *The Tragedy of Nazi Germany*). Moreover, the Germans were more efficient than either the Italians or the Russians.

3. **Like Mussolini**, Hitler lost the war, and so there are more details than for Stalin, who was more brutal even than Hitler.

4. **After 1939 and the start of the war**, and especially with failure from 1942, things were very different, and Hitler no longer paid lip-service to German public opinion, which, for example, in 1941 caused him to stop his euthanasia programme begun in 1939. In 1933, two lads, who climbed into Dachau concentration camp to see what was going on, were released the next day with a warning. The great Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn (who spent many years in Stalin's camps) related that Communists incarcerated in Hitler's concentration camps were usually released, only to be shot in Stalin's Russia if they emigrated there.

5. **Local Nazi leaders** "knew exactly what needed to be done ... and they did it, apparently without more than generalized direction from above." (Mosse in *Nazi Culture*).

6. **The Nazis were popular.** They were the largest single party and probably became more popular as time went on, until 1939 or 1941. "Men and women fell into the arms of the new Reich, like ripe fruit from a tree. Others stood by to let the Nazis have a chance." (Mosse). Nazism "made individuals, alienated by an industrial society, feel part of a strong whole, and the movement gave a purpose to life". (Mosse). Until 1939/41, Hitler restored German prosperity (symbolized in a way by the Volkswagen car) and German self-respect. His unification of Germans was generally popular, and in 1935, in a free vote run by the League of Nations, the Saarlanders voted for reunification with Germany. In 1945, 60% of German prisoners-of-war expressed confidence in Hitler. A 1951 German opinion poll showed that almost half of those interviewed, including Social Democrats, considered 1933-39 as a period in which things went well for Germany, in comparison with the years 1919-33 and 1939-45. After 1939/41, efforts were made to conceal the brutality from the German people.

7. **Unlike Stalin's Russia, emigration was always possible, although hard in the depression years.** Refugees included the writer Thomas Mann, the playwright Bertolt Brecht, the conductor Otto Klemperer, the Bauhaus architect Walter Gropius, and the politicians Heinrich Brüning and Willy Brandt.

B. Political control.

1. Elections on 5th March 1933 gave Hitler a majority in the Reichstag.

As he did not have a majority in the Reichstag in January 1933, Hitler had arranged the March elections, in which the Nazis gained 17,000,000 votes (44%) out of 39,000,000, and 288 out of 647 seats, and their Nationalist allies 3,000,000 votes (8%), giving Hitler a majority of 33.

The increased Nazi vote, the modest scale of which disappointed the Nazis, resulted partly from Nazi control from January 1933 of government funds and machinery, and largely from the **28th February 1933 Decree For the Protection of the People and the State** (suspending constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech, press, association, and allowing detention of up to 3 months without trial) and the **Law to Combat the Misery of the People and the Reich** (to combat "treasonable activities"). These acts followed the **Reichstag fire of 27th February**, for which the mad Dutch communist, Marianus van der Lubbe, was tried and executed, although the Bulgarian communist Georgii Dimitrov was acquitted. The Nazis alleged that the fire was part of a communist plot to seize power. At the time, there were accusations that the Nazis had started the fire themselves. The Nazi responses were certainly quick off the mark, but later research has tended to support the trial verdict, that van der Lubbe had acted on his own.

2. On 23rd March 1933, the Reichstag, by a majority of 441 to 84, passed the Enabling Bill, after a mixture of Nazi promises and threats, and with the SA Brownshirts in the aisles of the Kroll Opera House, where the Reichstag met after the fire. Passage of the bill by the second chamber, the Reichsrat, representing the German states, was a formality, as in the Reichstag Hitler had a two-thirds majority, with which he could constitutionally overrule the Reichsrat. The Enabling Act, which came into force on 24th March after President Hindenburg's signature, gave the Chancellor dictatorial powers, in view of the emergency, until 1st April 1937. From 1933 to 1945, the Reichstag continued to meet, but passed only 7 acts, including the renewal of the enabling Act. Elections were also held, for example in November 1933, but for a one-party list, as, on 14th July 1933, Germany had been declared a one-party state). Hitler, unlike Mussolini (and Lenin), did not introduce a new system, but worked through the Weimar constitution. The Enabling Act and the "suspension" of constitutional guarantees were the twin pillars of Hitler's power.

3. Gradually, Hitler appointed Nazis to key government positions. After the Night of the Long Knives (see point 7 below), June-July 1934, von Papen became German ambassador to Austria and then Turkey. Werner von Blomberg survived as Minister of War until 1937, and Konstantin von Neurath as Foreign Minister until 1938.

4. In March and April 1933, Hitler dissolved the 17 state governments (diets), except that in Prussia, which was already in Nazi hands, and reconstituted them on the basis of the ratio of votes cast for the March 1933 Reichstag election, that is, with a Nazi-Nationalist majority. The Nazi Regents (governors) and their cabinets were empowered to promulgate laws without consulting the state diets. On 30th January 1934, by a unanimous Reichstag vote, the state governments and the Reichsrat in Berlin were abolished. Thus, Germany became a unitary state for the first time, with **Reichsstatthalter** (provincial governors) carrying out instructions from Berlin.

Storm troopers had been used where necessary to disband the state diets. General von Reichenau, at the Ministry of War, had instructed the army leaders in the provinces not to become involved in politics.

5. May-July 1933, Germany was made a one-party state. On 10th May 1933, the Socialist Party was banned, followed by the other parties, including, June 1933, the Nationalist Party, which dissolved itself after the SA seized its headquarters. 14th July 1933, the Nazi Party was declared the only political party, "the carrier of the government" and "inseparably connected with the state".

In addition, all monarchist organizations were forbidden in February 1934, as were the Freemasons and similar organizations.

6. In December 1933, a decree merged party and state as far as possible (the party was short of trained personnel), key party officials taking over important government posts, such as mayorships. The party had been organized under 19 Reichsleiter, 41 Gauleiter (40

Gaue or regions in Germany, and one for Germans abroad), 808 Kreisleiter, 28,376 Ortsgruppenleiter, and 89,378 Zellenleiter. (Leiter = leader; Kreis = circle; Ort = district; Zell = cell).

7. 30th June-2nd July 1934, the Night of the Long Knives or the Great Blood Purge. Officially, 76 conspirators, who had plotted with a foreign power to overthrow the regime, were killed. Hitler admitted acting illegally, but claimed to have done so in order to save Germany. After the Night, Hitler was clearly the sole source of law, and the state was without a true legal basis. The likely fate of anyone who dared to oppose Hitler was clear to see.

In fact, Hitler had eliminated those who challenged his power, both inside and outside the party. Above all, Röhm, head of the powerful 3 million strong SA, and with strong socialist inclinations, was killed, and the SA destroyed as an effective force. Gregor Strasser, another Nazi socialist, was killed. Schleicher, associated with the conservative militarists, was shot, as was Erich Klausener, leader of Catholic Action. Vice-Chancellor von Papen was under house-arrest for 4 days, and two of his assistants were shot. Probably over 1,000 were killed.

The Night was in large part a response to Blomberg (Minister of War) informing Hitler on 21st June 1934 that he, Hitler, would have to end the SA threat or the President would declare martial law and leave matters to the army. The SA had become very rowdy, uncontrolled and unpopular.

8. In August 1934, on Hindenburg's death, Hitler refused the title of President, instead asking to be Führer, a title probably suggested by the journalist Dietrich Eckart. A plebiscite approved Hitler's move, with 38,000,000 for and 4,500,000 against. Hitler inherited the President's control of the army, but, in addition, the army had to swear an oath of "unconditional obedience" to Hitler as "supreme commander".

9. "At last someone ruled in Berlin. The gangster sat in the managing director's chair". (A.J.P. Taylor) "The law and the will of the Führer are one." (Goering)

C. Administrative control: the Civil Service Law, April 1933. Non-Aryans and those who would not "act at all times unreservedly for the national state" could be dismissed. By 1938, the civil service had been "cleansed", and many were in "protective custody" in concentration camps. The same law was applied to lawyers, teachers, police, hospital staff and other semi-public employees. In general, people kept quiet in order to preserve their jobs.

D. Legal changes.

1. The legal system was changed, to replace protection of the individual by protection of the state.

2. On 28th February 1933, following the Reichstag fire, the Decree for the Protection of the People and State suspended constitutional guarantees; for example, anyone considered a threat could be detained for up to 3 months without trial.

