

WAR AND GENOCIDE

A Concise History of the Holocaust

THIRD EDITION

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FROM REVOLUTION TO ROUTINE

NAZI GERMANY, 1933–1938

Looking back it is easy to forget that half of the Nazi era occurred before World War II began. Those first six years proved crucial. Between 1933, when Hitler became chancellor, and 1939, when German forces invaded Poland, Nazi rule revolutionized Germany. During those same years, the “Third Reich” or third empire, as Hitler and his followers called their new Germany, became routine for many Germans. This chapter examines those two phases of Hitler’s rule: first, the Nazi revolution, and second, the routinization of Nazism that followed. How did Hitler begin to implement his ideas of race and space during the peacetime years of Nazi rule? How did the German public respond, and what was life like for Germans under the Nazi system?

The previous chapter outlined Hitler’s worldview and described how he came to be chancellor of Germany. Throughout that discussion you might have noticed an imbalance between the ordinary aspects of Hitler’s life and the extraordinary impact he had. There was nothing so unusual in Hitler’s background, nor were his ideas original. Even the factors that brought him to power—misfortune, opportunism, miscalculation—were unsensational. And yet the destructive role that Hitler would play was far from ordinary. Even today, when asked to name one individual who has dominated the past millennium, many people say “Adolf Hitler.”

That same dichotomy or gap between the extraordinary and the ordinary is evident throughout the entire Nazi period. On the one hand, Hitler

revolutionized Germany, but on the other hand, the ways in which he did so seemed undramatic to many participants and observers at the time. Between 1933 and 1938, Nazism became everyday routine and ordinary for many Germans, but that routine normalized terror and legalized extraordinary persecution.

PHASE I: THE NAZI REVOLUTION, 1933–1934

Hitler's appointment as chancellor in January 1933 was in itself unspectacular. Since 1918, Germany had seen many chancellors from a range of political parties, and many of their governments had been short-lived. Yet that seemingly unremarkable event on January 30, 1933, marked the beginning of a revolution that would transform German politics and society. The new chancellor lost no time in attacking the elements of the population he despised, but he did so in ways that expanded his own power even as he isolated his enemies.

Political Revolution

Hitler's political position in early 1933 was not that strong. His party's support had dropped from its July 1932 peak, and even then it had received only 37 percent of the votes cast. The Nazi Party faithful themselves were divided into factions with very different visions for Germany's future. Some emphasized the "Socialist" part of the name National Socialist and favored a social revolution that would redistribute wealth and property in radically egalitarian ways; others wanted to bolster traditional elites. Meanwhile, Hitler's cabinet included only two members of the Nazi Party besides himself: Hermann Göring and another longtime associate, Wilhelm Frick, as minister of the interior. The rest of the cabinet posts were assigned to conservatives and nationalists, members of the Catholic Center Party, and military men who thought they could control their inexperienced new chancellor. Instead he proved to be skilled at manipulating them.

Hitler made his first major move in early 1933 against the Communists, a target he chose with care. Communism could have posed a real threat to Nazi power. Like the Nazi Party, the Communist Party had local cells throughout Germany. It was well represented both in the Reichstag and in the streets, where its men had fought the Nazi Stormtroopers for more than a decade. The Communists, however, were an ideal first target for another reason as well: Hitler was guaranteed to have allies against them. Precisely those elements in German society that had helped Hitler into the chancellor's seat—conservatives, nationalists, industrialists, and military men—hated and feared

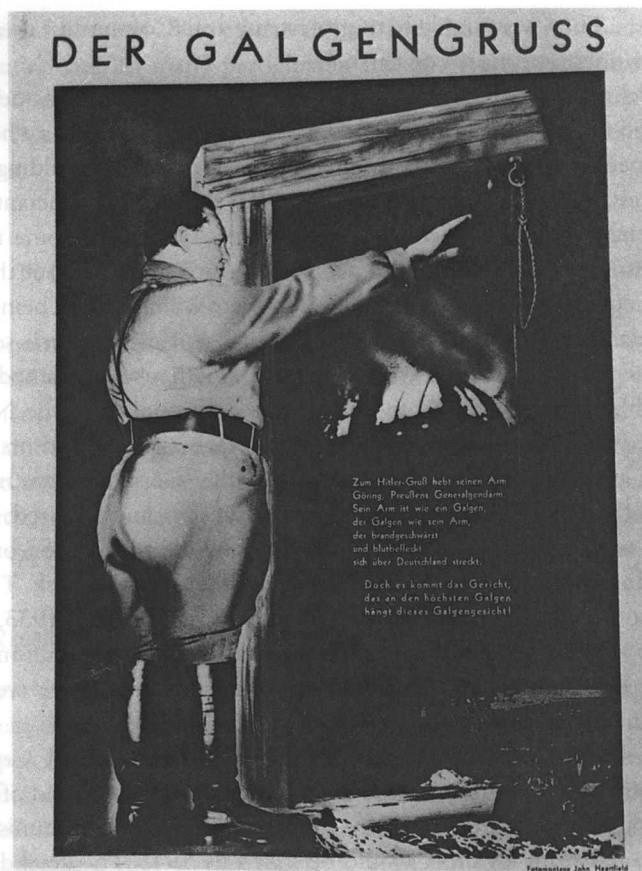
Communism. They were unlikely to protest any anti-Communist measures, no matter how unconstitutional or harsh.

On February 27, 1933, the Reichstag—the German parliament building—burned down. The Reichstag fire gave Hitler the opportunity he wanted. His spokespeople insisted that Communists had torched the building, and the German press, relying on information from Nazi sources and reluctant to speak against the new regime, echoed those accusations. At the time some non-Nazi Germans assumed that Hitler's own people had started the fire, but they could do little except grumble in private, unless they were willing to risk being accused of sympathizing with the Communists. For a long time, research seemed to indicate that the blaze was the work of a lone, Dutch arsonist named Marinus van der Lubbe, who was linked to neither the Communist nor the Nazi party. Subsequent work, however, points back to the Nazis as the instigators.

Hitler ordered massive reprisals against the German Communists in response to the fire. He had thousands arrested, beaten, and tortured; hundreds were "shot while trying to escape." That phrase was a euphemism or indirect way of saying that police or soldiers had shot them in the back. Thousands more fled into exile. Shortly after the Reichstag fire, in March 1933, German newspapers announced the opening of the first official concentration camp—at Dachau, near Munich. Among the first prisoners sent there were many Communist men.

With the actions of late February 1933, Hitler crippled Communist power in Germany. That assault was only the beginning: by the end of the Nazi regime, about one hundred and fifty thousand German Communists would be arrested, and many of them would be killed by 1945. The crackdown also gave Nazis an opportunity to attack leaders of Germany's trade unions. It is not surprising that Communists produced some of the most influential anti-Nazi texts and images in the early years of Hitler's rule. John Heartfield, a German who anglicized his name from Helmut Herzfeld during World War I to protest rampant anti-British sentiment, created some of those images, including a photomontage in response to the Reichstag fire. Heartfield's indictment of Göring as a human gallows appeared in a popular Czech weekly, the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* (workers' illustrated newspaper).

The Reichstag fire gave Hitler a pretext to dismantle what was left of Germany's democratic institutions. Pointing to the supposed risk of disorder and to his now-proven ability to act decisively, he convinced the members of the Reichstag to pass the Enabling Law of March 23, 1933. The Enabling Law allowed Hitler to put through any measure without approval from the Reichstag. He no longer even needed to have the president declare a state of emergency or sign a decree. Social Democratic representatives opposed the Enabling Law, but they were the only mainstream party to do so. In effect the



The German Communist artist John Heartfield created this photomontage in response to the Reichstag fire in 1933. Titled "The Gallows Greeting," the text reads: "He raises his arm for the 'Heil Hitler,' Göring, Prussia's General Policeman. His arm is like a gallows, the gallows like his arm, which blackened by fire and flecked with blood, stretches itself across Germany. But the judgment is coming that will hang this gallows-face on the highest gallows." Given the prevalence of Nazi propaganda and the fascination with it long after the fact, it is easy to forget there was also a powerful tradition of anti-Nazi visual propaganda.

