

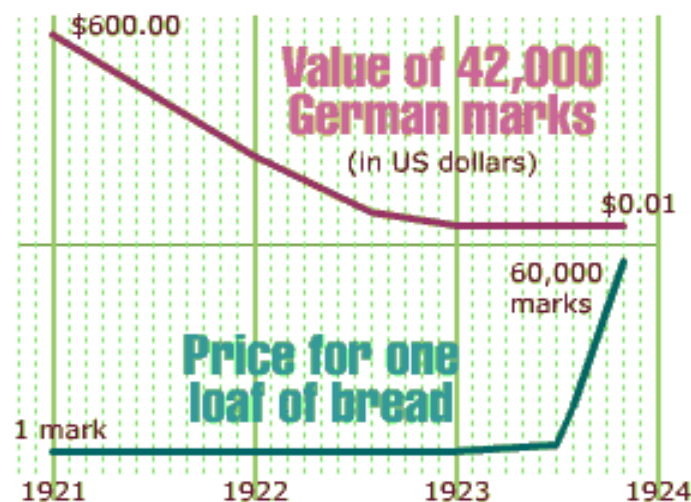
Hitler: Conditions in the Country

Many Germans did not believe that the German army had actually been defeated in World War I in 1918 because Germany had not been invaded. They believed that the army had been "stabbed in the back" by the "November Criminals," or the politicians who had signed the Armistice (ceasefire)

Several of the clauses of the Treaty of Versailles were thought to be very harsh. It was going to be almost impossible to pay the **Reparations**. In fact, the German government gave up after only one year, and the **War Guilt Clause** seemed particularly unfair. How could Germany be the only country to blame for the war? After all it had started when a Serbian shot an Austrian.

Feelings like these led to a great deal of unrest in Germany in the years from 1919 to 1922.

- Returning soldiers formed armed gangs who roamed the streets attacking people.
- There was an **attempted revolution by the Communists** in January 1919.
- There were many murders, including a government minister who had signed the Armistice.
- The government, the Weimar Republic, became more and more unpopular and appeared to be very **weak** because it was not able to deal with the revolutions and the unrest.
- A number of extremist political parties were set up, including the **German Workers' Party**, which Adolf Hitler took over in 1921. He based his support upon the hatred that many Germans felt for the Treaty of Versailles.
- In 1922 and 1923 Germany was hit by **Hyperinflation**. This is the name given to the massive rise in prices that took place and affected everyone in Germany.
- Many Germans found that their life-savings were lost. People who lived on pensions were ruined.
- Prices rose every day and every hour and people rushed to buy goods as soon as they were paid. They bought anything, because otherwise their money would lose value immediately. People began to exchange goods (barter) rather than use money and shopkeepers tried to keep their shops closed and avoid selling anything.
- On October 24, 1929, the American Stock Exchange crashed. This led to the **Depression** of the 1930s, which affected Germany more than any other country. By 1932 6,000,000 Germans were out of work. This was much more than in any other country.



Hitler: Early Life

Adolf Hitler was a man who managed to simultaneously inspire unfaltering reverence and unbridled fear. He was a paradox, a man who wielded supreme authority over the lives of millions, yet hardly looked to be a figure of terror. Five feet nine inches tall, with wide hips, short legs, a comb-over hairstyle, and a Charlie Chaplin toothbrush mustache, he looked more like a comic figure. But those that came in contact with him felt the sheer force of his personality. His steely, pale blue eyes radiated a power and magnetism that frightened even the most hardened Nazis. During his reign, many outsiders thought it a privilege to spend personal time with the **Fuehrer**, but those that did have that "privilege" were desperate to be out of his company. His overpowering personality, furious rages, and unending quirks drove people away.



Despite his stiff, unyielding persona, Hitler enjoyed playing practical jokes. A particular favorite was to pretend that he was angry with one of his subordinates just to see the frightened reaction. He liked to choose a victim and have one of his men make a telephone call to him with false threats from the Fuehrer. Hitler stood nearby in sidesplitting laughter imagining the terrified reaction of the man receiving the telephone call.

Hitler was a **hypochondriac** and constantly fretted over his health. He was a vegetarian, never drank alcohol, and he never smoked. Despite concerns about his health, he devoured boxes of sweets and heaped teaspoonfuls of sugar into his tea. He had his personal doctors, Theodor Morell and Karl Brandt, examine him and then he skeptically questioned their diagnosis. In 1936, Dr. Morell prescribed Mutaflor for Hitler's stomach cramps and it not only cured his cramps, but it also cleared up a rash of eczema on his leg. Hitler was so impressed, that he made Dr. Morell his main personal doctor. Many people considered Dr. Morell a quack, but Hitler trusted him. His trust continued despite the fact that his cramps returned and he developed chronic insomnia. Since Hitler's mother died of cancer, he desperately feared that he would be stricken with the disease as well. His fear intensified when he had surgery to remove a polyp from his throat. Even though he was reassured by doctors that the polyp was benign, he was convinced that it was cancer.