3. In March 1933, the first concentration camp was set up, at Dachau outside Munich, followed later in March by Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg, outside Berlin. By October 1933, 26,000 were in "protective custody". By 1939, there were six main camps in Germany (Buchenwald, Dachau, Flossenbürg, Papenburg, Ravensbruck -for women, and Sachsenhausen) with others, such as Mauthausen near Linz, in Austria and Czechoslovakia. Gestapo records show that, in 1939, there were 27,367 political prisoners in Germany (although total prisoners numbered 162,734, mostly in Austria and Czechoslovakia) and 112,432 had been sentenced for political offences since 1933.

4. In April 1933, the Gestapo (Geheime Staatspolizei, the Secret Police) was organized. In January 1938, the Gestapo was freed from all judicial and administrative

interference, although the Army remained immune until the July 1944 Bomb Plot to assassinate Hitler.

5. In May 1934, People's Courts were set up to try cases of treason, which was given wide definition. Proceedings were secret and there was no appeal, except to Hitler. Some judges preserved a degree of justice until 1943, when the Ministry of Justice was reorganized and judges before trials were to consult the Nazi authorities about verdicts and sentences! By 1945, the SS was hanging people from lamp-posts. Roland Freisler, the President of the People's Courts, was merciless and comparable to Andrei Vyshinsky, the chief prosecutor in Stalin's Russia.

E. Propaganda.

1. "Is it possible to eradicate ideas by force of arms?" (Hitler in *Mein Kampf*). The importance attached by the Nazis to propaganda was seen clearly by the 1920 purchase of the *Völkischer Beobachter* (*National Observer*), and the setting up of the *weekly Illustrierter Beobachter* (*Illustrated Observer*).

2. March 1933 brought the establishment of the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda (Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda), headed by the highly capable and fanatical Josef Goebbels (who opposed the word Propaganda, but gave in to Hitler's insistence). Goebbels never had full control over the dissemination of information. He made skilful use of films, radio and posters, as well as newspapers and mass meetings. Eventually, death was the penalty for listening to the BBC.

3. October 1933, the Editors' Law banned newspapers from publishing anything that would "mislead the public". In 1932, Germany had 4,703 daily or weekly papers, but after 1933, these disappeared or came under the control of the Nazi Max Amann. For some time, those with an international readership retained a degree of freedom, notably the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, which was suppressed only 1943.

4. Various associations were established or taken over to instil Nazi ideas. The **Hitler Youth** (for boys) and the **Bund deutscher Mädchen** (for girls) were set up under Baldur von Schirach. There were also: the Nazi Schoolchildren's League, the Nazi Students' League, the Nazi Teachers' Association, the Order of German Women, and unions for Nazi Lawyers and physicians.

5. Hitler and Goebbels were considerable orators, although after 1940, Hitler was seldom seen in public. Nazism, before and after 1933, was given the trappings and pageantry of religion, and religious words and ideas were widely used. Massive rallies were organized, especially the Nuremberg rallies, cleverly arranged for after work, when people were tired, and ending after the cafes had shut, so that there would be less discussion. Rousing songs, such as the **Horst Wessel Song**, about a Nazi killed in action in 1931, helped to set the mood.

6. May 1933, all trade unions were abolished and replaced by the German Labour Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront - DAF) under Dr. Robert Ley, who had the power to settle disputes.

7. Control of education and religion.

Religion was, and remained, a powerful source of opposition to the Nazis, although there were the German Christians, who supported Nazism. For example, before 1933, Catholics had been advised not to join the Nazi Party. Hitler moved cautiously against the Churches, despite advice from Alfred Rosenberg and others, and despite his own contempt for Christianity. He had been brought up as a Catholic and knew the power of religion. For example, Church opposition was able to end the euthanasia programme in 1941.

Seven stages of penalty were established (with Gestapo agents in the congregations): warning, fine, prohibition to preach, exile from parish, order to cease all clerical activity, short-term arrest (in a concentration camp), long-term arrest. In July 1938, the Student Christian Movement was banned. In July 1939, clergymen and those closely connected with a Church were banned from the Party.

Those who protested too loudly were quietly removed, to avoid martyrs. Perhaps 5,000 Catholic clergymen ended up in camps (2,000 of them dying), as did almost as many Protestant pastors. For example, Monsignor Bernhard **Lichtenberg** of St. Hedwig's Cathedral in Berlin died in 1943 after 2 years in custody; Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hanged in Flossenbürg camp a few days before the end of the war; Pastor Martin **Niemöller** survived in Sachsenhausen.

In 1944, papers were told to replace "God" with "Providence". Julius Streicher's paper *Der Stürmer* printed more and more scurrilous references to Christ and Christianity. Factories had "worship rooms", with party symbols, and attempts were made to revive old German paganism. However, the army retained chaplains right up to the end.

Protestants. There was the Lutheran tradition of obedience to the state, and, unlike, Catholic priests, pastors had their families to think of. Nazi plans to unite the 29 Protestant groups into one more easily controlled unit under a Bishop, appointed by the Führer, prompted the Protestants to unite in July 1933 into the German Evangelical Church Union under Pastor Dr. Friedrich von Bodelschwingh. Dr. Ludwig Müller, Nazi chaplain and friend of Hitler, anxious to be made national bishop, refused, with other German Christians (about 3,000 out of 17,000 pastors) to accept Bodelschwingh's authority. Thanks to Hindenburg, a compromise was arranged, whereby the Reichsbishop was to be elected by a national synod. Owing to government aid (press, radio), Müller won the elections, which were held in Wittenberg, and became Reichsbishop. However, in September 1935, Hitler deprived Müller of his power, and put the Protestant Church under a Minister for Church Affairs, Hans Kerrl. Many pastors were arrested (Niemöller was freed in 1938 by a court after one year in prison, but was promptly rearrested, without any new charge.)

Catholics. In July 1933, Hitler arranged a new Concordat with Pius XI (Pope 1922-39), replacing the three existing ones (with Prussia, Bavaria and Baden). The clergy were not to participate in Reich politics, and appointments were to be made only after consultation with the government; in return, Catholic schools and groups were to be left alone. However, friction increased, Catholic institutions were closed down and many priests, monks and nuns were arrested.

There has been much debate about whether the Churches, especially the Catholic Church, could have done more. The greatest debate is about Pope Pius XII (1939-58). There was always the danger that too outspoken an opposition would be counter-productive; for example, the Dutch Churches secured a reprieve for Jews in mixed marriages, until the Archbishop of Utrecht, in church, denounced Nazi deportations. The Roman Catholic Church saved 860,000 Jews in monasteries, more than all the other Churches together.

F. The armed forces.

1. **In 1933, army leaders like Ludwig Beck and Erich von Manstein were won over by the belief that Hitler had saved Germany from civil war and by his apparent moderation.** Then they were won over by rearmament ("Hitler had opened the toy-cupboard", Alan Clark in *Barbarossa*), which until the winter of 1937-38 was defensive in nature, and by Hitler's restoration of German prestige. Hitler's Night of the Long Knives in 1934 (see below, H4) was partly an attempt to keep the military happy by removing the SA, which challenged the power of the army. In August 1934, on Hindenburg's death, Hitler as Führer inherited the presidential position of head of the armed forces, but he considered this inadequate, and made all soldiers take an oath of loyalty to him.

2. **In 1938, Hitler appointed sycophants to key posts.** General Werner von **Fritsch**, the Commander-in-Chief from 1934, was accused unjustly of homosexuality and

replaced by the weak Walther von **Brauchitsch**, although the army was able to reject Walter von Reichenau, who was too Nazi for their liking. Werner von **Blomberg**, the Minister of War appointed by Hindenburg in January 1933, was replaced by the **Army High Command** (OKW Oberkommandowehrmacht) under Hitler; this followed the revelation that his new bride had once been a prostitute. (Fritsch died in battle in Poland 1939. Blomberg died of cancer in 1945 in a US prisoner-of-war camp.) 16 high and 44 other generals, who, like Fritsch and Blomberg, had stood up to Hitler, were replaced.

3. **In 1938, army leaders led by General Ludwig Beck**, alarmed by Hitler's Czech plans, prepared to overthrow Hitler, but the plans came to nothing, when Chamberlain negotiated the Munich Agreement. (See below, VIII.F.)

4. **In December 1941, following the failure to capture Moscow**, Hitler personally took over command of the army in the field.

5. **After the July 1944 Bomb Plot**, the army was brought wholly under control. All soldiers had to adopt the Nazi salute and insignia, and lost immunity from the Gestapo. Hundreds of officers were arrested and many executed, some, like Field Marshal von Witzleben, strung up on a butcher's hook and strangled with piano-wire, with the execution filmed for Hitler to watch at Berchtesgaden.