Reichstag was now defunct; its own members had voted it out of existence. Their reasons for doing so varied: quite a few welcomed the new regime they thought would replace the cumbersome parliamentary system they hated with authoritarian order; others felt intimidated by Nazi attacks on Communists and Social Democrats; some hoped to curry favor with Hitler and his people by proving how willing they were to cooperate.

By the end of the summer of 1933, Hitler had used his authority to dissolve or outlaw all political parties except the Nazi Party. Even the facade of

German democracy was gone. Hitler's political revolution was not without violence, but he established his dictatorship through means that were, at least in a narrow sense of the word, legal.

Social Revolution—Testing the Waters

The Nazi revolution had immediate effects on those groups Hitler had described as enemies for years. It was not only political opponents like the Communists who felt early blows; homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, German Jews, people considered physically or mentally disabled, and Afro-Germans all experienced attacks within the first year of Nazi rule.

Hitler and his associates in the new German leadership struck in dramatic, decisive ways, but they always tested the public response to each move before proceeding further. This mixture of boldness and caution would be typical of Nazi tactics throughout the Third Reich, from its inception in 1933 to its collapse in 1945. Public opinion was very important to Hitler. A firm believer in the stab-in-the-back myth, he was convinced that a disgruntled German public had caused Germany to lose World War I. He was determined to avoid a repeat of that situation under his rule, during the wars he intended to wage.

In *Mein Kampf* Hitler had made it clear that he planned to "deal with" the Jews. He started his social revolution, however, with attacks on a group that was even less likely to receive public support: homosexual men. In the 1920s and early 1930s, Berlin and other major German cities had become centers of a small but vibrant gay culture. Even before the Nazis came to power, police had sometimes harassed men known or suspected to be homosexual; many Germans regarded homosexuality as deviant and decadent and urged their government to crack down by imposing what they considered moral and sexual order.

Since 1871, Paragraph 175 of the German criminal code had outlawed sexual relations between men: "A male who indulges in criminally indecent activities with another male or who allows himself to participate in such activities will be punished with jail." The prohibition did not mention sexual acts between women. Hitler built on this law in early 1933 to ban homosexual rights organizations in Germany. According to National Socialist teachings, homosexuals were an abomination because they opted out of the reproduction of the so-called Aryan master race. Moreover, according to Himmler and others, homosexual men in public positions of any kind were dangerous because they were always vulnerable to blackmail.

It was also politically expedient for Hitler's new government to lash out against gay culture, because opponents of Nazism charged the movement, in particular the Stormtroopers and SS, with fostering and glamorizing intimate relations between men. Communist and Socialist enemies of Nazism had been

known to mock those obsessively male organizations as stomping grounds for deviants, and some conservative and Christian critics leveled the same accusations.

Antagonistic Nazis focused on gay men; they seemed for the most part not to see lesbians or bisexual women as posing a particular threat, because women did not exercise public power by serving in the military or at high ranks of the bureaucracy. In any case women, some Nazi activists presumed, could always be forced to bear children for the German Volk, regardless of their own sexual orientation. Nevertheless, in individual cases lesbians were persecuted as so-called asocial elements.

Leadership from above prompted initiatives by people acting out their own hostilities. In 1933, Nazi Stormtroopers and other thugs raided gay bars and clubs in German cities and forced many of them to close. A few managed to remain open longer—some intermittently until the end of World War II—but under constant threat of raids and violence. In May 1933, a group of Nazi students stormed and destroyed the Institute for Sexual Research in Berlin. Its director was the gay rights activist Magnus Hirschfeld, whom his opponents also vilified because he was Jewish. For the most part the German public was indifferent or cheered such offensives.



Johannes Steyer, a German Jehovah's Witness, spent ten years in Nazi concentration camps, prisons, and forced labor units. During the 1970s he painted a series of watercolors depicting his persecution under the Third Reich. In this scene, Steyer, preaching under surveillance, is told: "We do not want Jehovah God's Kingdom! We have our church and our Führer!" Steyer's painting draws attention to the role of so-called ordinary Germans in the isolation of people targeted by the Nazi regime.

There was likewise no protest within Germany in the spring of 1933, when Nazi regulations banned the Jehovah's Witnesses. In fact, some mainstream Protestants and Catholics churches encouraged state measures against a religious group they considered a dangerous cult. Most Germans were just as unlikely to complain when the new regime used existing laws and conventions to bear down hard on Sinti and Roma. Stereotyped as shiftless wanderers, Roma and Sinti had suffered police harassment and public prejudice for decades, even before Hitler came to power. Nazi persecution in its early stages hardly seemed new.

Germans of African descent were easy targets as well. They were few in number—probably only hundreds in the early 1930s—and vulnerable in their visibility; those with dark complexions stood out in a nation of white people. Some had come from Germany's former colonies in Africa—territories in what are now Cameroon, Namibia, Burundi, and Tanzania—or were children of colonials. Some were the offspring of African soldiers or other men of color stationed in the Rhine area after 1918 as part of the French occupation forces. Many Germans had responded with panic to the appearance of black troops in their midst, and the children some of them left behind seemed to many racist Germans to be living examples of Germany's humiliation. Even before he came to power Hitler had spoken of his desire to see all Germans of African descent—people he, like others, called the "Rhineland bastards"—sterilized. The early months of Nazi rule brought attacks, official as well as spontaneous, on these people as well. Compulsory registration of all Germans deemed "half-breeds" revealed 385 such individuals, 370 of whose fathers had been part of the French occupation. In 1937 most of those 385 people were sterilized.

One woman named Doris Reiprich recalls how her landlord evicted her and her African father, white German mother, and sister from their apartment after Hitler came to power. Officials tried to convince the girls' mother to divorce their father, but she refused. Doris lost her job, and her sister, Erika, was tormented by her classmates at school. Teachers were no better; they forced Erika to take part in a course on "race" and listen to such statements as, "God made all whites and blacks; half-breeds come from the Devil." Erika recalled a field trip to see an exhibit about supposed racial degeneration. On display were pictures of black and biracial people, some of whom Erika recognized as her parents' friends. The photographs had been retouched to make them appear ugly and threatening.

Both Afro-German sisters would make it through the war by acting in movies. They recount their experiences in the book *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*. German filmmakers needed a few people of color to make movies that promoted German colonialism in Africa. Throughout the Nazi years most Afro-Germans had no such protective positions. Like Doris

Reiprich and her sister, they suffered a whole range of indignities and abuses, and many of them experienced even harsher treatment—sterilization, incarceration, and death.

The Nazi Revolution and the Jews

Of course the Nazi revolution also meant assault on German Jews. In 1933 Germany's Jewish population was small: about half a million people, less than 1 percent of the total population. New regulations in April banned Jews from the German civil service. That same month the Nazi Party organized a boycott of Jewish businesses throughout Germany, although the boycott did not succeed in the way its planners had anticipated.

Hitler's Nazis used a combination of intimidation and legislation to create a mood of hostility toward Germany's Jews, a kind of open season for abuse. During the boycott Stormtroopers stood outside Jewish businesses to frighten potential customers. Nazi activists staged public humiliations of Jews and friends of Jews, and Jewish children experienced vicious harassment in school from teachers as well as fellow students. Especially singled out for attack were German Jews and non-Jews who were involved in intimate relationships. In one case, for example, Stormtroopers forced a gentile woman and her Jewish boyfriend to stand in the street wearing sandwich boards. Hers read, "I am the biggest pig in the place and go around only with Jews." His said, "As a Jewish boy I only take German girls to my room."

In this climate of persecution print and visual propaganda served to disseminate stereotypes, normalize stigmatization, and further isolate Jews and other targets of abuse. All over Germany insulting reports accompanied by photographs and lewd cartoons from the antisemitic newspaper, *Der Stürmer*, appeared in public display cases. The headlines named names: they charged Jewish doctors with abusing "Aryan" girls, accused Jewish community leaders of extracting blood from Christian children, and denounced Protestant pastors for abetting Jewish perfidy by baptizing converts to Christianity. Nazi activists hid near businesses owned by Jews and photographed customers who violated the boycott. Such pictures too were published and displayed, as was the snapshot reproduced on the next page.