At dinner parties, Hitler treated his guests to lengthy monologues on various subjects that interested him, most notably architecture, history, art, and food. He never asked for anyone else's opinion and if a foolhardy guest disagreed with him, they were given a swift and furious tongue-lashing. His tantrums were legendary and those who witnessed them first hand quickly realized that the legend had no exaggeration. He was capable of bone-shattering rages, made worse by their unpredictability. During his rages, the blood rushed to his head, he bellowed madly, beat his fists on the furniture, and threw himself up against the wall with his arms stretched out as if crucified.

In addition to his rages, the deadly vengeance of Adolf Hitler knew no bounds. When he felt challenged, threatened, or betrayed, his response was the total annihilation of the violator. His vengeance ran so deep that it shocked the other Nazi leaders as well as the hardened German generals. When Hitler set his mind to retribution, nothing mattered; he did not want to hear apologies or explanations, when someone crossed the line there was no turning back.

Hitler: Rise to Power

- Hitler wanted to attract as many people as possible to the party, so he changed the name to the National Socialist German Workers Party. He hoped that the word "National" would attract nationalists who wanted to rebuild Germany after the First World War and the word "Socialist" would attract socialists who wanted to improve the lives of working people in Germany.
- The confusion caused by hyperinflation led Adolf Hitler to believe that he could take power in Munich in November 1923, the Beer Hall Putsch. The attempt failed. Hitler was arrested and tried for high treason. He was found guilty and sentenced to five years in prison. While Hitler was in prison after the Beer Hall Putsch, he wrote "Mein Kampf" (My Struggle), which was a cross between his autobiography and a list of his political ideas.
- When Hitler was released from prison, he set up a proper political party with a national organization. He appointed Josef Goebbels as head of propaganda. His job was to put the Nazi message across as clearly as possible.
- The Nazi Party was well organized and supported a millionaire who owned 53 newspapers.
- Hitler hired a private plane to fly around Germany. He was the first politician to do this. This meant that he could speak in many towns on the same day.
- Hitler told the German people that the problems of the Depression were not their fault. He blamed the Jews for Germany's problems. He used them as a **scapegoat**. Hitler said that he would be able to solve the problems and promised different things to different groups of people. To businessmen he promised that he would control the Trade Unions and deal with the Communists. To workers he promised that he would provide jobs.
- Hitler said that he would do away with the Treaty of Versailles, which had treated Germany so badly. Hitler was always backed up by large numbers of disciplined and uniformed followers - Sturm Abteilung (**Storm Troopers**) - who gave him the authority sort out Germany's problems.
- As the situation in Germany became more and more desperate, people were more and more ready to listen to the ideas of Hitler. In January 1933, President Hindenburg was persuaded to appoint Hitler as Chancellor of Germany. He believed he would be able to control Hitler and use his popularity to create a majority in the Reichstag (the Congress). He was wrong: When he took office, Hitler was leading a coalition government. There were only three Nazis apart from himself. He immediately called a general election to try to win a majority.
- On 27th February, just a week before the election, the Reichstag caught fire and burnt down. A communist, Franz van der Lubbe was arrested inside. Hitler used this as an excuse to arrest many members of the Communist Party, his main opponents.
- The general election took place on 5th March 1933. The Nazis won 288 seats. This was not a majority, but 52 Nationalists supported them. At the first meeting of the Reichstag on 23rd March, the 81 Communists stayed away. Hitler could now do as he liked.
- The new Reichstag immediately passed the **Enabling Act** - this made Hitler dictator of Germany for four years. He immediately began to use this power to crush all opposition to him in Germany. All trade unions were abolished and all political parties banned, except for the Nazis. In November 1933 in another general election, in which only Nazi candidates were allowed, 92% of the people supported the Nazis.

Hitler: Priorities

Hitler was most infamous for his anti-Semitism, or hatred of Jews. The following is a letter written by Hitler on September 16, 1919 where he explains this philosophy.

