What did Hitler and the Nazi Party believe in?

A.) The 25-Point Programme of the Nazi Party
This stated the aims of the Nazi Party. Hitler helped to write this in 1920.
- Destroy the Treaty of Versailles. End reparation payments.
- Take over land in Eastern Europe in order to provide ‘living space’ (lebensraum) for the growing German population.
- Only those of German blood may be members of the nation. No Jewish may be a member of the nation.
- Provide generous old age pensions, help for small businesses and work for all.

B.) Key Points from Mein Kampf
Whilst in prison, after the failed Munich Putsch, Hitler wrote Mein Kampf (‘My Struggle’). This book outlined his main ideas about how Germany should be ruled.
- Germany should have one strong leader. Debate and discussion produce weak government. Instead of democracy, decisions should be taken by one man.
- Communism is a threat to Germany. The Communist Party should be destroyed.
- The Aryans (white Europeans) are the Master Race. All other races (especially the Jews) are inferior.
- Rebuild the German army. Armed struggle is an essential part of life.
How did Hitler rise to power? Part One

Adolf Hitler became leader of Germany in 1933. He did not seize power in the same way that Stalin became leader of the Soviet Union. After the First World War Germany became a democracy. Men and women living in Germany could vote in elections to choose who should run Germany. So, you need to find out how the Nazis became the most popular party in Germany. The new government was known as the Weimar Republic. It soon faced many problems. The way that the government dealt with these problems made it unpopular.

Problem 1: The Treaty of Versailles

The First World War ended in November 1918. By June 1919 the Allies (France, Britain and the United States) had decided on a peace treaty. This became known as the Treaty of Versailles. The new German government was not invited to take part in the discussions about the peace treaty and they had little choice but to accept the agreement. The German people hated the treaty and many blamed the new government for ‘accepting’ it.

The terms of the Treaty of Versailles:

- Germany was blamed for the war. It had to pay reparations to countries that had been damaged as a result of the war (mainly France and Belgium). In 1921 the sum that Germany had to pay was fixed at £6.6 billion.
- The German army was reduced to just 100,000 men. The German navy was also reduced and Germany was not allowed to have submarine, tanks or an air force.
- Germany lost 13% of its land. This included land that was rich in important raw materials such as coal.

Problem 2: Fear of communism

Communists living in Germany wanted to seize power for themselves. They did not believe that the new government would do enough to help working people. There were communist uprisings in 1919 and 1920. These uprisings scared many people living in Germany. Business owners and farmers were particularly concerned. They had seen what had happened in the Soviet Union where the communist government had taken over big industries and farmers’ land. Groups like the Nazi Party and the German National Party hated communism. They often fought battles with the communists in the streets.

DISCUSS

Today Hitler’s ideas seem very extreme. Why, in the 1920s and early 1930s, might the German people have found some of his ideas attractive and wanted to vote for the Nazi Party?
How did Hitler rise to power? Part Two

Problem 3: Economic Difficulties

Germany was also struggling to keep up with the reparation payments to the Allies. In 1923 French and Belgian troops marched into the Ruhr and seized control of all mines, factories and railways. This made the German government even more short of money. The government printed more money to pay German workers in the Ruhr who had gone on strike, and to help pay its debts.

However, the more money that they printed the less it was worth. Prices rose at an incredible rate and there was hyper-inflation. People needed more and more money to buy things. Workers found that wage increases did not keep up with rising prices. By November 1923 an egg cost 80 million marks and a glass of beer 150 million marks. People with savings were the biggest losers. Pensioners were badly hit. In 1919, 6,600 marks was a small fortune. By 1923 it would not even buy a stamp for a letter.

The problems started in the USA. Their stock market suddenly crashed and businesses went bankrupt. This affected many countries in Europe as the USA stopped buying foreign goods and loaning money to other countries. Germany was affected particularly badly because it relied so heavily on loans from the USA. Without the huge loans from the USA, German firms went bankrupt and unemployment rose to six million. Many German people lost their homes and millions lived in poverty.