The civil service ban and the boycott created terrible situations for Jews in Germany. At the same time, for Nazi planners they revealed complications in implementing anti-Jewish measures. For one thing, there was no concrete definition of who exactly counted as a Jew, so it was not always clear to whom the ban on employment applied. Given Hitler's sensitivity to public opinion, officials did not want to antagonize potential "Aryan" supporters by mistaking them for Jews. Moreover, by April 1933, German Jews had not yet been



This snapshot shows a woman, taken by surprise, emerging from a Jewish-owned business in violation of the April 1933 boycott. Such photographs, circulated and displayed, were used to denounce individuals and intimidate members of the German public into compliance with anti-Jewish measures.

isolated from the rest of population. The Nazi government did not dare impose formal measures against Jewish veterans of World War I, for example, or against Christian spouses of Jews. There was also uncertainty around how to regard people who had converted from Judaism to Christianity. Outraged German Jews who did not yet know how far the regime would go in attacks on them deluged authorities with petitions and requests for exceptions, and sometimes non-Jews supported their efforts.

But there were also non-Jews who went even further than the civil service law to introduce anti-Jewish measures on their own. Some gentile spouses divorced "undesirable" Jewish mates, and many people cut contact with friends and former coworkers. University administrators fired scholars who were not in fact targeted by the law, for example, Christian men with Jewish wives or people whose parents had converted from Judaism to Christianity. Removing such individuals made their supervisors look especially eager to cooperate with the new government. Students and the other professors were not too likely to complain, because they hoped to benefit from the situation. After all, professorial positions were in high demand in German society, with its many educated people, high level of unemployment, and great respect for academics.

In the Protestant church, pro-Nazi clergy who belonged to a group called the German Christian Movement tried to expel from the pulpits any pastors who had converted from Judaism to Christianity or who were the children or grandchildren of such converts. Only a handful of clergy actually fell into those categories. Uneasy as to how Protestant church people inside Germany and abroad would respond, Nazi government authorities decided in 1933 not to back that scheme. Public opinion was still more important to Hitler than complete thoroughness. There would be time to widen the net later. Meanwhile, individuals and organizations were free to develop anti-Jewish initiatives that suited their own purposes. German municipal governments, strapped for cash, found it expedient to drop Jewish recipients of public support from their welfare lists, before authorities in Berlin had even thought of the idea.

As for the anti-Jewish boycott of April 1933, it did not really catch on. Some German gentiles complained that the ban on Jewish businesses disrupted their lives and created public disorder. Many continued to frequent Jewish shops out of habit or convenience. Outside Germany there was considerable negative publicity around the anti-Jewish measures. In the United States, Britain, and elsewhere, Jews and people who generally opposed abuses of human rights threatened to organize a counter-boycott of German goods to pressure the German government into curbing antisemitic behavior.

There were other, less obvious issues, too. What constituted a Jewish business? If the issue was Jewish ownership, what about "Aryan" employees? What about enterprises owned jointly by Jews and non-Jews? In a complex, modern economy that included large, incorporated firms with thousands of employees and stockholders, it was by no means clear who would be hurt by the boycott. Even in very small businesses, Jewish and non-Jewish interests were intertwined. For instance, Susanne Weillbach's father was a Jewish dairy farmer in the Rhine valley. Boycotting him would also destroy the livelihood of his non-Jewish hired hand and impoverish that man's family.

Aware that the anti-Jewish boycott was damaging his public image at home and abroad, Hitler called it off ahead of schedule. Still Nazi leaders learned some lessons from these early anti-Jewish experiments. First, they realized that it was easiest to attack people who were already marginalized. Second, they learned that members of the general public were more likely to participate in or at least tolerate attacks on minorities if they stood to gain rather than to lose from such initiatives. In any case, leading Nazis found out that unanimous approval was not required. Indifference of the majority was all that was needed to carry out many plans.

In another sense, for the regime the boycott was not a failure at all. By revealing how tightly Jews were woven into the fabric of German economic life it proved the need to isolate Jews before mounting a direct, all-out attack.

Meanwhile it gave hard-core antisemites an opportunity to act out their hatred. A useful trial balloon, the boycott typified what became a common pattern for Hitler: push, wait to test public response, and then push again in the direction of least resistance. In this way Nazi authorities learned what the German people would accept and gained valuable experience for implementing subsequent measures. Moreover, by pulling back from an extreme position, they appeared flexible and concealed the radical nature of their goals.

German Jewish Responses

How did German Jews respond to Nazi attacks? Like Communists and homosexuals, some left the country. Departure, however, was not a simple proposition, especially for people with families and deep roots in Germany. There had been Jews in German territory for some sixteen hundred years; many Jews were at home in German society in ways that made leaving almost unfathomable. Moreover, some of the people who antisemites considered Jews did not regard themselves as Jewish at all. Over the centuries Jewish Germans had intermarried with Christians and some had converted to Christianity, but because Nazi ideology was based on the notion of blood, its adherents suspected such people of still being Jews.

Unlike Communists, who could (in many cases, mistakenly) expect a haven in the Soviet Union, there was no obvious place for Jews to go. No State of Israel existed in the 1930s, and the traditional countries of immigrants—the United States, Canada, Australia—all had very restrictive immigration policies. Economic problems linked to the Great Depression and a climate of nativism made governments and public alike hostile to immigrants, especially those who were not Christian or did not come from western Europe. Still, during the first year of Hitler's rule, some thirty-seven thousand Jews fled Germany. Many did not go far: they chose destinations where they had relatives, business connections, or other prospects. For 73 percent of them that meant elsewhere in Europe; 19 percent went to Palestine, and only 8 percent overseas. Anne Frank's family from Frankfurt am Main moved to the Netherlands. George Mosse, later an influential historian, left with his family for Switzerland, though only after his father, who owned a large publishing conglomerate, had been forced at gunpoint to sign over his assets to a fake organization for war veterans.

Many German Jews tried to find new ways to pull together within Germany. They organized self-help efforts and sought to combat social isolation by providing educational and cultural opportunities for themselves. To these ends, in September 1933 a group of Jewish leaders created the Reich Representation of the German Jews to unify attempts to preserve Jewish

religious life and offer practical assistance to Jews from all over Germany. The group's president, Berlin Rabbi Leo Baeck (1873–1956), would steadfastly refuse to leave even when he had opportunities to do so. As long as any Jews remained in Germany, Rabbi Baeck believed, he belonged with them.

Once German officials began transporting German Jews to ghettos and sites of killing in the east in late 1941, the Reich Representation of the German Jews lost its always limited ability to do anything to help its members. Its leaders too were sent to be killed. In 1943 German police sent Rabbi Baeck to the ghetto and transit camp at Theresienstadt, also known as Terezin, near Prague. Rabbi Baeck survived the war and moved to London.

In 1933 some German Jews joined Zionist associations. The Zionist movement had emerged in the late nineteenth century. Its members believed that Jews were not only a religious group but a distinct people who deserved a country of their own. Zionists took their name from the biblical name "Zion," the hill in Jerusalem on which the Jewish temple had stood. They worked to establish a Jewish national homeland, and some moved to Palestine. Before the 1930s Zionism had been rather unpopular among German Jews, but Nazi measures convinced many Jews in Germany it was their only alternative. After Hitler came to power, some German Zionist leaders who promoted immigration to Palestine found ways to work out arrangements with Nazi authorities who wanted Jews out of Germany. Others continued to wait and hope that somehow the storm would pass.

The Nazi Revolution and the Disabled

The Nazi revolution advanced on all fronts in its drive for so-called racial purity. In May 1933 Hitler introduced a law to legalize eugenic sterilization, that is, sterilization to prevent reproduction by people deemed unworthy on the basis of mental or physical conditions. More radical legislation followed just two months later.

In July 1933 Hitler proclaimed the Law for Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring. It ordered sterilization of people with certain physical and psychiatric conditions. The list included people characterized as severe alcoholics, epileptics, schizophrenics, and a number of other loosely defined categories such as the "feeble-minded." Roma and Sinti were targeted too, though indirectly, as "asocials." Nazi minister of the interior Wilhelm Frick went so far as to suggest that 20 percent of the population should be sterilized. Ultimately the number of Germans sterilized under this law would come to less than 0.5 percent of the German population, but that still meant destroying the reproductive capabilities of some four hundred thousand people without their consent and in many cases against their wills.

