



REVISION – NAZI GERMANY 1934-39



Nazi Germany before WWII (1934-1939)

MATERIAL: Old Morris (HL) = 293-302 Newest Morris (SL) = 307-321 Traynor = 268-307

FACTS:

- **The Party;** The leadership of the NSDAP in the late 1920s began at the top with Adolf Hitler and extended to his inner circle from the early days of the Party. As the Nazis were now operating on a national level, The position of *Reichsleiter* (Reich Leader), was intended for the most senior of Nazis who were part of the inner circle.
 - The NSDAP also maintained the position of *Gauleiter* who was a Nazi headman in a particular region of Germany. A Gaue was roughly analogous to a province. There were thirty-four Gaue for Germany and an additional seven for Austria, the Sudetenland (in Czechoslovakia), Danzig and the Saarland (then under French occupation). In 1932 the NSDAP spread to Switzerland; its branch was founded at Davos by Wilhelm Gustloff.
 - Beneath the Gauleiters were several junior Nazi political leaders with a variety of titles such as *Kreisleiter* (County Leader), *Zellenleiter* (Cell Leader) and *Blockleiter* (Block Leader). Such Nazi political officers wore paramilitary brown uniforms, the same as Hitler and his senior Nazi inner circle. In this way, the first Nazi Party ranks came into being.:
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- **The Nazi State;**

- **1933 – 1938:** When Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, the Nazi Party suddenly found itself in control of a modern state government. Hitler and Nazi ideologists had foreseen that for Germany to become a dictatorship, the Nazi Party and the German government had to become one and the same. To accomplish this, measures were enacted to merge the German government with the Nazi Party. On the federal level, all German Ministries were staffed with Nazi officials who, in turn, appointed other Nazis to civil service positions within the government. A vast and complex Nazi party civil service system then developed which had, by 1935, completely taken over the German government. Such Nazi Party government officials held regular government postings, but also held ranks in the Nazi Party, wore paramilitary uniforms (a wide variety of which existed by this time) and reported to Adolf Hitler both as the Chancellor of Germany and the Führer of the Nazi Party.

On the state and local level, German town and city governments were allowed to continue as before but the Nazi Party political chain, extending upwards to the Gauleiters, existed side by side with the local government establishments.

Thus, a town could possibly have a non-Nazi Bürgermeister and town council, but such persons were merely “rubber stamps” for the local head Nazi leader.

In 1933, the paramilitary groups of the Nazi Party began merging with the German state, as well, the most notable of which was the SS which would eventually take over all law enforcement functions of Germany and also serve as a political police force. The German Labor Front was another state run Nazi Party organization along with several less known Nazi paramilitary groups.

- **1938 – 1939:** By 1938, there was virtually no distinction between the Nazi Party and the German government. Hitler, by this time, had merged the office of Chancellor and President into the new office of *Führer und Reichkanzler* of Germany and remained Führer of the Nazi Party. The swastika flag was now the official Flag of Germany and the German armed forces now wore Nazi insignia and swore personal

allegiance to Hitler. In addition, nearly all Nazi Party paramilitary groups were sponsored and in some way connected to the German government:

- **Problems with the duality of the Nazi State:** Gordon Craig: "*the smoothly functioning Nazi state was never much more than a myth*" - for government consisted largely of a jostling for influence between the old ministerial hierarchies and a variety of party bodies that sought to supervise or to control them.
 - *Ministry of Finance* and *ministry of Economics* worked fine because the head of each department (von Krosigk and Schacht) managed to preserve the traditions of these departments
 - *Party Chancellery* (under Martin Bormann) infiltrated the *ministry of Interior* (under Wilhelm Frick)
 - *Foreign Office* competed with the *Nazi Bureau for Foreign Affairs* (headed by Alfred Rosenberg) and with *specialist agencies* headed by Joachim von Ribbentrop (he became foreign minister 1938)
 - *Local administration* and *Nazi provincial chiefs* (Gauleiter) also experienced this dualism in the struggle over the power of the local government

Some claim that this confusion arose from Hitler's great failings, his boredom with administrative detail, and his preference for wider questions like foreign affairs. It seems more like that Hitler was satisfied with this system that enabled him to block and nullify any initiative or individual unacceptable to him: _____

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- **Propaganda; Joseph Goebbels** was appointed Reich Minister for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda (March 1933). Outlining the goals of and concerning the ministry of propaganda:
 - All propaganda ventures and all institutions of public information belonging to the Reich and the states must be centralized in one hand.
 - Organization must be organized under one person.
 - It must be our task to instill into these propaganda facilities a modern feeling and bring them up to date. We must not allow technology to run ahead of the Reich but rather the Reich must keep pace with technology.
 - The ministry must be properly financed to convince the people
 - Some means of propaganda:
 - **Films:** Department of film: One of five departments, established 1933, **Aim:** to spread the Nazi view to the society, suitable for popular enlighten. Director Karl Neumann, was not so much used for political reasons, more for education. Used film because it was of easy access, like radio, Movies was one of the strongest propaganda measures, and when for example schools closed in the end of the war, the movie theatres kept open, **Movie stars:** after stars like Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo gone to Hollywood, they had stars like the Swedish actress *Zarah Leander* and German stars like *Renate Müller*. Had to follow strict orders how to act in public, **Famous movies:** *Hitler Youth Quex* (1933), *The Eternal Jew* (or the Wandering Jew). An early cartoon showing the greedy Jew that only liked money, whilst the Aryan relied on hard, physical work. **Famous director:** Leni Riefenstahl ("*The Triumph of the Will*" (1935) and "*Olympia*" (1937))
 - **Radio:** Goebbels once stated that radio was the "most crucial instrument for influencing the masses" and Hitler agreed that the spoken word is more powerful than the written. Through radio broadcasts the masses could be easily reached. The Nazis forbade all other political parties to broadcast. Radio propaganda was widespread in the German society. It could be heard everywhere, speakers in the streets, in stores, cafes, restaurants etc.
 - **Literature** _____