G. Economic control.

1. **In May 1933, trade unions were abolished and replaced by the German Labour Front** (Deutsche Arbeitsfront, DAF) under Dr. Robert Ley. 13 labour trustees were appointed to maintain industrial peace, with power to fix wages, check dismissals and oust inefficient or inconsiderate employers. Lockouts and employers' associations were banned.

In July 1933, Hitler decided against interference in private businesses, and Nazi supervisors, who had been appointed to co-ordinate large industries and remove "objectionable" elements, were gradually removed. Hitler had quickly realized that the employers posed no threat to him and could not and would not oppose his wishes.

2. **Many workers were won over by the provision of work and by the "Kraft durch Freude"** ("Strength through Joy") Organization, established in January 1934 to provide recreational and educational facilities for workers.

H. Violence.

1. **Initially, the main instrument of violence was the SA** (Sturm Abteilung, the Storm Division), which protected Nazi meetings and leaders, and generally intimidated the opposition. These "**Brownshirts**" were begun by Ernst Röhm in 1920 as the "Gymnastic and Sports Division", a successful ploy to prevent the government of the day from disbanding it. The organization was officially founded in August 1921, with the name SA being adopted in October 1921. The SA was often connived at by the authorities, as the bastion against Communism.

Röhm, a tough, scar-faced soldier-of-fortune, who had great organizing ability, had joined the Nazi Party before Hitler. In 1925, he had quarrelled with Hitler and gone to Bolivia. However, Captain Franz Pfeffer von Salomon, who had taken over, had not been a success, and in 1930, at Hitler's request, Röhm returned and resumed leadership. In 1929, there had been about 60,000 members, but it swelled to 300,000 by 1933, and over 3,000,000 by 1934, although perhaps only 1,000,000 were active members. The SA was destroyed as an effective force in the Night of the Long Knives. (see 4 below)

2. **After 1934, the functions of the SA were taken over by the SS** (Schutzstaffel, the protection squad, the Blackshirts or Order of the Death's Head, from their

insignia). Originally set up in 1920 as Hitler's bodyguard, they were officially organized in 1925, with the name SS. In 1929, Heinrich Himmler, a poultry-farmer from near Munich, took over leadership of the 200 or so men from Erhard Heiden, and quickly transformed the SS into a large, disciplined and reliable force. By 1944, there were about 1,000,000 in the SS, which, with the Gestapo, was the main means of intimidation. Himmler's SS had various branches (police work, intelligence, camps, military).

3. **The Gestapo (Secret Police).** This force was set up by Goering in April 1933, but in April 1934 came under Himmler's control.

4. **"The Night of the Long Knives" (the name was apparently coined by Walter Funk, and used by Hitler), or the "Great Blood Purge", Operation Hummingbird, 30th June-2nd July 1934.**

Hitler, Goebbels and five carloads of SS men drove from Munich to Wiessee, where Ernst Röhm, Edmund Heines and other SA leaders were having a conference and get-together. Some were shot on the spot, while Röhm was taken to Munich and shot, having refused to commit suicide. In Berlin, under Goering's direction, the political opposition was dealt with. Erich Klausener, leader of the Rhenish Catholic Party, was shot while working at his desk. Kurt von Schleicher, associated with conservative militarists, was shot dead at home, along with his wife. Gregor Strasser, who had left the Nazi Party 1932 and headed a socialist oriented group, was executed after a summary trial. The Vice-Chancellor, Franz von Papen, associated with the Catholic Centre Party, was under house-arrest for 4 days, his office was wrecked, and two of his assistants were shot.

Officially, 76 conspirators had been killed, having worked for months, with the aid of a foreign power, to overthrow the regime and seize power. In fact, many more were killed, probably over 1,000, as Hitler removed all those who might challenge him. Especially dangerous had been the SA, which was larger than the army, and was disappointed at its lack of influence and Hitler's failure to introduce social reforms.

The Night highlights the brutal intimidation to which German people could be subject. After the Night, Hitler was clearly the sole source of law.

J. Resistance.

1. **This grew** as the Nazi regime revealed its true colours, and success turned to failure. Apart from the Church and the armed forces, there were courageous individuals, but the effectiveness of the Gestapo and intimidation meant that few people resisted.

2. **In November 1939, a bomb killed 8** in the Löwenbräu (formerly the Bürgerbräu) Inn in Munich, but missed Hitler as he had left early. Georg Elser, a Communist carpenter, was arrested and sent to Dachau, where he died in 1945.

3. **In February 1943, the brother and sister Hans and Sophie Scholl, at Munich University, circulated the "White Rose" letter calling for the end of the war and the end of the Nazi regime.** Following anti-Nazi student demonstrations, they and other student leaders were guillotined, the usual Nazi method. Sophie's interrogation had been so rough that she appeared in court with a broken leg.

4. **In July 1944 Colonel Claus, Graf (Count) von Stauffenberg and other military plotters narrowly failed in their attempt to blow Hitler up at his headquarters "Wolf's Lair" in Poland.** Himmler had apparently been aware of the plot but had decided that it might be better if Hitler was removed. 10,000 were tried after the Plot, most being executed. This was not the only attempt by the military to assassinate Hitler, but the Führer seemed to have a charmed life.

5. **Kurt Gerstein joined the SS** to do what he could to sabotage it from the inside, especially by passing on information. By mistake, he was hanged for war crimes by the victorious Allies.

VI. **The economy under Hitler** (nb. Until 1939, there was a general improvement in living standards.)

A. **The original programme.**

Nazism was a movement, rather than a party with one fixed programme.

Peasants hoped for the break-up of the large estates. Shopkeepers and tradesmen hoped for protection against chains and department stores. Industrialists wanted stability and the containment of socialism and communism. Urban workers were not generally Nazi, but Ernst Röhm and Gregor Strasser were socialist-inclined and wanted nationalization, profit-sharing, and pension and other improvements. Hitler himself was not interested in economics, except in as far as it helped him gain power, and then rearm Germany and make it a great power. He did not believe in economic means to achieve his political objectives, but by 1939, Eastern Europe was economically dominated by Germany.

B. Efforts to end the depression; these came to be called the First 4 Year Plan, although there was no overall plan.

1. **Hitler was interested in German political resurgence**, which he believed would restore the German economy. Immediately on gaining power, he increased military expenditure to 1,900,000,000 Reichsmarks (up from 800,000,000 in 1932). However, he was aware that high unemployment was politically unwise and asserted: "There is only one problem which absorbs all my attention. How to reduce unemployment."

2. **In general, at least at first, Hitler left economics to Hjalmar Schacht, President of the Reichsbank from May 1933 and Minister of Economics from August 1934.** (Schacht later disagreed with Hitler's policies, resigning as Minister in December 1937 and Bank President January 1939. Subsequently he was put into a concentration camp. Walther Funk became Economics Minister.)

3. **Schacht continued the measures begun under Chancellors von Papen and von Schleicher to stimulate production and reduce unemployment by government spending** (in what was an early experiment in what came to be called Keynesian economics). These measures, which came to be known as the First Four-Year Plan, were largely the work of Dr. Hans Luther, Reichsbank President from 1923. Schacht's innovation was to provide vast sums of government money. Thus, in 1933, 500,000,000 Reichsmarks were provided for housing; public buildings (town halls, schools, post offices) were constructed; and plans for the construction of 7,000 km. of motorways were laid. Tax concessions were made (for example, to companies engaged in developing new processes; to companies employing more people, or reinvesting their profits). Protective measures were undertaken to help German industry. Schacht was also a master at arranging barter deals with other countries. Hours of work were reduced to a maximum of 40 per week, and the employment of married women was discouraged. In January 1933, the Voluntary Labour Service had been set up, providing food and keep in return for land improvement work; by June 1933 it had 500,000 participants and by June 1934 800,000.

4. **Schacht also supported Hitler's rearmament**, as he was a nationalist, and rearmament would create work. (Later he condemned Hitler's rearmament as economically suicidal, and opposed war.) Schacht disapproved of measures taken by Goering, Streicher and others against Jewish businesses. In any case, boycotts of Jewish shops and businesses, and the dismissal of Jews would have little economic impact, as Jews were only 600,000 in number (just under 1% of the population).

5. **By 1933, the measures taken by Schacht's predecessors were just beginning to bite**, but Hitler and Schacht of course got the credit. Unemployment (out of a total working population of 25,000,000) fell from perhaps 7,500,000 in December 1932 to 6,000,000 in January 1933, between 3,700,000 and 5,470,000 according to source in September 1933, 2,300,000 in September 1934, 1,800,000 in September 1935, 1,100,000 in September 1936, 500,000 September 1937, and 200,000 by September 1938. From 1936, Germany was faced with a labour shortage; permission was needed in order to take on more workers, and eventually conscription was imposed for nationally important jobs. The labour shortage became more acute during the war, and eventually about 7,000,000 foreign workers were drafted into Germany for all sorts of work, from architects down to servants. With full employment came rising wages, accompanied by growing absenteeism, and inflation.