There was criticism of the sterilization law, especially from Catholic clergy. Proponents of the measure countered by finding a few Catholic theologians who were willing to endorse it. Meanwhile enforcement required the participation of many people: lawyers who drafted the legislation; medical and social workers who reported people to be sterilized to the authorities; bureaucrats who handled the paperwork; doctors, nurses, and aides who performed the procedures. As the Nazi regime established and reinforced its power, it involved ever larger numbers of people, who in turn developed a stake in its continuation. Through this dynamic, Nazi ideas gained acceptance, even among people who might earlier have opposed them.

Like programs of forced sterilization elsewhere, the Nazi variant also played on common prejudices and fears. Some of these are displayed in a propaganda image titled "The Terrible Legacy of an Alcoholic Woman." The precise numbers give the appearance of scientific rigor, but how could anyone know how many "asocials"—beggars, criminals, murderers—had descended from one individual and how much money they had cost the state? Who



This image comes from a filmstrip of the Reich Propaganda office titled, "The Terrible Legacy of an Alcoholic Woman." It claims that within eighty-three years, one such woman produced 894 descendants, 50 percent of whom were "asocial," including 40 paupers, 67 habitual criminals, 7 murderers, 181 prostitutes, and 142 beggars. Taken together, these "deviants" allegedly cost the state 5 million Reich Marks. The use of precise numbers (even if invented) was meant to give scientific legitimacy to fear mongering.

would define who counted as a “pauper” or a “whore”? The combination of scare tactics and an appeal to self-interested practicality was typical of Nazi eugenic and racial propaganda.

The Policy of Coordination

The Nazi revolution brought rewards for those who cooperated as well as attacks on those deemed undesirable. Many Germans of all ages enjoyed participating in an exciting, dynamic movement that welcomed them as long as they were “the right kinds of people.”

In 1933 Hitler and his accomplices introduced a process called Gleichschaltung, which means “coordination,” literally “shifting into the same gear.” In the name of national unity, new Nazi organizations swallowed up other, independent groups and clubs. For example, the Nazi-run German Labor Front replaced the old trade unions. Nazi organizations of farmers, women, boys, girls, writers, and artists absorbed associations of people in those categories. These new groups had monopolies over their clienteles and did not tolerate competing organizations.

Local cooperation and leadership were essential to the success of “coordination.” So was a bombardment of propaganda from party-controlled newspapers and publicists enthusiastic about the “national awakening.” For at least some Germans the surge of group activities provided an exciting sense of belonging. Melitta Maschmann, a teenager in 1933, later described how she loved being part of the BDM, the Nazi League of German Girls (Bund Deutscher Mädel). It gave her a chance to assert independence from her parents, she said, and to feel like someone important, part of dramatic new developments. Testimonials collected from Nazi Party members in the 1930s by the American social scientist Theodore Abel echoed those sentiments: joining the Nazi movement empowered many Germans.

Hitler’s government introduced all kinds of programs to win favor with the majority of the population. Enormous publicity was devoted to job creation and massive public works programs. Many people still claim that Hitler “saved” Germany from the Depression, and indeed, Nazi policies did accelerate the process of economic recovery. At the same time, many of Hitler’s schemes continued what his predecessors had begun, and in any case, by 1933, the slump seemed to have bottomed out in Germany. Of course Hitler took credit for all improvements, and the Nazis even set up an agency called Strength Through Joy (*Kraft durch Freude*) to organize workers’ leisure activities and plan holiday trips. Strength Through Joy set up package tours, such as cruises to the Mediterranean or Scandinavia or short trips within Germany. It also sponsored mass production of the “people’s cars”—Volkswagens—and set up savings plans



Members of the League of German Girls (Bund Deutscher Mädel, or BDM) take children from large families for an airing in the park while the mothers of the infants are busy elsewhere. Activities of the BDM, the female complement to the Hitler Youth, aimed to prepare young "Aryans" ideologically, socially, and physically to serve the Reich as mothers. Positive images like this one depicting the benefits of inclusion in the "people's community" were the flipside of the propaganda of exclusion.

so that workers could arrange to buy them. Even fun was to appear to be a gift of the Führer.

Terror and Pageantry

The Nazi revolution claimed to restore order, but from the beginning it was enforced with terror. In March 1933, not even two months after Hitler became chancellor, Nazi authorities opened the first official concentration camp. Located at Dachau, just outside Munich, its initial prisoners were political—Communists arrested in the wake of the Reichstag fire—but it also held men charged with homosexuality and common criminals. Dachau Concentration Camp was no secret. To the contrary, the Nazi press covered its opening in detail, on the theory that merely knowing it existed would serve as a public deterrent.

Dachau and the network of similar camps that followed were under the control of Heinrich Himmler, one of Hitler's longtime associates, and the head

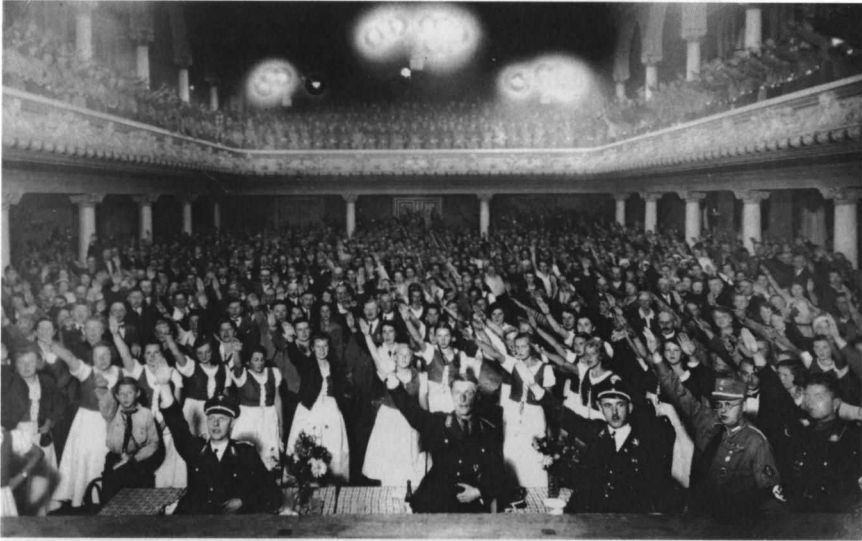
of the SS, Nazism's elite force. By July 1933 German concentration camps held an estimated twenty-seven thousand people in what was euphemistically called "protective custody."

Violence itself served the Nazi regime as a form of propaganda. In May 1933, Hitler's minister of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, organized public book burnings, which presented intimidating spectacles of Nazi force. Thousands of pro-Nazi students proved especially eager to participate. They and other Nazi supporters made huge bonfires of books by Jewish authors such as Albert Einstein and the satirist Kurt Tucholsky. They also burned works by Communists and others associated with left-wing positions—for example, the playwright Bertolt Brecht and the writer Heinrich Mann; liberals such as Thomas Mann; and foreigners, including the American Jack London, author of *Call of the Wild*, an adventure story about a sled dog in the Klondike. Photographs of heaps of books and crowds massed around the flames showed up on the pages of newspapers in Germany and all over the world, a warning and a threat to critics of Nazism.

Pageantry was the flip side of Nazi terror, another show of strength. The first months of Hitler's rule featured endless torchlight parades with columns of marching men. Observers after the fact often interpret footage of those events as evidence of the unanimity of Germans behind Hitler. It would be probably more accurate to see those demonstrations as efforts on the part of the new regime to create an image of unanimity that itself worked to deter opposition. It must have been a lonely and terrifying experience to be on the outside of a torchlight march looking in. What chance would one feel one had against that monolith of power?

The columns of Nazis often sang as they marched. Supporters adapted old songs and wrote reams of new ones, everything from sentimental folk songs to outright vicious fighting songs, with lyrics about "Jewish blood" spurting from German knives. The most famous Nazi song was the "Horst Wessel Lied." It was named after its lyricist, a Nazi Stormtrooper who had been killed in a brawl with a Communist in 1930. Set to a familiar folk tune, Horst Wessel's lyrics extolled the Nazi flag, called for unity against the foe, and praised the comrade-heroes who had died for the cause. During the Third Reich the Horst Wessel song became part of Germany's official national anthem. It was always sung with the right arm outstretched in the "Hitler salute."