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- **Economy;** Many different policies – not only one. Three main ideas:
 1. A "third way" between a fully planned socialist economy and a completely free capitalist economy
 2. *Economic self-sufficiency*
 3. Concept of *war economy* (*Wehrwirtschaft*)
 - All these ideas formed a part of Nazi economic thinking, but they were never coordinated into a single economic strategy.
 - The **big winners** of the Nazi economic policy were **large industrial companies**, especially those geared to rearmament.

If the big winners were big business who paid for their success...

- **Small business.** Due to government measures about 20% of all small enterprises had to close while the big business grew
- **Industrial workers.** In general the take-home pay of industrial workers fell and the hours per week increased. All trade union rights had been removed. The unions were replaced by DAF - the German Laborfront (*Deutsche Arbeitsfront*)

Some groups experienced a small improvement but still had to face some set backs;

- **Artisans.** This group won some concessions with government backing. Still the number of independent artisans declined between 1936 and 1939
- **Farmers.** Some experienced a small improvement but some rules (some nearly feudal) curtailed what could have become a bigger improvement.

Compared with the economy during the depressions most people saw an improvement of the standard of living, but the idea of a greatly increased standard of living under the Nazi regime is a myth. The German people had a lower standard of living than people in Britain and they were vastly worse off than people in the USA: _____

- **Domestic Policy – time-line of the main events;**
 - 1933** First Concentration Camps opened
Nazi boycott of Jewish owned shops and public book burning starts.
Herman Goring forms **Gestapo** (former Prussian police)
 - 1934** An increase of the German Army is announced (start of rearmament)
 - 1935** Nuremberg Race Laws
Heinrich Himmler appointed assistant Chief of Gestapo
 - 1936** **Great economic recovery 1933-1936** (under the leadership of Hjalmar Schacht) It should be noted that between 1933 and 1936, Germany outpaced the United States in construction, automobile production, unemployment and employment (the massive rearmament policy led to full employment during the 1930s). The New Reich gave Germans confidence and naturally instilled loyalty. In addition to a number of architectural projects that were undertaken, the construction of the *Autobahn* made it the *first National Motor Highway system* in the world (but real wages in Germany dropped by roughly 25% between 1933 and 1938) The German economy was transferred to the leadership of Hermann Goring when, on 18 October 1936, the German Reichstag announced the formation of a *Four-Year Plan* (Hjalmar Schacht was replaced as Minister of Economy 1937). The Nazi economic plan aimed to achieve a number of objectives. Under the leadership of *Fritz Todt*, a massive public works project, the *Reichsarbeitsdienst*, was started, rivaling Roosevelt's New Deal in both size and scope. It functioned as a military-like unit...
Gestapo is not any more placed under the ordinary German Law
Olympic Games in Berlin
Germany introduces a compulsory two-year period of military conscription
 - 1938,** Hitler replaced von Blomberg as Commander for the German Army
Joachim von Ribbentrop replaced von Neurath as Foreign Minister

Germany military mobilizes
Kristallnacht (the Night of Broken Glass, literally "Crystal Night")
1939 Hjalmar Schacht dismissed as president of the German Reichsbank

• **Foreign Policy – aims;**

- 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.
 - The restoration of Germany's status as a great power. Hitler 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 of the world.
 - The acquisition of "**Lebensraum**" (living space) in the East, and the restoration of Germany's colonies (in 1939 Hitler told the Reichstag he had no "*territorial demands against England and France, apart from the return of the colonies*"). Hitler dreamed of large families and a German population of 170 million instead of 70 million in the 1930's, settling in conquered territories in the East, where the Slavs would be allowed to die out.
 - The completion of the work of German unification. This was done by Anschluss with Austria and the acquisition of the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia.
 - A limited war, or a series of limited wars, which would show clearly German superiority, but not a general war.
 - Defense against growing Soviet power and Communism.
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• **Foreign Policy – time-line of the main events:**

1933 Germany withdrew from the League of Nations
1934 Non-Aggression Pact with Poland
1935 The people of the Saarland voted to join Hitler's Germany
Hitler repudiated the military clauses of the Versailles Settlement and openly rearmed Germany
Naval Agreement with Great Britain. Help ending the Stresa Front...
1936 Germany denounced the 1925 Treaty of Locarno
German military occupation of the Rhineland
Mussolini acknowledged the co-operation with Germany by speaking of the "Rome-Berlin Axis"
Anti-Comintern Pact was made with Japan
1937 The Hossbach Memorandum
1938, Anschluss: Union with Austria
Munich Agreement.
Occupation of the Sudetenland
1939 Hitler occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia
Hitler seized Memel from Lithuania
Hitler denounced the 1934 Non-Aggression Pact with Poland
Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (or Nazi-Soviet Pact)
German forces seized Danzig.
German forces attacked Poland. This started the Second World War...

• **Workers:** _____

• **Women:** _____

• **Youth:** _____

• **Education:** _____

• **Culture:** _____

• **Jews:** _____

• **Law and order;** _____

• **Church;** _____

• **Resistance;** _____