The Great Depression made many people angry. They blamed the political parties that had been running the country and started to question the democratic way that Germany was governed. Support for the more extreme political parties like the Nazis and the communists grew.
How did Hitler rise to power? Part Three

The Nazis take advantage

The Nazi Party was well organised and it was able to take full advantage of the problems that the government faced. Hitler was a powerful and inspiring public speaker. He was able to make people believe that he alone could save them from the problems Germany faced. Nazi propaganda was also very effective. They used the latest technology – loudspeakers, slide shows and films – to spread their message. They also used powerful propaganda posters with simple slogans to spread their key ideas.

In the 1932 elections, the Nazi Party won 37% of the vote. They became the most popular political party in Germany and the largest party in the German Parliament (the Reichstag). In January 1933, Hitler made a political deal with Franz von Papen (a well-connected politician). They agreed to form a new government with Hitler as Chancellor and von Papen as Vice-Chancellor. Hitler was now leader of Germany.

Hitler becomes dictator

Opposition to the Nazis was weak and divided. The Nazis’ two main rivals, the Communist Party (KPD) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD), were not prepared to work together to stop the Nazis. Once in power, Hitler moved quickly to strengthen his position.

In February 1933, the Reichstag building where the German Parliament met was burnt down. A Dutch communist, Marinus van der Lubbe, was found at the scene. The Nazis claimed that this was part of a communist plot to take over the country. Hitler was able to persuade the German President to grant him emergency powers to deal with the threat. The Nazis used this extra power to attack their political opponents. Thousands of people were arrested, political meetings were banned, and opposition newspapers were closed down.

However, Hitler, like Stalin, wanted total power. On 24th March he was able to push through an Enabling Law. This law gave Hitler the power to pass any law he wanted without going through the Reichstag or the German Parliament. The Reichstag has placed all the power in the hands of Hitler and his closest advisors. Germany was now a dictatorship.

By the end of 1933, all political parties except for the Nazis had been banned. In 1934, the entire army, the one group who had the power to overthrow Hitler, swore an oath of personal loyalty to Adolf Hitler.
Terror – how did Hitler use fear to keep people in line?

Hitler did not want any opposition within Germany. In order to achieve this, the Nazis used a mixture of propaganda, censorship and terror. The man at the centre of the network of terror was Heinrich Himmler (right).

The SS

Himmler built up the strength of the SS (originally Hitler’s personal bodyguard). By 1939 it had 240,000 members. Recruitment to the SS was very strict and they were trained to be ruthless and fiercely loyal to Hitler. The SS had the power to arrest people without trial and could search houses without permission from the courts. They also ran the concentration camps.

The Courts

The law courts were under Nazi control so a fair trial was impossible. All judges had to swear an oath of loyalty to Hitler. The number of offences carrying the death penalty increased from three, when the Nazis came to power, to 46. Even ‘crimes’ such as listening to a foreign radio station or telling an anti-Nazi joke could be punished by death.

Concentration camps

The Nazis set up concentration camps as soon as they came to power. At first, opponents to the Nazis were sent to makeshift prisons, set up in disused factories. Later, the camps were purpose-built and prisoners were forced to do hard labour. Food was very limited and discipline was harsh. Beatings and random executions were common and very few people emerged from the camps alive.

The Gestapo

The Gestapo were the secret police. They could open mail, tap telephones and arrest and torture people without going through the courts. The Gestapo set up a huge network of informers who reported on local people that they believed were ‘anti-Nazi’. Every 30 or 40 houses had a Block Warden, a local Nazi, who checked up on people and reported back to either the Gestapo or SS.
How did Hitler control Germany? Part 2

**Censorship and Propaganda – how did Hitler control ideas?**

Many Germans did not have to be terrorised into supporting Hitler. They went along with the Nazi Party’s policies because they believed that Germany was benefiting from the way that the country was being governed. Propaganda played an important role in convincing people that the Nazis were doing good things for the German people. The man who controlled Nazi propaganda was **Josef Goebbels** (right).

Goebbels made sure that the German people received one-sided information through the media. Nazi achievements were exaggerated; Nazi ideas were presented in the most attractive way possible, and Nazi failing were hidden from the public.