Newspapers, magazines, and newsreels propagated images of cheering crowds, their arms raised in unison. A 1933 photograph from Pößneck, a small town in Thuringia, is typical: up front are the dignitaries in SS and Stormtrooper uniforms, more uniformed men fill the balcony, and foregrounded are women and girls in traditional dirndls. The photographer is not identified,



Filling an entire concert hall, an enthusiastic audience gives the Nazi salute during a ceremony or festival. Young women in traditional peasant costume stand near the front. Undivided, exuberant support for the regime was a prevalent feature of Nazi gatherings from the early days of Hitler's rule to the dying days of World War II. Photography was an important tool in propagating an image of unanimity.

but clearly he or she took this picture with official permission, from the stage. Viewing this photo together with another crowd scene highlights the role of the photographer and his or her perspective in shaping the view.

Julien Bryan, an itinerant American, photographed a political rally in Berlin in 1937, standing not in front but in the middle of the crowd. Instead of a sea of glowing faces and outstretched arms, he captured a range of actions: another photographer composes a shot, a woman looks disapprovingly at someone or something outside the frame (perhaps at Bryan), and a man appears to hesitate as he raises or lowers his arm. Bryan took many other photographs while in Germany—of Nazi Party rallies, daily life, and anti-Jewish propaganda. Back in the United States, those images, shown in numerous film and slide lectures that he gave, incorporated into documentary movies, and reportedly even screened at the White House, helped create an informed view of Nazi Germany and the dangers it posed.

A Revolution in Foreign Policy

As he had at home, Hitler used a combination of boldness and caution to bring about a revolution in foreign policy. He was a master of making his aims



German spectators at a rally in Berlin in 1937. Julien Bryan, the American who took this picture, was an untrained photographer who traveled around Germany taking hundreds of shots of Nazi leaders, political rallies, and everyday life. His photographs and films of Nazi Germany toured extensively in the United States. In this photograph one can glimpse the reality behind the image of unanimity that the Nazis projected in Party rallies and through propaganda.

look safely conventional, even while his intentions were dangerously radical. Hitler railed against the Treaty of Versailles, but so had almost all German politicians since the war. He talked about restoring German boundaries to their “rightful” location; so had many German nationalists. Hitler’s plans, however, were far more ambitious, and he wanted nothing short of world domination. Nevertheless, in the first stage of his rule he used diplomacy to work toward achieving his goals.

In this regard too, Hitler chose his priorities carefully. His first major foreign policy success came in July 1933, shortly before announcement of the new sterilization law. That month Hitler’s representatives signed an agreement called the Concordat with the Vatican in Rome. Hitler promised to respect the rights of Catholics and the Catholic Church in Germany. Pope Pius XI, for his part, hoped to protect Catholic interests within Germany and to use Hitler’s Nazi regime as a defense against Communism all over Europe. For Hitler the Concordat turned out to be an effective way to gain legitimacy both at home and abroad.

Germany’s population in 1933 was almost 40 percent Roman Catholic, and Hitler himself was raised in the Catholic Church. Nevertheless many

German Catholic clergy were initially suspicious of Nazism. They saw Nazi ideas as anti-Christian, especially the emphasis on race and blood and the obvious disrespect for human life. Before the Concordat, some priests in Germany had refused to administer the sacrament of communion to church members in Stormtrooper or SS uniforms.

The Concordat undermined potential Catholic opposition in Germany. How could parish priests criticize a chancellor who had been recognized by their pope? What possibility remained for a united Catholic front against the sterilization program? Meanwhile, abroad the Concordat added to the prestige of Hitler's new regime. Even if the pope no longer wielded much political power, he still had moral authority with Catholics all over the world.

Other foreign policy successes followed. By January 1934 Hitler's diplomats had negotiated a Non-Aggression Pact with Poland that was supposed to last for ten years. Hitler had no intention of keeping that promise, but such deals bought valuable time. Meanwhile, Germany withdrew from all its multilateral arrangements; most notably, in October 1933, it left the League of Nations.

Under Hitler Germany actively began to rearm. Because the Treaty of Versailles restricted German military power, rearmament at first had to be secret. In 1933 Hitler's government set up a phony initiative called the Agricultural Tractor Program, which was a cover for a project that in fact built tanks. By 1934 Germany was producing explosives, ships, and aircraft in quantity. In 1935 Hitler dropped even the pretense of secrecy. Germany had become a military power once again, with an air force, a navy, and an army based on conscription.

The Nazi revolution was difficult to oppose because it occurred with a mixture of subtlety and force. The regime did not snap into place in January 1933 as a full-blown totalitarian prison. There was still room for Germans—at least those who were not considered disabled, Jewish, or otherwise unwanted—to maneuver, even to criticize. Precisely those mainstream members of society, however, were the least likely to recognize the revolutionary nature of the new regime. Many of them stood to gain from the measures it introduced, and others were apathetic. What did any of it have to do with them? It was those in the most vulnerable positions—Nazism's targets—who were the first to recognize what was at stake. They, however, had little power to do much about it, other than to warn people like them, who often preferred to hope for the best instead of heeding alarmists, or to try to convince a busy and often hostile world of their impending doom.

A Telling Incident

An incident recounted by a German waiter and recorded in Bernd Engelmann's book *Inside Hitler's Germany* captures the dynamics of the early

months of Nazi rule. In early 1933, the man worked at a restaurant in a small town. One day a group of Nazi enthusiasts came in. The editor of the town's Nazi newspaper was there, so were the chief Stormtrooper and the local Party leader. At another table all alone sat an elderly lawyer who had lived in the town all his life.

The group of Nazi functionaries got louder and drunker. Suddenly they summoned the waiter, a young man at the time, to their table and told him to deliver a note to the lawyer. Afraid to refuse, the waiter complied, but as he put the note down on the table he saw that it said something like: "Get out, you Jewish swine."

The lawyer read the note and began trembling with rage and shame. He stood up at his table and addressed the three men. How dare you, he challenged them: "I am a veteran of the World War. I risked my life for this country." The restaurant became deathly still. No one at any of the other tables spoke or even seemed to breathe. The waiter remembered being able to hear the sound of pots and pans in the kitchen.

The three Nazis broke the silence. They taunted the lawyer again and turned back to their beers. The lawyer summoned the waiter and, still shaking, handed him money to cover his meal, and left the restaurant.

Later the waiter realized that the man had given him far too much money. He went to the lawyer's home to return the extra. There he found the man dressed in his hat and coat with a suitcase in his hand. He was leaving, he told the waiter, because there was no future for him in Germany.

What would have happened to any of the other Germans at that restaurant if they had spoken in defense of their Jewish neighbor? At that point, in early 1933, probably not much. The aggressors were drunken bullies new to their roles. The observers likely knew them personally, as they did the lawyer. So why did they say nothing? Perhaps they did not want to risk an unpleasant scene. Maybe they would have taken the chance for someone else, a woman, say, or a Christian clergyman. In any case, they were silent, and their silence emboldened the ruffians. All over Germany the silence of others like them sent a message back up to Hitler: it was safe to keep pushing.

The Night of Long Knives and the End of the Revolutionary Phase

The end of Nazism's revolutionary phase can be marked with reference to a specific event—the so-called Night of Long Knives, also known as the Röhm Putsch, of June 30, 1934. Ernst Röhm (1887–1934) had been Hitler's associate since the early 1920s, when he had been instrumental in building up the Stormtrooper organization. By 1934 Röhm was head of 2.5 million Stormtroopers. A veteran of World War I, Röhm and his Stormtroopers had played a

powerful role in destabilizing the Weimar Republic and consolidating Hitler's new regime. After some professional setbacks and personal scandals, Röhm immigrated to Bolivia in 1928, but Hitler brought him back to Germany in 1930 to reorganize the Stormtroopers.

After Hitler became chancellor, he began to view the Stormtroopers as a liability. Restless for action and disgruntled with what seemed a slow pace of change, many of them thought Hitler had sold out their movement's ideals for the sake of respectability. The SS, or Schutzstaffel (protective staff), Nazism's elite guard headed by Himmler, had grown more powerful and wanted the upper hand over its rival organization, the Stormtroopers. Meanwhile the army and Hitler's new conservative friends considered the Stormtroopers disreputable thugs who disrupted the public order; some also castigated them as a group dominated by homosexuals.

Hitler had to choose. Would he cast his lot with the SS and the army or be loyal to his old brown-shirted Stormtrooper allies? He decided to move against the Stormtroopers. On the night of June 30, 1934, on Hitler's orders, the SS struck.