6. **Rearmament:** In 1933, there was a reorganization of the defence system to create a framework for later expansion. By October 1934, there were 240,000 in the army. Open conscription was decreed in March 1935, and there were 550,000 in the army by September 1938. The 80 planes of 1933 had become about 3,000 by 1939. There was also a naval construction programme, especially of surface ships.

C. 1936, introduction of the Four Year Plan for autarky and a war economy, often called the 2nd Four Year Plan.

1. **"In 4 years, Germany must be entirely independent of foreign countries** with respect to all those materials which can in any way be produced through German capability through German chemistry, or by our machine and mining industries." (Hitler). Hitler was aware of the importance of the blockade of Germany during the First World War.

2. **Goering was put in charge of the Plan**, partly because of Hitler's principle of having his lieutenants competing with each other, and partly because he was increasingly at odds with Schacht. Schacht opposed further rearmament, and considered that plans for autarky would ruin the German economy and invite foreign retaliation.

3. **By 1941, Germany was self-sufficient in food**, except for oil and fats, but was not as successful with regard to industry, although sufficient rubber was produced synthetically, and some oil was produced from coal. Most oil and 75% of iron ore had to be imported.

4. **The Plan** : made Germany "the land of substitutes" (for example, "ersatz" or substitute coffee was produced from acorns).
: was uneconomic. It generally meant higher prices and required greater manpower than for imported goods. It also reduced the amount Germany could export, which consequently reduced the foreign exchange available for imports.

5. **Despite the Plan, Germany was not on a full "War Economy"**. Goering's slogan was "Guns before Butter", but, in fact, Germany was producing "guns **AND** butter". German rearmament was in width, not, as in Britain, in depth; Britain was preparing for a total war, with all production geared to the war effort.

D. Financing government expenditure.

1. **The Reichsbank was constitutionally unable to guarantee government debts, so Schacht set up a fictitious company, Metallforschungsgesellschaft AG** (Metal Research), which issued credit notes discounted by the Reichsbank (that is, accepted by and backed by the Bank, so that the Mefo Bills could be used as security for a loan, or passed on in payment). In 1934 and 1935, Mefo Bills financed 50% of rearmament; thereafter, more came from taxation, as Germany recovered, but, between 1934 and 1939, 20% of rearmament was financed by Mefo Bills. Schacht had intended eventually to buy back the Mefo Bills, mainly to prevent inflation, but this never transpired because of Hitler's opposition and Schacht's fall from favour.

2. **Schacht also** : imposed a unilateral moratorium on foreign debts;
: perfected the system of controls on foreign exchange and imports developed by Hans Luther, his predecessor as Finance Minister;
: arranged barter deals with Eastern Europe and Latin America. Germany was short of foreign exchange, but raw materials were gained in exchange for finished products. As the finished products were usually delivered long after the raw materials, Germany in effect had an interest-free loan.

3. **Goering financed the War Economy by:**
Taxes
Expropriation of property held by Jews and Catholic monastic orders and societies (especially in Austria).
Special levies deducting 35-40% profits of large corporations.
Increased taxes on bachelors, spinsters and childless couples.

Floating loans, which were generally heavily subscribed to.

4. Acquisition of the assets of areas taken over. For example, the Anschluss with Austria in 1938 brought the Austrian gold and other reserves, which not only wiped out the German deficit but left 140,000,000 Reichsmarks for raw materials. Also acquired were Austrian and Czech industries, such as the Skoda engineering works in Czechoslovakia.

E. State control, to the outbreak of war in 1939.

1. On 2nd May 1933, trade unions were abolished, as being against the interests of the state. In 1933 and 1934 lock-outs and employers' associations were forbidden. However, in July 1933, Hitler warned against interference in private business, and Nazi supervisors, who had been appointed to co-ordinate large industries and deal with "objectionable elements", were removed. Big business and labour were controlled by the **German Labour Front** (Deutsche Arbeitsfront, DAF), set up 11th May 1933, under Dr. Robert Ley, to indoctrinate and to arbitrate in labour disputes; 13 labour trustees were appointed to maintain industrial peace, with power to fix wages, check dismissals, and oust inefficient or inconsiderate employers. In the event, few appeals were made to the DAF.

2. The hopes of the more socialist inclined Nazis for nationalization came to nothing, and Gregor Strasser and Ernst Röhm, leaders of the socialist wing, were killed in 1934 in the Night of the Long Knives. Big business, which in the early years had never been too keen on Hitler, came to appreciate the economic recovery and expansion, as well as the stability that accompanied Nazism, and threw in their lot with Hitler. For his part, Hitler concluded that big business would be loyal without being taken over. However, the leaders of the steel industry proved insufficiently subservient, and steel was virtually nationalized in the Hermann Goering Works. Krupp, IG Farben, Siemens, and other German companies prospered in the 1930s. Business relied on the government and in the final analysis could not ignore government wishes.

3. Government regulations and control increased as labour became short. Thus in 1936, companies needed government permission to take on more workers, and in 1938 workers were drafted to nationally important jobs.

F. An estimate to 1939.

1. Industrial workers were better off. Not only did they have work, but wages rose and the "**Kraft durch Freude**" ("Strength through Joy") Organisation provided educational and recreational facilities. An attempt was made to reduce class differences; for example, there was to be one canteen for management and workers, and all were to wear similar uniform at work. Much was made of "the Beauty of Work", and work places were made more attractive. Up to 1935, each business employing more than 20 people had to have a council, elected by the workers, to advise on business, conditions and efficiency. Workers were called "followers" and management were "leaders".

2. Agriculture. Despite early promises, the large estates were not broken up, as the Nazis realized that large estates were more efficient, and they were unwilling to lose Junker support. To further this end, the Minister of Agriculture, Richard Darr,, hoped to establish an Aryan farmer aristocracy. To this end, in September 1933, the Hereditary Farm Law established that farms of fewer than 309 acres had to pass on intact to one heir. He established nationwide marketing organizations, which checked quality and decided on prices. Farmers were helped by protective tariffs and by government subsidies. However, wages and profits were lower than in industry, and there was a flight to the towns, possibly by 1,000,000 people between 1933 and 1938.

3. **Shopkeepers and artisans.** By the May 1933 Law for the Protection of the Retail Trade, chains were not allowed to increase their number of outlets, and were not to have bakers, barbers, and shoe repairers. Department stores were not allowed to expand. A 1935 law decreed that artisans had to pass a Master's examination set by the local guild.

4. **Between 1933 and 1939** champagne sales increased fivefold, wine sales doubled and beer sales increased by a quarter. Shortly before war began in 1939, Germans were ordering and paying for the new Volkswagen (People's Car), even though they were not given a delivery date.

However, increasingly, Hitler's rearmament and autarky meant that there were few goods available for people to buy, although they had the money. Promises of pension and other improvements in social security came to nothing. Workers and employers also lost the democratic right to form associations.

5. **Schacht feared, probably correctly, that Hitler's policies were leading to a return of 1923-style hyper-inflation and economic chaos.** In the event, war began, and this probably saved the economy, at least temporarily.

6. **There was little Gleichschaltung** (co-ordination), but rather much chaos.

G. The economy in wartime.

1. **From 1939 to December 1941, there was a Blitzkrieg Economy of "guns and butter", that is, no all-out effort.**

As before, there was the usual Hitler system of ad hoc committees established for specific purposes, with a tendency to duplicate and encroach. For example, the **Todt Organization** competed with the Four-Year Plan; Fritz Todt's Organization had originally been set up to construct the motorways, after which Todt, an efficient administrator, had been given other tasks.

Attempts were made to bring greater efficiency. In February 1940, Todt was made Inspector General for Special Tasks in the Four-Year Plan, with the special task of seeking economies in the use of metal in the arms industry. In March 1940, Todt was elevated to the new post of Reich Rüstungsminister (Minister for Arms and Munitions). He had limited powers and yet, not only did he increase production, but he cut costs: For example, he made fixed price contracts, replacing the previous system of contracts, where manufacturers were guaranteed a profit of between 3% and 6% of production costs, despite the fact that this was an obvious incentive for manufacturers to increase their costs.

2. **In January 1942, the first moves were made towards a full war economy.**

The Soviet recapture of Rostov on the River Don in December 1941 prompted Goebbels and others to press for total war.