Dear Herr Gemlich,

The danger posed by Jews for our people today is seen in the way our people avoid the Jews. This distaste for Jews occurs mostly from personal contact and from the personal impression that the individual Jew leaves--almost always an unfavorable one. For this reason, anti-Semitism is too easily characterized as a mere emotional phenomenon. And yet, this is incorrect. Anti-Semitism is also a political movement that cannot be defined by emotions only, but by also requires us to look at the facts. These are the facts: First, Jewry is absolutely a race and not a religious association. Even the Jews never designate themselves as Jewish Germans, Jewish Poles, or Jewish Americans but always as German, Polish, or American Jews. Jews have never yet adopted much more than the language of the foreign nations among whom they live. A German who is forced to make use of the French language in France, Italian in Italy, Chinese in China does not thereby become a Frenchman, Italian, or Chinaman. It's the same with the Jew who lives among us and is forced to make use of the German language. He does not thereby become a German. Thus, being Jewish is a race, not a religion, and Jews are NOT true Germans.

Jews do not determine the value of a person by his character or by the significance of his achievements. Instead, they only care about the size of his fortune and his money. They don't measure the value of a nation by its morality and achievements. Instead, they only care about the wealth of its material possessions.

This striving after money and power serve the purposes of the Jew who is unethical and cheating. Jews destroy the national pride of a country. Everything men strive after as a higher goal, be it religion, socialism, democracy, is to the Jew only means to an end, the way to satisfy his lust for gold and domination. Jews are like a racial tuberculosis of the nations.

Thus, our I have reached this conclusion: Anti-Semitism must be the system we follow and it must lead us to systematically and legally combat and eliminate of the privileges of the Jews. The ultimate objective must be the irrevocable (irreversible) removal of the Jews in general.

To achieve this, a government of strength, not of weakness, is necessary. For this to happen it will require a rebirth of the moral and spiritual powers of our nation. And this rebirth cannot be begun by the current government, which is influenced by certain party dogmas, an irresponsible press, or internationalist phrases and slogans. It requires the ruthless creation of a new, stronger, and nationalistic leadership with an inner sense of responsibility. I will lead this new government!

Respectfully,
Adolf Hitler

Hitler: Maintaining Power

After the passage of the **Enabling Act**, which made Hitler dictator for 4 years, he quickly worked to secure his power:

- He eliminated his opponents within the Nazi Party in the "Night of the Long Knives". Untrustworthy members of the secret police, Sturm Abteilung, or SA (Storm Troopers) were murdered. The main aim of this was to get rid of Ernst Roehm, the leader of the S.A. Roehm had been demanding that he should be made the commander in chief of the German army. Hitler was frightened that Roehm would use the S.A. to get rid of him and seize power.
- When President Hindenburg died in August 1934, Hitler was finally able to gain total power and combined the posts of chancellor and president, giving himself the title of Fuhrer. All members of the armed forces now had to swear an oath of loyalty to him.

Hitler then made sweeping changes to maintain his power:

- Books of nursery rhymes were published which encouraged children to play with guns and enjoy fighting. Children's songs were about bloodshed, violence and anti-Semitism.
- All school lessons were based on Nazi ideas. School textbooks were rewritten and included Nazi versions of German history. Math problems involved calculations about bombing Poland and killing invalids. Nazi beliefs were part of school in subjects such as Ideology and Eugenics.
- All children had to join Nazi youth organizations by 1939. They joined at the age of five and stayed until eighteen. Boys joined the Hitler Youth. Girls joined the League of German Maidens.
- Children were used to control their parents by being encouraged to report what they did and said. Hitler realized that older people would be less enthusiastic about his ideas, so he made every effort to win the minds of the next generation.

In 1933 unemployment in Germany stood at 6,000,000; by 1938 it was 500,000 and by 1939 it had virtually disappeared. This was one of the most important reasons why most Germans accepted Hitler's ideas; he offered security after the Depression.

- In fact the reduction in unemployment was deceptive. Many of the unemployed were absorbed into the Labour Service and the army. Most women were forced out of work and many projects, like the Autobahns, were built without machinery. This meant that more workers were needed.
- Trade Unions were banned and were replaced by the Nazi Labour Front. This organized festivals and demonstrations.

Most Germans seem to have accepted Hitler's ideas, but for those who did not life could be unpleasant:

- All other political parties were banned. the leaders of the Communist and Socialist parties were arrested and put in Concentration Camps. the first of these were opened in 1933. the Reichstag ceased to have any importance.
- Only Nazis could become civil servants, government officials or teachers.
- A People's Court was set up to try cases of treason, but this could include almost anything. It worked in secret and there was no means to appeal, except to Hitler himself.
- The Nazi Party took control of every area of life in Germany. A secret police force was set up, the "Geheime Staats Polizei" (Gestapo). This was used to spy on people at all times. Germans learned to keep their mouths shut. Any sign of complaint could lead to arrest and "re-education" or to complete disappearance. In every block of flats there was a warden who checked on people's comings and goings.
- The Nazis controlled all books and newspapers, films and radio programs. Any writers, painters or composers that the Nazis did not approve of were banned.