It is often said that a revolution devours its own children. Hitler's revolution was no exception. In a bloody rampage, SS men fanned out to kill Röhm, other old allies of the Führer such as the Nazi ideologue Gregor Strasser, and Hitler's rivals, including former chancellor General Kurt von Schleicher and, for some reason, Schleicher's wife. In general, Hitler and SS leader Himmler used the purge to get rid of people they found problematic. The list of dead even included a priest who had helped write *Mein Kampf* when Hitler was in prison. Perhaps that man was a victim of mistaken identity, or Hitler may have thought he knew too much to be trusted.

The total number of people killed is unknown. Some place it as low as 150; others estimate it in the thousands. At least eighty high-ranking Stormtroopers were shot. The numbers of more lowly individuals killed on local initiatives, that is, not on direct orders from Hitler or Himmler, may have been much higher. Hitler did not dismantle the Stormtroopers after the purge, but he clipped the organization's wings and subordinated it directly to his authority.

Hitler dressed the bloodbath in the guise of conventional morality. Ernst Röhm was openly and actively homosexual. Hitler had known about Röhm's sexual preference for years and never seemed to have considered it a problem. Now, however, in his bid for legitimacy, Hitler publicly reviled Röhm. The killings, Nazi press reports contended in lurid detail, were part of a cleanup of the movement, a necessary measure against decadence and perversion.

How did the German public react? You might expect shock or horror. In fact there was little of either expressed in Germany, at least in public. President Hindenburg sent Hitler a telegram of congratulation for restoring order, and

German military leaders likewise praised what they considered appropriate measures in the interest of public safety. Members of Hitler's cabinet declared the purge retroactively legal. Many observers believed that now the Nazi regime had become an ordinary government, its dangerous, extremist days behind it.

Victor Klemperer, a German professor of Jewish background in Dresden, had a different opinion. After such blatant criminality, he was certain that the rule of brutes had to fall. Surely the old German elite would come to its senses and throw out the upstarts, he hoped, but Klemperer was wrong. The Night of Long Knives left Hitler stronger than ever.

PHASE II: ROUTINIZATION, 1934–1937

June 1934 marked a turning point in the Nazi regime. By no means did it signify the end of brutality, but it did usher in a new phase of routinization. Instead of uncontrolled, revolutionary shows of force, Nazi authorities concentrated on systematizing violence and normalizing coercion. They did so by centralizing power in the hands of a few and passing laws to make their measures at least look respectable. Inventing rituals and convincing people to police their own behavior in keeping with Nazi regulations were also parts of the process.

Centralization of Power

One component of routinization was centralization, which took many forms. One of the most significant was the centralization of police power under Himmler and the SS. The Night of Long Knives brought the Stormtroopers under Himmler's control. In 1934, Himmler, along with Heydrich, who ran the intelligence office known as the Security Service, took over all political police, known in Germany as the Gestapo. By 1936 Himmler had pulled the criminal police into his orbit as well, so that the head of the SS and the concentration camps was now in charge of all police forces in Germany.

Himmler and his tens of thousands of SS men were crucial to the Third Reich. Unlike the German military, the SS was officially linked to the Nazi Party organization, not to the government of Germany. Throughout the Third Reich, the Nazi Party retained its own separate hierarchy with headquarters in the Brown House in Munich. Its status gave the SS an unprecedented degree of independence from any kind of authority that predated Hitler's rise to power. The SS was an ideologically dynamic organization that combined the functions of a conventional, repressive political police force with a drive to implement the "Führer's idea." Himmler saw his goal as defending "purity of

the blood" and persecuting those who he believed threatened it: Communists, Freemasons, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, Jews, Roma, and others.

In August 1934 President Hindenburg, the man who had appointed Hitler chancellor of Germany, died. In another act of centralization, Hitler united the offices of president and chancellor in his own person. That change did not substantially alter Hitler's duties, nor did the president's death remove a major obstacle to the expansion of Hitler's power. Hindenburg had done little to check Hitler's activities in the first year and a half of Nazi rule. Nevertheless, for some Germans the death of the old man Hindenburg meant the end of any hope that Hitler and Nazism would be stopped.

There were also practical repercussions to the uniting of the offices of chancellor and president in the person of the Führer. According to the German constitution, still officially in force, the president was the supreme commander of the German armed forces. Hitler now claimed that position for himself and used it to require members of the military to swear an oath of personal allegiance to him.

Legalization

A second component of routinization involved legalizing Nazi measures. The goals of Hitler and the Nazi "true believers" were twofold: "racial purity" and spatial expansion. In this phase of development after the Nazi revolution of 1933–1934, pursuing those goals meant revamping German law. Members of all professions—teachers, journalists, doctors—served the Nazi cause, but lawyers and judges played an especially important role in giving the regime and its measures a veneer of legitimacy that was important to international observers and to many Germans. As he consolidated and expanded his power, Hitler had to operate within the prevailing view of Germany as a state governed by law.

The first minister of justice under Hitler, Franz Gürtner, was not a Nazi, although he supported authoritarian rule. Gürtner was prepared to sanction the blatant illegalities of the revolutionary phase, including attacks on Communists and the Röhm Putsch massacre. Justice Minister Gürtner also presided over laying the legal foundations for what would become mass murder of people considered disabled and of Jews.

The key pieces of legislation when it came to attacks on Jews were the Nuremberg Laws, passed in the fall of 1935. The laws had two parts. First was the Law for Protection of German Blood and Honor, which forbade marriage or sexual relations between Jews and "Aryan" Germans. Jews could not fly the German flag nor employ German gentile women under age forty-five in their households. Such measures were intended to isolate German Jews from the rest of the population and stigmatize them as disloyal, destructive outsiders.

The second component was the Reich Citizenship Law of November 1935. This legislation defined, for the first time in detail, who was to count as a "Jew" in Nazi Germany. According to Nazi ideology, Jewishness was a racial trait, but in fact there was no way to measure distinctions of blood, because they did not actually exist. In other words, there were no reliable markers of appearance, blood type, or any other physical traits that Nazi "experts" could use to separate Jews from "Aryans." Instead the Nuremberg Laws fell back on religion as the only way to define Jews. Under the law it was not one's own religion but that of one's grandparents that mattered. People with three or more grandparents of the Jewish faith counted as Jews. Most Germans defined as "Jews" under the law lost the rights associated with German citizenship.

The Nuremberg Laws considered people who had two grandparents of the Jewish faith to be *Mischlinge*, or "mixed bloods," a category that would remain in dispute throughout the entire Third Reich. *Mischlinge* who were Jewish by religion or who married people categorized as Jews also counted as Jews. Some *Mischlinge* who had no contact with Judaism or Jews likewise ended up being treated as Jews, perhaps because they looked stereotypically Jewish or had especially hostile neighbors or coworkers. There were, however, people categorized as *Mischlinge* who managed to continue living in German society throughout the Nazi period, and a few even served in the German military in World War II. The law did not address people with one Jewish grandparent, but in practice some of them would also face disadvantage and discrimination of various kinds.

The Reich Citizenship Law offered no definition of "Aryan" other than the implied opposite of "non-Aryan" or "Jew." Thus, by default, Germans with four grandparents who were baptized into a Christian church were assumed to be "Aryans."

The Nuremberg Laws contributed to what can be called the social death of Jews in Germany. "Social death," a term coined by the sociologist Orlando Patterson to describe the marginalization, dishonoring, and powerlessness of enslaved people, is used by the historian Marion Kaplan as a way to analyze how official discrimination and persecution systematically cut Jews in Germany off from the majority non-Jewish population. Formal and informal measures combined to isolate Jews in ways that were both brutally public and intensely personal.

The prohibition against sexual relations between people defined as Jews and those classified as Aryans reveals how the process worked. Denunciation was central for enforcement of the law: who would know who had sex with whom unless someone contacted the police? Investigations of charges of *Rassenschande*—"racial shame" or race defilement, the Nazi name for the supposed crime—were public affairs that often involved sensational press coverage and

open trials. No details were too intimate to be exposed by police detectives and prosecutors eager to demonstrate their dedication to the Nazi cause. Even people who were acquitted found their lives destroyed. Small wonder that many Jewish and non-Jewish Germans broke off relationships and friendships, whether out of fear or a desire to protect the feelings and reputations of others. Meanwhile, cases of *Rassenschande* served to educate the general public as to the costs of associating with Jews.