Consequently, in January 1942, Todt's powers were increased. Then, in February 1942, Todt was killed in a plane-crash and was succeeded by the even more able Albert Speer. In April 1942, Speer managed to secure the establishment of a Central Planning Board for the allocation of resources. In May 1942, he won control of army munitions production, in June 1943 of naval construction, and eventually and after great difficulty, air construction in June 1944. He worked to make the most effective use of plants, for example, transferring workers to plants that were undermanned, instead of building new plants or rebuilding damaged ones. He tried to standardize as much of the equipment for the army, navy and airforce as was possible. Despite increasing bombing raids and destruction (which Speer called the "second front"), he managed to increase production (for example, between February and July 1942, by 55%).

3. In January 1943 Hitler established a Committee of Three to organize total war. The three members were Martin Bormann, Party Secretary; Hans Lammers, Chief of the Reich Chancery; and Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, Chief of Staff of the Armed forces.

However, progress was slow. In October 1943, Speer attacked the continued production of consumer goods (for example, in 1943, 4,800 tons of hair tonic and 12,000 tons of wallpaper). Admittedly, in 1943 Germany spent 61% GNP on the war effort, while Britain spent 63%, but Britain by this time had a long lead.

4. A major problem was the shortage of workers. Fritz Sauckel was put in charge of the conscription of foreign workers. By 1944, the workforce comprised 13,000,000 German men, 14,500,000 German women (in January 1943, Hitler reluctantly agreed in principle to the conscription of women workers) and 7,500,000 foreigners (who often sabotaged production). Concentration camp labour was provided to German companies, which consequently made increased profits (often put into Swiss banks by shrewd businessmen); the average life-expectancy of concentration camp slave labour was 6 months, when overwork and malnutrition took their toll. Himmler established the SS Economic Administration (headed by Obergruppenführer Oswald Pohl), which set up factories using camp labour (for example, Mauthausen and Nordhausen).

5. Occupied countries provided: forced labour; raw materials and goods (food shortages occurred in Germany only under the Allies in 1945, as the Reich was supplied while the suppliers starved); and "occupations costs" (France paid most, some 20,000,000 Reichsmarks per day).

6. Speer opposed the Führer Command of September 1944 for Scorched Earth (*Zerstörung*) and May 1945 for total destruction, instead implementing a policy of paralysis (*Lähmung*), that is, destroying or hiding a key component in a plant, so that production could easily be resumed. Speer reasoned that with peace, Germany would have to produce again to prevent starvation.

VII. Society.

1. The Nazis attempted, by means of propaganda and force, to remould society and the Volksgemeinschaft (national community), which had been corroded, they believed, by pernicious ideas of liberal democracy and by biological decline.

The campaign against **Gemeinschaftsfremde** (those alien to the community) had three main targets: those with "false" ideologies, such as pacifists, socialists, asocials (drunks, homosexuals, prostitutes, tramps, the work-shy), whose behaviour offended national norms; biological outsiders, such as the 30,000 Gypsies, 560,000 Jews (there were about 16,000,000 Jews in the world 1939); and those with mental and/or physical defects. (The idea of eugenics, that is, of improving the "race" was widely popular in the 1920s; the First World War had destroyed the healthiest, welfare meant that the weaker were surviving, and the post-war depression brought a desire for economy, including a reduction in the number of people who were a burden on society.)

Jews, it was claimed (especially by Alfred Rosenberg, the ideologist of Nazism, and Julius Streicher, editor of the Nuremberg newspaper, *Der Stürmer (the Storm Trooper)*, were the chief threat. Jews had their own Volk (meaning "people", in the sense of race), were urban and unimaginative, had only whatever culture they could borrow, and selected facts to suit their arguments. Jews were considered responsible for most of the modern crime and corruption, the decline of Germany, the root of all evil generally, and one reason for Germany's defeat 1914-18.

Jews were also suspect because of their ties with Marxism, "the Jewish doctrine of Marxism" (Hitler, in *Mein Kampf*), if only because Marx, Trotsky and many other leading Marxists had Jewish origins. The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were apparently taken at face value. The *Protocols* were presented in 1903 by one Sergei Nilus to Tsar Nicholas II, who rejected them, but thereafter they became widely known. They were allegedly written at the 1897 Basle International Judaic conference, and indicated Jewish plans to take over the world. It would seem, however, that the original appeared in French, at least as early as 1884, and was connected with the Masonic Order. Certain ideas in the *Protocols* are clearly not Jewish; for example, the reference to a "King of the blood of Sion", although kings are not a Jewish concept.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler called for "defence measures" against the Jews, adding that, "if 12,000 or 15,000 of these Jews who were corrupting the nation had been forced to submit to poison gas, then the millions of sacrifices made at the front would not have been made in vain." Oddly, he remained grateful to the Jewish doctor who had treated his dying mother (with a gas remedy) and in private, did not make much of racial theories, while admitting that they were useful. In the early days, he distanced himself from the anti-Semitic Nazi elements; the Jews were important economically, he had many other problems, and anti-Semitism was not especially popular, and would be bad for the German image abroad. In 1935, Hitler, in fact, adopted the most moderate proposals put forward and eventually enshrined in the Nuremberg Laws. Norman Stone, in his book, *Hitler*, points out that there is documentary evidence only from October 1943 that Hitler knew about the extermination programme, but it seems certain that he ordered the destruction of the Jews and Gypsies in 1941.

2. Nazism extolled 19th century middle-class society and a mythical rural golden age of happy, healthy peasants, and tried to re-establish such societies. Nazis were expected to be puritanical, moderate in all things, modest; beauty meant being natural (make-up was discouraged) and healthy (much was made of sport, and great preparations were made for the 1936 Olympic Games held in Berlin); the nobility of work was lauded. For one reason or the other, the crime rate went down after 1933 (although suicides increased).

3. Nazi violence and intimidation. This was always present, but, until 1941, tended to be kept in the background.

4. Education and culture. Hitler considered that there was an excess of knowledge in education. Consequently, character-building and physical fitness were stressed, and emphasis placed on "instinct and will". In education, as elsewhere, emphasis was also placed on political reliability, rather than talent. University graduates had to pass an athletics test, and do manual work for one year. The only elite to be allowed was the party elite, and special schools were set up to train such an elite, for example, NAPOLA (the National Political Educational Establishment), and the Adolf Hitler Schools.

As in the USSR, musicians and artists were expected to promote standards acceptable to the party, to have a social purpose and to illustrate party ideals. Thus, for example, the peasant and the family were popular themes. In music, jazz and modern dances were condemned as incitements to sexual promiscuity, and as being associated with American Negroes.

Not surprisingly, there were many "artists" among the refugees from Hitler's Germany, for example, Walter Gropius, the architect; Otto Klemperer, the conductor; and Thomas Mann, the writer. Standards in the sciences and the arts declined, and, as Winston Churchill put it, Germany experienced a new Dark Age.

5. Women and the family.

Hitler and the Nazis adhered to the traditional idea of the role of women being **the "three Ks"- Kirche, Kinder und Küche** (kirk, kids, and kitchen). Women were expected to run a home, and not work for money, or become involved in politics. Limits to women working included their being barred in 1936 from legal posts. As the labour shortage grew, inroads were made on the principle of women staying in the home. Early marriage and large (Aryan) families

were encouraged, for example, by means of allowances and tax concessions, as well as by propaganda; in 1938, there began the Honour Cross of the German Mother, for services in child-bearing.

The Nazis also established the **Lebensborn** (Source of Life) Institutions, which were technically maternity clinics and orphanages, but were also human stud farms for ardent Nazis to procreate large numbers of Aryans.

6. **Equality.** In theory, Nazis believed in a classless society, in so far as all people had a contribution - which admittedly varied in size - to make to the community, whose good was the overriding concern. The widespread wearing of uniforms, the practice of one canteen for both management and workers, and even a uniform Nazi funeral, were all attempts at social levelling and an attempt to bridge the gap between the classes. In practice, there remained the new elite of the Nazi party "leaders" (nb. not "bosses").

7. **Religion.** Hitler, although he had been confirmed as a Catholic, had little time for Christianity, believing instead in Providence, and, like Himmler and other Nazi leaders, in astrology. There was also much interest in the old Germanic religions, and Hitler's funeral pyre was in the old Germanic tradition. Attempts were made to replace Christ, for example, in the school lunch prayer: "Führer, my Führer, bequeathed to me by the Lord, protect and preserve me as long as I live. Thou hast rescued Germany. I thank thee today for my daily bread." Finally, in 1944, newspapers were told to replace the word God with Providence. Even so, Hitler was aware of the general religious belief among Germans, and chaplains were allowed within the armed forces right to the end of the war.