In the wake of the Nuremberg Laws the regime introduced an endless stream of prohibitions that heaped indignities and hardships one on top of the other and further separated Jewish Germans from their neighbors. Jews were forbidden from using public swimming pools; owning radios, telephones, and typewriters; attending school; practicing medicine; wearing *dirndls* and *lederhosen*; buying chocolate; shopping other than at specified times; and giving the "German greeting": "Heil Hitler!" Hundreds of such restrictions tormented and stigmatized Jews by translating antisemitic ideas into everyday routines that required no effort whatsoever from most non-Jewish Germans: they only needed to obey the law and follow their self-interest.

Jewish children were especially hard hit, because they had daily contact with non-Jews at school and on the way there and back. Many memoirs looking back on childhood in Nazi Germany include accounts of harassment, beatings, and other forms of violence. Georg Iggers, who was about ten at the time, remembers being threatened with knives and shoved down some stairs by members of the Hitler Youth in Hamburg. Susanne Weilbach recalls schoolyard bullies and mean, antisemitic, or simply ambitious teachers who could do whatever they wanted to Jewish children, knowing they were backed by official policy. When her teacher banished Jewish and Romany children to a bench at the back of the room, it is not surprising that her classmates taunted her and threw stones.

Nazism was not simply about "difference," as if "anyone different" were persecuted. In fact persecution itself served to create and enforce difference along officially designated lines.

Consider this group portrait of German girls posing outside their school in Heldenbergen, near Mainz, in 1935. The photographer has arranged them in front of the flag, with the swastika centered and rising like a sun behind them. The girls are dressed in white, wreaths of flowers in their hair, traditional garb for a Corpus Christi procession. One of the girls shown is Lilli Eckstein (later Stern), who was expelled from the school six months later for being Jewish. But which one is she? The tiny girl in the center of the front row? The dark-eyed girl next to the teacher? The girl in the back, whose polka dot dress is not quite concealed by the classmates in front of her? Or maybe she is the unsmiling girl on the far left in the middle row, the only one who appears not



German girls from Heldenbergen pose outside their school in front of the Nazi flag in 1935. To Nazi leaders, children and adolescents represented the future of the Third Reich, and there were intense pressures put on them to conform to Nazi ideals by teachers, administrators, and fellow students, as well as by the Hitler Youth and League of German Girls.

to be holding anyone's hand. The archive's description of the photo does not tell us, and the faces, hair, body types, and expressions of the girls are as different from one another as they are similar. But Nazi law and everyday practices of exclusion transformed Lilli from a member of the group to an outsider and a refugee. By the end of 1938, she and her family had left Germany and were living in Swaziland.

Most non-Jewish Germans gave little thought to the Nuremberg Laws and other anti-Jewish regulations. They seemed to be just more bureaucratic measures that would have little direct impact on their lives. Nor did the international community regard the laws as especially significant. After all, every nation reserved for itself the right to determine who counted as its citizens, on what basis, and what rights they received. Their mundane appearance notwithstanding, the Nuremberg Laws proved to be a crucial step toward the destruction of Germany's Jews. All kinds of attacks on Jews were now directly sanctioned, even mandated, by law. Moreover, once Jews were defined, it would be much easier to isolate, rob, deport, and eventually kill them.

Although focused on Jews, the Nuremberg Laws had repercussions for other target groups as well. Regulations that followed meant that under certain conditions, Sinti and Roma, as "alien to the Aryan species," could also lose the

rights of German citizens. They too faced prohibitions on marrying so-called Aryan Germans. Eager German racists applied measures described in the Nuremberg Laws to Afro-Germans as well. One woman remembers how as a small girl she was sent home by a teacher who forbade her, as a "non-Aryan," to march behind the German flag.

The phase of routinization also brought increased measures against homosexuals and men charged with homosexual acts. In June 1935, Paragraph 175 of the German criminal code was revised to expand the definition of "criminally indecent activities between men." Now sexual relations did not have to be established; any physical intimacy assumed to lead to sexual arousal could be grounds for prosecution. It became easy for denouncers to lay charges of homosexuality, and the courts used their power to impose a crackdown that brought thousands of men accused of homosexual behavior into prisons and concentration camps.

Meanwhile, Nazi sterilization developed its own routines, and new regulations extended the assault on those considered disabled. For example, a 1935 law required any pregnant woman who should have been sterilized under the 1933 law but had not been to have an abortion. The laws and regulations already introduced against people with disabilities routinized worsening conditions in institutions and hospitals around Germany. What kind of treatment would you expect health-care workers to mete out toward people whose government labeled them "useless eaters" and "unworthy lives"?

Ritualization

In addition to centralization and legalization, a third component of Nazi routinization was ritualization. After the first year, Nazi pageantry developed a ritualized rhythm. The largest event was the annual Party Rally, held each year in the southern German city of Nuremberg. It was an enormous spectacle, choreographed by propaganda experts to the smallest details. As with the early torchlight marches, these imposing shows of strength were supposed to create a sense of unanimity and invincibility so that any opponents of the system would feel isolated and helpless. In 1934 the German director Leni Riefenstahl filmed the rally and released it under the title *Triumph of the Will*. It has become one of the most famous propaganda movies of all time.

Later some Germans would describe their participation in these Nazi extravaganzas as among the high points of their lives. In particular children seemed impressed. Alfons Heck, a member of the Hitler Youth (Hitler Jugend) from a small town near the French border, described his trip to the Nuremberg Party Rally in 1935 in his book *A Child of Hitler*, which he wrote many years later. Heck was awed by the pageantry, the uniforms, and the scale of the whole

affair. No doubt those sensations contributed to his devotion to the Nazi cause and his desire to share in such amazing power.

Of course, for others inside Germany Nazi spectacles brought other kinds of routines—predictable harassment and the drudgery of confinement. In preparation for the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, an event that Nazi organizers used to showcase the “new Germany,” police forced about six hundred Sinti out of Berlin into detention in a camp near a sewage dump and the cemetery in the nearby suburb of Marzahn. Guarded by police and their dogs, the camp had only three water pumps and two toilets. Under those conditions, contagious diseases ran rampant. Otto Rosenberg, a Sinto from Berlin, had just turned nine when police shipped him, his grandmother, a teenaged aunt, and a brother and sister to Marzahn. The smell of sewage was terrible, he recalled, and people lived in huts knocked together from sheet iron they scrounged for themselves. The glories of the Third Reich looked rather different from the vantage point of what amounted to an overcrowded, filthy, open-air prison.

Self-Coordination

A fourth important aspect of routinization might be called self-coordination. In the years between 1934 and the beginning of the war, Nazism lost much of its momentum. Some people became disillusioned or bored with the new system, but most of the population, even those who were not overly enthusiastic, fell into the habit of going along with the regime. They grumbled in private, perhaps, or expressed their criticism in ineffective forms, such as jokes. In either case they posed no real threat to Nazi control.

One popular joke that poked fun both at Hitler's pretensions and at public gullibility went as follows. Hitler and Goebbels were driving through the German countryside when their car struck a dog. Hitler, who loved animals, was devastated. “Go and find the masters of that loyal German dog,” he ordered his minister of propaganda. “Apologize to them in the name of the Führer.” Sometime later Goebbels returned, beaming and bearing all kinds of gifts: bread, sausage, and beer. “What happened?” Hitler demanded. “Were they unhappy?” “Not at all, mein Führer,” Goebbels answered. “All I said was ‘Heil Hitler! Der Hund ist tot’ [The dog is dead], and they started to celebrate.”

Self-coordination also involved self-policing. Since 1933 a law called the Malicious Practices Act had banned remarks that offended or subverted Nazi authority. Such prohibitions can only be effective if people report one another, and they did so in Nazi Germany. Throughout the 1930s denunciations poured into the offices of the Gestapo, the political police in charge of crimes against the state. Some people denounced others in order to demonstrate their own loyalty to the Nazi cause. Others sought to better their positions, attack

outsiders, or just carry out old grudges. The prevalence of denunciations and police raids inspired German wits to invent two new national "saints," Maria D'enunciata and Marie Haussuchung—that is, Holy Mary the Denouncer and Mary of the House Searches.

Fear of denunciation led people to develop what became known as the "German glance"—the quick look over the shoulder before one spoke to see who might overhear. The SD or Security Service employed an elaborate network of infiltrators and informers whose job it was to report in detail on the public mood across Germany. Nazi routinization depended on consensus and co-option as well as coercion.

Nevertheless Nazi Germany cannot simply be characterized as a "police state." Indeed, as the historian Robert Gellately has shown, there were in fact relatively few police per capita in Germany in the 1930s. A high level of cooperation from the general public, not an unusual number of men in uniform, made Nazi control possible. Smooth functioning of the system did not require all Germans—or even most—to share every tenet of Nazi ideology. Enough enthusiasts could always be found to stage enormous public shows of support, such as the annual Nuremberg Party rallies. On a day-to-day basis, the Nazi regime only needed most people to obey the law, try to stay out of trouble, and promote their own interests as best they could under the current circumstances.

Preparations for War

Even during the period of routinization Hitler did not lose sight of his goals of race and space. In various ways he presided over Germany's preparation for war. After two years of secret rearmament, in 1935 Hitler's government went public. It reintroduced conscription and revealed its new military machine to the world.

No one had altered the Treaty of Versailles, but German contravention of its terms had become routine under the Nazis. The victors of World War I were not in a position to risk a new conflict in order to check German violations. Impoverished by the war and the difficult years that followed and faced with their own problems at home, the British and the French had no desire to play the role of international police. The United States had retreated into isolationism, and most of its people opposed its government involving them again in the turmoil of European affairs.

In 1936 Hitler took his biggest foreign policy gamble so far. Under the Treaty of Versailles, the westernmost part of Germany along the Rhine River had been demilitarized to provide a buffer zone for France. A year after reintroduction of conscription, rumors began to circulate that Hitler intended to reoccupy the Rhineland with Germany's new military. For some months he

seemed to waver, waiting until the Winter Olympics in Berlin had ended and collecting the views of his inner circle, Germany's diplomats, and military leaders. By the beginning of March, he had made his decision and prepared to act.

Hitler made the announcement in a speech on March 7 to the Reichstag and, by radio, to the people of Germany. It was a lengthy and in places emotional speech, which denounced Versailles and railed against Communism. Hitler saved the punch line for the end. "In the interest of the primitive rights of a people to the security of its borders and safeguarding of its defense capability," he proclaimed, "the German Reich government has therefore from today restored the full and unrestricted sovereignty of the Reich in the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland." The six hundred deputies in the Reichstag, all in Nazi uniform, went wild, stretching out their arms in the Nazi salute and screaming "Heil!"

Meanwhile, German troops were approaching the Hohenzollern Bridge across the Rhine River in the city of Cologne. Propaganda minister Goebbels had arranged for plane-loads of journalists to be on hand to record the event, and thousands of Germans crowded into nearby streets to cheer the soldiers as they crossed into the demilitarized zone. Even in this moment of national euphoria, Hitler and his advisers retained some caution. They made sure that the forward troops were instructed to withdraw and fight if they met military resistance from the French. As Hitler had expected, the French did not respond by sending in troops. Instead the gamble paid off by giving Hitler's prestige at home its most enormous boost yet.

Even as he publicly pledged his commitment to European peace, Hitler announced to his inner circle in 1936 that Germany must be ready for war within four years. To that end he named his old associate Göring head of a "Four-Year Plan" to prepare the German economy and military for war. Göring took over economic planning, and a year later the Minister of Economics, the banker and old-guard figure Hjalmar Schacht (1877–1970), resigned.

In the winter of 1937–1938, Hitler completed the routinization and consolidation of his rule by dumping the old elites who had been so instrumental in bringing him to power. Those old-fashioned conservatives had been useful throughout the phases of Nazi revolution and routinization. They had lent respectability to the regime when it needed it and had provided expertise and continuity as it consolidated its power. Now, as Hitler prepared to move to a more aggressive phase, they had become a burden.

In November 1937 Hitler met with leaders of the German army, navy, and air force. It had been two years since Germany had announced its rearmament. Since 1936 German forces had been involved in the Spanish Civil War on the side of General Francisco Franco and the enemies of the Spanish Republic. Hitler had pushed German intervention even though many

Germans opposed it. Because the Soviet Union backed the Republic in Spain, support of Franco gave Hitler a way to attack Communism. Moreover, Mussolini was actively behind Franco as well. So Spain offered a chance for Germany and Italy to practice cooperation in the spirit of their leaders' mutual admiration. For the Germans the Spanish Civil War was also an opportunity to try out new military equipment. In particular they broke in their new air force by bombing Spanish towns and cities. Now Hitler was ready to risk more.

Hitler gave those gathered at the November meeting a lengthy harangue on Germany's need for more space. They were skeptical. How could Germany be ready for war? Hitler's response to their misgivings was typical. In early 1938 he launched a purge of the military leadership, replacing old conservatives with men more amenable to Nazi plans. He retired fourteen senior generals, replaced or pensioned approximately sixty others, and assumed command of the armed forces as minister of war.

Hitler made a clean sweep of all positions directly related to his plans for war. He replaced the conservative foreign minister Constantin von Neurath with the loyal Nazi Joachim von Ribbentrop. The Nazi general Walter von Brauchitsch became head of the army in place of Werner von Fritsch. There were new Nazi ambassadors to Rome, Tokyo, and Vienna.

Hitler's methods in early 1938 were quite different from those he had used to purge the Stormtroopers less than four years earlier. This time he employed less violent means, in keeping with the stature of the individuals involved and the spirit of routinization rather than revolution. But the tactics were no less vicious for all their bloodlessness. For example, Hitler disposed of the war minister Werner von Blomberg by stirring up a scandal around his new wife. She was a former prostitute, the Nazi press claimed; how could a man thus compromised hold a position of such responsibility? The fact that both Hitler and Göring had served as witnesses at the wedding was conveniently omitted, and Blomberg went abroad in disgrace.

Two years earlier, rumors of homosexual activities on the part of Fritsch, the head of the army, had been ignored. Now Fritsch had to go, and the old charges provided the perfect means to force him out. He, like the others, had served his purpose; he had supported Hitler's regime in its early stages and helped provide it with a veneer of legitimacy by linking the new system to familiar, experienced military leaders. After four full years in power Hitler had consolidated his position, and preparations for war were under way. Fritsch and Blomberg had outlived their usefulness to Hitler, and it was no problem to find replacements eager for their positions. Meanwhile those members of the military elite who kept their jobs fell into line with barely a murmur. It would become much more difficult to challenge Nazi rule now that not only the police but the military was firmly in hand.

Contrary to the image presented by Nazi propaganda—Germans marching in massive columns, their arms raised as one in the salute to Hitler—not all Germans fell into line. Friedrich Thimme, a trained historian and fervent German patriot who had headed the Foreign Office's division on the so-called War Guilt Question in the 1920s, railed in his private and not-so-private correspondence against Hitler and his henchmen and refused to break ties to his Jewish friends. Thimme's daughter Annelise, a teenaged schoolgirl in Berlin in the early years of the Third Reich, announced to her classmates that obviously the Nazis had lit the Reichstag fire themselves, and she scoffed at Nazified teachers who preached the party line in the classroom. With a group of high-spirited schoolmates, Annelise once played a trick on one of the worst offenders. One at a time the girls rode by the teacher, who was on her own bicycle, calling out "Heil Hitler" so that the woman repeatedly had to raise her right arm in salute until she lost her balance and fell. In a small way, that youthful prank reveals the continued presence in Hitler's Germany of people who for all kinds of reasons—family ties, personal loyalties, religious and moral principles, political allegiances—remained skeptical and even critical of their government and its actions.

In early 1938, however, most Germans were not thinking about challenging Nazi rule. Looking back on his youth in Germany, Alfons Heck can see some of the factors that made him an enthusiastic Nazi. There was the indoctrination in school and in the Hitler Youth, for example, and the unrelenting propaganda. But there were also concrete ways that Nazism benefited him. It promised action, rewards for his ambition, power, a chance to be an insider, and a role in something enormously successful. Heck, like many of Hitler's German supporters, was no brainwashed automaton. He was just one of millions of "ordinary people" who, for all kinds of ordinary reasons, endorsed and accepted a brutal system.