8. **Sterilization and euthanasia campaigns.**

In 1920, the distinguished jurist Karl Binding and the psychiatrist Alfred Roche produced a book advancing the idea that the state should have the power to kill the incurable and severely handicapped.

In July 1933, the Nazis, despite Hindenburg's objections, imposed a sterilization law for a number of specific (hereditary) illnesses. Between 1932 and 1945, some 320,000 to 350,000 Germans were compulsorily sterilized, with about 100 dying during, or soon after, the operation.

In the spring or early summer of 1939 (it is not clear exactly when), a euthanasia programme for the young was quietly begun, allegedly after a request to Hitler by the parent of a severely handicapped child. In August 1939, Hitler ordered the extension of the programme to adults, by means of gas-chambers in 6 mental hospitals. The programme was run by Philip **Bouhler**, and run from **T4** (No. 4, Tiergartenstrasse in Berlin). The programme was officially halted in August 1941 because of public protests, led by the Catholic Bishop of Munster, Count Galen; by this time, about 5,000 children and 72,000 adults had been killed.

9. **Gypsies.** Himmler admired pure Gypsies and proposed reservations, but he was opposed by Hitler and Bormann. The 1938 Decree for the Struggle against the Gypsy Plague brought systematic regulations for the persecution of Gypsies. Later, in what Gypsies call "**the Devouring**", Gypsies were deported to Poland, and from December 1942, to camps, or they were murdered by Einsatzgruppen (special task forces). By 1945, there were 5,000 German Gypsies left, out of about 30,000; about 500,000 non-German Gypsies were killed, out of about 4,000,000 in all Europe.

10. **Jewish policies, culminating in what Jews came to term the Holocaust.** . (nb. There was much anti-Semitism in Germany, as elsewhere in Europe. By Hitler's time, the number of German Jews had declined, as Jews increasingly became assimilated; Hitler's policies reversed this process!)

i. **In the 1930s, Hitler laid down no clear policy,** but the SS developed a policy of emigration, to be encouraged by intimidation.

ii. **Thus:**

The Law for the Restoration of the Civil Service, 7th April 1933, and subsequent laws and measures made it increasingly difficult for Jews to find work. The Association of German Booksellers and Publishers was ordered not to publish books by Jews, and most businesses were persuaded to dismiss Jewish employees. By 1937, about half the 560,000 German Jews had become unemployed.

In April and May 1933, Nazis organized bonfires in many German towns to destroy the works of about 150 writers, who were regarded as Jewish, pacifist, radical or liberal. Signs were put up in shops banning Jews, who increasingly found it hard to buy food. Jews were excluded from selling in markets, and boycotts of Jewish shops were organized.

The September 1933 Hereditary Farm Law established that heirs could inherit only if there was proof that there was no Jewish blood since 1880.

After a lull in 1934, the campaign recommenced, and, in September 1935, the **Nuremberg or Ghetto Laws** (officially Laws for the Protection of German Blood and Honour, written by Hans Pfundtner and Wilhelm Stuckert in Nuremberg, and passed by the Reichstag, which met in Nuremberg) deprived Jews of German citizenship and therefore political and other rights, and forbade marital and extra-marital relations between Jews and Aryans.

In June 1938, the synagogues in Munich, Nuremberg, Dortmund and other towns were destroyed on Hitler's orders, and 15,000 Jews sent to concentration camps. Even so, in July 1938, the international **Evian Conference**, called by President Roosevelt to try to help the German Jews, did nothing and this inaction, and some of the comments made there, only encouraged Hitler, as he concluded that most governments tacitly approved of the Nazi anti-Semitic measures.

In July 1938, Jews were barred from German schools, and from law, medicine, journalism and other professions. Jews were not to present plays or music by Aryans, and were not to perform before Aryans. Aryans were not to put on Jewish works.

In August 1938, all Jews with more than 5,000 Reichsmarks were to provide an inventory of their property, which might be used by the state in furtherance of the Four Year Plan. All Jews with non-Jewish names were to add Sarah or Israel to their name, and a list of "permissible" names was published. Large numbers were sent to "protective custody" in concentration camps.

9th-10th November 1938, the **Kristallnacht** (the Night of Broken Glass), as the Nazis called it. On 7th November 1938, a 17-year-old Polish Jew, Herschel Grynszpan, tried to assassinate the German ambassador in Paris, but got the Third Secretary. (Polish Jews in Germany had been dumped across the frontier by the Germans, until the Poles threatened to do the same for Germans in Poland. Herschel's father had been deported from Germany.) Hitler used the incident for more severe measures. All Jews were held responsible, and a collective fine of £130,000,000 was imposed on all Jews owning more than £700 worth of goods; the fine took the form of a levy of 20% of their property. Jews were barred from public places, such as parks and beaches. In "spontaneous" demonstrations, about 7,500 Jewish shops were looted, nearly 200 synagogues burnt, perhaps 200 Jews killed and 20,000 Jews arrested and sent to concentration camps.

iii. **By November 1938, about 150,000 Jews had emigrated.** Thereafter another 150,000 rapidly left. Jews were naturally reluctant to emigrate, and anyway, in the depression, it was hard for them to find anywhere to go; in addition, they could only take out 10 Reichsmarks (about \$5). Many went to Palestine, and as early as August 1933, the Haavara Agreement was made between the German Ministry of Economics and the Jewish Agency in Palestine; by this, Jews were allowed to take out half of their wealth, the rest being blocked in Germany until they reached Palestine, when the other half could be used to buy German goods.

iv. **The acquisition of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and elsewhere increased the number of Jews.** This, and war from 1939, made it impossible to contemplate the emigration of several million Jews. Jews were then herded into ghettos to die, but in July 1941, Hermann Goering authorized Reinhard Heydrich to make preparations for the **"Final Solution"** to the Jewish and Gypsy Problem (Operation Reinhard). The plans and details were revealed to

those who needed to know at **the Wannsee Conference in January 1942** and early 1942 saw the start of the murder/extermination of Jews and Gypsies. Ad hoc methods were used at first, such as shooting by Einsatzgruppen, or gassing with the fumes from lorries. Soon the more organized system of gas-chambers was set up, especially at the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp (modern Oswiecim in Poland). In Treblinka Camp in Poland, there was an 11-minute revolt, in which the Jews, with home-made knives, tried to break out; 180 Jews escaped (although only 78 survived), and 117 SS guards were killed, although subsequently 1,100 Jews were killed as a reprisal. Incredibly, 3,000-14,000 (according to source) Jews survived hidden in Berlin, where 1/3 pre-war Jews had lived. A further 5,000 survived a precarious existence married to Gentiles. Possibly in 1945, 28,000 Jews were left in Germany and Austria.

VIII. **Foreign Policy.** (See also the work on the Second World War.)

A. Goals.

1. The avenging of the humiliation of the First World War and the Versailles Settlement. The Settlement was to be overthrown, especially the limits placed on Germany's armed forces, and the Polish Corridor separating East Prussia from the rest of Germany.

2. The restoration of Germany's status as a great power. He hoped to make Germany the equal of the United States and the British Empire; to his successors would be left the task of making Germany the dominant power in the world.

3. The acquisition (with conquest the only means) of "Lebensraum" (living space) in the East, and the restoration of Germany's colonies. (In February 1939, he told the Reichstag he had "no territorial demands against England and France, apart from the return of the colonies".) He dreamed of large families, and a German population of 170,000,000 instead of the nearly 70,000,000 in the 1930s, settling in conquered territories in the East, where the Slavs would be allowed to die out.

4. The completion of the work of German unification begun by Frederick the Great (1740-86) and Otto von Bismarck (1862-90).

5. A limited war, or a series of limited wars, which would show clearly German superiority, but not a general war.

6. Defence against growing Soviet power and Communism, both of which Hitler believed were being used by Jews as a means to take over the world.

B. Factors.

1. How far was he an "intentionalist" (that is, had everything planned out) and how far a "functionalist" (that is, was an opportunist)?

There is no agreement among the experts as to how far Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, written in 1923 and 1924, was a blueprint. Hitler in 1936 described *Mein Kampf* as "fantasies from behind bars", and ordered the press not to quote from it without permission. In general outline, Hitler remained remarkably true to "Mein Kampf", notably expansion to the East, although he deviated, especially with regard to implementation: for example, in *Mein Kampf*, he wanted co-operation with Britain and opposed war on two fronts.

Hitler was clearly an opportunist and a gambler but there is no way of telling whether he would have risked war in 1939 had the circumstances not appeared favourable. For example, he had not invaded Austria in 1934, apparently because Mussolini had made it clear

that such a move would not be tolerated and had massed troops on the Brenner Pass border as a warning. Often, he seemed merely to be reacting to events, especially in the annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia in 1938 and 1939; in the case of Austria, the spontaneity is indicated by the way the German army had to fill up with petrol at Austrian garages and use maps from Baedeker guide books. He was not the man of iron he is often made out to be and was always very nervous before an adventure. His string of successes (and his survival of assassination attempts) seem to have convinced him that he was a man of destiny guided by Providence; he was thus like Napoleon, who had believed in what he called his "star", but Napoleon's fate should have been a warning.

2. How far was he a "continentalist" and how far a "globalist", that is, had aspirations outside Europe?

His *Second Book*, produced in 1928, dealing specifically with Foreign Policy, makes no mention of global aspirations. However, Hermann Rauschning's records, published in England in 1939, of Hitler's conversations in the years 1933 and 1934, quote the Führer as dreaming of acquiring the Dutch colonial empire, and incorporating Brazil and the United States into a "German World Empire" as part of the "recasting of the world". Rauschning was an early Nazi who turned against Hitler and became an emigré, but Trevor Roper concluded that he was "completely reliable". World ambitions are certainly suggested by Hitler's "Z Plan" of January 1939 for a huge fleet by 1944-46 of 800 ships, based on Trondheim in Norway and capable of challenging any power. However, Hitler was a great dreamer and in 1939, when he thought he had not long to live, could scarcely have contemplated world domination in his lifetime, although he presumably expected his Aryan heirs to complete his work, for which he would have laid the basis.

3. How far were his policies new?

In some ways, for example Anschluss with Austria and the acquisition of the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia, his foreign policy was a continuation of the German national unification undertaken by King Frederick II the Great (1762-86) and Otto von Bismarck (1862-1890), whom he greatly admired and whose portraits adorned his office and bunker. His method was also the same as theirs, namely war.

Weimar leaders had worked to overthrow Versailles. For example, Hans von Seeckt, in charge of the German army after 1918, in 1921 or thereabouts, arranged a secret deal with the Russians to evade the military terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Above all, there was Gustav Stresemann, Foreign Minister between 1923 and 1929, who was able by his peaceful policy of "Fulfilment" to reverse much of the Treaty of Versailles.

Fear of Russia and communism was not new.

To some experts, the Second World War was merely the second phase of a Second Thirty Years' War waged between 1914 and 1945 (the first having been fought between 1618 and 1648), and the war aims of the Kaiser's government in 1914 and of Hitler were similar.

4. Hitler was cautious; for example, in 1936 German officers apparently had secret instructions to withdraw if they met any resistance in occupying the Rhineland. He chose his time very carefully, and honoured agreements only as long as it suited him. He acted quickly to present opponents with a *fait accompli*. He exaggerated German strength and was believed. He tried to get an agreement with Britain in 1939 to avoid civilian bombing and did not use gas.

However, he reached the conclusion that it was possible to win a war against another great power. In contrast, Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister between 1937 and 1940, and other European leaders believed that such a war would be pyrrhic and therefore impossible.

5. Foreign policy was useful for domestic reasons; for example, the March 1938 *Anschluss* (union with Austria) crisis distracted attention from the dismissals of Werner Fritsch (Commander-in-Chief), Werner von Blomberg (Minister of War) and the Freiherr Constantin Neurath (Foreign Minister). In general until 1939, his foreign policy was popular inside

Germany; in 1939, German propaganda worked to convince Germans that it was a defensive war caused by the Poles.

6. Until 1938, the Foreign Office and Ministry of War were generally left alone, as respectable façades. Neurath (a conservative career diplomat), the Foreign Minister, and Field Blomberg, the Minister of War, had both been appointed in 1933 by President Hindenburg and were not Nazis. In February 1938, they were replaced, having opposed Hitler's plans. Hitler and the OKW (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, the German High Command) replaced Blomberg, and Joachim von Ribbentrop became Foreign Minister. Ribbentrop was a former champagne salesman, who had advised Hitler on foreign affairs and been appointed ambassador to London in 1936.

7. There was a widespread feeling, at least in Britain, that Germany had been badly treated at Versailles in 1919, especially with regard to national self-determination and disarmament.

C. In September 1933, Germany withdrew from the League of Nations and the League Disarmament Conference (approved October 1933 by plebiscite, with 96% in favour), partly as Britain and France were on the point of denouncing German infringements of the Versailles terms. Hitler, in January 1934, cleverly made a Non-Aggression Pact with Poland, hoping to calm general European fears (which might lead to some retaliation against Germany) and break the French alliance system with Eastern Europe.

D. 1935:

January, the people of the **Saarland**, in a free plebiscite supervised by a League of Nations force, voted to join Hitler's Germany.

March, Hitler repudiated the military clauses of the Versailles Settlement **and openly rearmed Germany**. An air force and a fleet were to be built up, and one year of compulsory military service was introduced for young men (extended August 1936 to two years).

May, Hitler offered to make bilateral non-aggression pacts with his neighbours.

June, signature of a **Naval Agreement** with Britain (see L below).

E. 1936:

January, **denunciation of the 1925 Treaty of Locarno** guaranteeing Germany's Western borders.

March, military re-occupation of the **Rhineland**, in violation of Versailles. This was ostensibly in response to the May 1935 Franco-Soviet Treaty of Mutual Assistance.

July, **support for Franco** and the Nationalists in Spain, despite opposition from the German Foreign Ministry. The war would divert European attention, including Italian, so the longer it lasted, the better. It was also a useful training ground for German forces.

1st November, Mussolini spoke of the "**Rome-Berlin Axis**", by which he meant Italian-German co-operation.

25th November **the Anti-Comintern** (that is, anti-Communist) **Pact** was made with Japan. (Comintern, short for the Communist International, had been established in 1919 by Lenin to co-ordinate communist advances throughout the world.)

F. 1938:

March, the Anschluss (union) - the Blumenkrieg (the Flower War, as many Austrians threw flowers at the Germans) - with Austria.

In July 1934, during the Nazi revolt in Austria, Hitler had perhaps contemplated intervention, but Mussolini had massed Italian troops on the Brenner Pass. Now, in 1938, the Austrian Chancellor, Kurt von **Schuschnigg** (following demonstrations in Austria by

Austrian Nazis, led by Arthur Seyss-Inquart) had, on his own initiative, visited Hitler at Berchtesgaden. Hitler, **prompted by Goering**, saw and seized the chance, and by veiled threats got Schuschnigg to amnesty the Nazis and admit them to the government. Seyss-Inquart became the Minister of the Interior. When the Austrian Nazis took the offensive and demanded union, Schuschnigg announced a plebiscite, hoping to prove Austrian opposition to Nazism and to union with Hitler's Germany. Alarmed by this move, Hitler massed German troops on the border and presented Schuschnigg with an ultimatum that there should be no plebiscite. Schuschnigg resigned, and Seyss-Inquart became Chancellor, giving in to Hitler's demand that German forces should be invited into Austria to help end the disorder (which was largely the work of the Austrian Nazis!). The British and French governments protested at the entry of German troops into Austria and the subsequent union, which broke the Treaty of Versailles, but took no action. An Austrian plebiscite, no doubt rigged, approved union with 99.75% in favour. (nb. A 1921 plebiscite in the Tyrol and Salzburg had favoured union. From 1919, there were demands from both Austria and Germany for union, now that the Austrian empire was no more.)

October, occupation of the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia. Hitler had supported and stirred the Sudeten Germans led by Konrad **Henlein**. In Czechoslovakia there were 7,000,000 Czechs, 2,000,000 Slovaks and 3,250,000 Germans, mostly in the Sudetenland which until the First World War had been part of the Austrian empire. Operation Green was planned in December 1937 for the conquest of the Sudetenland, but the British Prime Minister Chamberlain negotiated the September 1938 Munich Agreement in which Hitler promised that the Sudetenland was his last territorial acquisition. Hitler was apparently disappointed that there had been no war.

G. 1939:

15th March, Hitler occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia, despite his earlier assurances that he had no more territorial claims. This showed clearly that his goal was not just to unite all Germans. Probably his goal had been to gain air-bases for use against Poland but Czech gold reserves and industry were useful; for example, one third of German tanks used against France in 1940 were made by Skoda.

21st March, he seized Memel (German for Klaipeda) from Lithuania. Admittedly, Memel, although it had historically been Lithuanian, was predominantly German in population and had been seized by Lithuania in 1923 from the League of Nations.

28th March, he denounced the 1934 Non-Aggression Pact with Poland and made demands on Poland about the Corridor.

August, the Molotov-Ribbentrop or Nazi-Soviet Pact with the USSR.

Following a trade agreement on 18th August, Germany and the USSR on 23rd August made a Non-Aggression Pact, agreeing not to attack each other, and to stay neutral if the other was at war. A secret clause, revealed only in 1945, arranged the partition of Poland.

24th August, German forces seized Danzig (modern Gdansk in Poland). Danzig was predominantly German in population and had been administered by the League of Nations.

On 1st September, German forces attacked Poland, ostensibly because of Polish intransigence over a deal on the Polish Corridor. To win over the German people to war, Hitler arranged matters to make it seem as if he was acting defensively and the Poles had begun hostilities by blowing up the German radio station at **Gleiwitz** (modern Gliwice in Poland), which was in fact blown up by SS men who left behind bodies in Polish uniforms. There thus started what became the Second World War, as Britain and France honoured their treaty promises and went to Polish assistance. Hitler gambled that Britain and France would do little or nothing and that the war would be a short one.

H. Relations with Italy.

1. **Initially, despite Hitler's admiration for Mussolini, relations were poor.**

Mussolini despised Hitler, and at the same time, felt that Hitler challenged his power and had aspirations for German expansion into the Balkans, on which Mussolini had his eyes set. Thus in

1934, Mussolini warned Hitler against involvement in Austria, when the Austrian Nazis tried to take over in Vienna.

2. When in October 1935, Mussolini began his conquest of Abyssinia, it was Hitler alone who supported him. They co-operated again in July 1936, when the Spanish Civil War began, in particular helping to ferry Nationalist forces from North Africa to Spain. In 1936, Mussolini began to talk of the Rome-Berlin Axis, his name for the co-operation. Mussolini had obviously concluded that he stood to gain more from working with Hitler than with Britain and France. In 1937, Italy joined the German-Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact, made in 1936. A formal alliance came only in May 1939, with the Pact of Steel, which promised support, regardless of who caused the crisis. In September 1940, Hitler arranged an alliance with Italy and Japan, the Tripartite Pact for Mutual Aid.

3. Hitler was increasingly disappointed by Italian support. In September 1938, Mussolini worked to prevent war over Czechoslovakia, and helped bring about the Munich Agreement. Mussolini's attacks from April 1939 in the Balkans displeased Hitler, who would have preferred Mussolini to have turned his attention to North Africa; the Balkans were in general favourably disposed to Hitler's Germany, but Italian involvement would throw the Balkans into Anglo-French arms. Hitler was not convinced by Mussolini's reasons for not helping in September 1939, and was understandably suspicious of Mussolini's motives for becoming involved in May 1940 since the war looked as good as won.

J. Relations with Stalin (nb. There was a German tradition of co-operation with Russia.)

1. Initially, Stalin neglected rising Nazi strength, seeing it as a defence against apparent French power, and possibly as capitalism entering its final stage. For his part, Hitler at the start did not feel strong enough to challenge the USSR. Thus in 1933, the 1926 Neutrality Pact was extended for a further 10 years. It was only in 1934, when Hitler made his non-aggression pact with Poland, that Stalin became alarmed, and, for example, ended the secret military co-operation with Germany, which had been begun in the early 1920s, although he continued to supply Germany with raw materials, in fact right up to the German invasion in 1941.

2. In November 1936, Germany made the Anti-Comintern Pact with Japan, to co-operate against the activities of Comintern. (Italy adhered 1937.)

3. Stalin urged a strong stand against Hitler, but the West was not willing to co-operate on Stalin's terms and Stalin was not prepared to act. Consequently, in 1939 Viacheslav Molotov became Soviet Foreign Minister in place of Maxim Litvinov, who was pro-British, and in August 1939, to general European surprise, Molotov and Ribbentrop agreed on a trade agreement and the Nazi-Soviet or Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. This 10-year non-aggression pact had a secret clause for the partition of Poland.

Consequently, on 17th September 1939, Soviet troops occupied eastern Poland, following Hitler's invasion of western Poland on 1st September. On 19th September, Soviet and German forces met near Brest-Litovsk, almost coming to blows, which in the event were averted by the signature on 28th September 1939 of the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty. Hitler had apparently taken Bismarck's advice "to cultivate the friendship of the barbarians (the Russians)" and could boast that "for the first time in history, we have to fight ... only on one front."

4. In June 1941, without any formal declaration of war, Hitler began Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of Russia. There had been indications of an attack, but Stalin ignored these and, in an obvious attempt at appeasement, supplied Hitler with materials up to the last moment. Hitler had apparently decided to neutralize Poland and the West before attacking his main goal, Russia.

5. **nb. The Berlin 1941 anti-Comintern Pact meeting in Berlin was called the First European Congress and the "Song of Europe" written.** This propaganda line of European unity could probably have won many to real union, but no genuine effort was made.

K. Relations with Japan and China, which, of course, were not Aryan countries.

1. **Nazi opinion was divided over whether to recognize Japanese control of Manchukuo** (Manzhouguo - Manchuria, conquered 1931-33 from China), or to continue the previous German policy of support for Jiang Jieshi (formerly spelt Chiang Kai Shek) and the Chinese Nationalists. The Foreign Office and the Army favoured continued support for China, which provided raw materials (including iron and wolfram for tungsten) and markets, and where a number of German officers were already employed as advisers. Ribbentrop held secret negotiations with the Japanese 1935, but Hitler sided with the Foreign Office (being influenced by British coolness towards Japan), although he hoped for tolerable relations with Japan. Good Chinese-German relations were sealed by the 1936 Hapro Agreement, whereby China would provide raw materials in return for manufactured goods and arms.

2. **However, later, in November 1936, German and Japanese representatives made the Anti-Comintern Pact**, to co-operate against Comintern's activities, especially by the exchange of information. German-Japanese relations became closer, when Ribbentrop became Foreign Minister in 1938, and, for example, the Hapro Agreement was denounced. Ribbentrop favoured a simultaneous Japanese-German attack on Russia, but Hitler did not want Japanese power and competition in Russia and so encouraged the Japanese to attack the US, for example, by promising to declare war on the United States, although this was outside the terms of the Tripartite Pact of 1940.

L. Relations with Britain.

1. **Hitler hoped for co-operation with Britain, or at least British neutrality, while he embarked on his adventures.** In April 1933, Hitler made indirect approaches to Britain, which was not interested in an agreement. Once Hitler in 1935 began to rearm openly, Britain began to propose pacts to limit armaments, which Hitler rebuffed.

2. **In June 1935, Britain and Germany signed the Anglo-German Naval Agreement.** By this, Britain agreed to the Germans' having a fleet that was up to 35% the size of the British one, even though this broke the terms of the Versailles Settlement and helped end the 1935 **Stresa Front**, in which the governments of Italy, France and Britain had agreed to co-operate against German aggression. (Hitler only turned his attention to a naval build-up in January 1939, when his "Z Plan" envisaged a fleet, mainly of surface vessels, comparable to the British Royal Navy by 1945.)

3. **Stanley Baldwin, Prime Minister 1935-37, began rearmament, which would mean a state of readiness only by 1939.** Chamberlain, Prime Minister 1937-40, continued rearmament, but also tried a more positive policy of appeasement, highlighted by the 1938 Munich Agreement, which, Chamberlain hoped, meant "peace for our time". The Sudeten crisis had brought real fear in Britain and elsewhere of a war against Germany.

4. **In September 1939, Britain declared war on Germany**, honouring its treaty obligations with Poland, although Britain was more interested in the balance of power than in Poland.

M. Relations with Poland.

1. The Poles were Slavs and Poland was the obvious route for an attack on Russia. Initially, however, Hitler seems to have hoped for co-operation with the Poles over the Polish Corridor and against a common enemy, Russia, although what fate he had in mind for Poland after a Russian defeat is not known; it is unlikely that it would have been advantageous to the Poles!

2. In 1934, Hitler made a non-aggression pact with Poland, probably to help calm fears after German withdrawal from the League of Nations and the League Disarmament Conference, and possibly to facilitate a deal with the Poles over the Polish Corridor, which was an obvious affront to Germany.

3. The Poles proved unco-operative, and Hitler decided that they would have to be neutralized first, rather than the French, who, Hitler guessed, would not act to help the Poles if he attacked Poland.

4. In 1939, after months of recrimination about the frontier and the Corridor, Hitler drew up a moderate ultimatum to the Poles, but German soldiers dressed as Poles blew up the Gleiwitz radio station, so that the message was never transmitted. Hitler accused the Poles of blowing up the station, which he claimed meant a rejection of his proposals, and 1st September 1939, invaded Poland.

5. Already, on 24th August 1939, German troops had occupied Danzig, where the Nazi, Albert Forster, was made "Supreme Head"; Danzig had been administered until then by the League of Nations through a Commissioner.