### Rallies

Goebbels organised mass rallies, marches, torchlight processions and special celebrations. These made the German people feel that they were part of something special and exciting.

![Rally](image_url)

### Books, newspapers and radio

As soon as the Nazis came to power, Goebbels organised public book-burnings. Books by political opponents, Jews, and anyone else the Nazis disapproved of were burned on huge bonfires. All new books were censored – nothing could be published without Goebbels’ permission.

Two-thirds of Germany’s newspapers were closed down. Those that remained received daily instructions about what to print. Display boards were set up in public places so that everyone could read these newspapers.

Goebbels quickly took control of all radio stations. Hitler’s speeches were broadcast as were German music and programmes on German history. Cheap radios were made so that as many people as possible could listen to these programmes. In addition, loudspeakers were set up in workplaces, streets and bars so that people could listen to important speeches and programmes.

![Radio](image_url)

### Films, art and posters

Goebbels controlled all the films made in Germany. Many were adventure stories, comedies or love stories, but newsreel films, full of the messages about the greatness of Hitler and the Nazi Party, were always shown before the main feature film. Some films were made on Goebbels’ orders and carried very strong Nazi messages.

Artists were restricted in the same way as writers. Only Nazi-approved artists could publish their work or put on exhibitions. Paintings or sculptures showing heroic-looking Aryans, military figures or images of the ideal Aryan family were encouraged. Images of Hitler were everywhere.
How did Nazi rule change life in Germany? Part 1

Life for workers
The Nazis were able to reduce unemployment by increasing the size of the armed forces from 100,000 to 1,400,000. All males between the ages of 18 and 25 had to do two year’s military service. New tanks, aeroplanes and battleships were built and lots of jobs were created to build the weapons and equip the army.

Also, the Nazis put the unemployed to work on job schemes, helping to build new motorways, schools, hospitals and other public facilities. The Nazis stopped paying benefits to anyone who was unemployed or refused to join the job schemes. Workers on the job schemes were paid less than they had received from unemployment benefits.

Trade Unions were banned. All workers had to join the German Labour Front (DAF), which was run by the Nazis. Schemes such as Strength Through Joy gave workers cheap theatre and cinema tickets, and organised leisure activities, which included holidays, trips, courses and sports events. Better meals and facilities were also provided. But in the factories working hours increased and wages remained low.

How much did life change for women and the family?
The Nazis believed that women should be mothers and housewives – not workers. Lots of women employed as lawyers, doctors, teachers and civil servants were sacked. Hitler believed that women had no role to play in politics or government.

The Nazis did not want women to stay single. Marriage and having children were encouraged. Loans were offered to married couples. The more children they had the less they had to pay back. However, not all women were allowed to have children. Women with inherited diseases had to be sterilised.

Slimming was frowned upon as the Nazis wanted women to be strong and solid in order to have lots of babies. Women were encouraged to wear simple rather than fashionable clothes. Wearing trousers or high heels, having permed or dyed hair, using make-up or smoking in public were all discouraged.

DISCUSS
What message is being put forward by the Nazis in Source 16? Think about how each role within the family is portrayed.
How did Nazi rule change life in Germany? Part 2

Life for young people
The Nazis knew that they could never be sure that they had the support of all adults, but Hitler believed that if they could control young people then they could control the future. As Source 17 shows, Hitler had very clear ideas on how young people should be educated.

Education
Hitler wanted all young people to become loyal Nazis. This was to be achieved both inside and outside of school. The school curriculum was used to teach what the Nazis wanted young people to think. Teachers who refused to teach Nazi ideas were sacked. Here’s an overview of what lessons were like:
- Lots of physical exercise – to make youngsters fit and tough. Boxing was compulsory for boys.
- Lots of German history – to teach pupils about Germany’s military victories of the past and how Adolf Hitler was the saviour of Germany.
- Girls were taught home-making and childcare.
- In biology, pupils were told that they were special and that the ‘Aryan race’ was superior in intelligence to other races. To keep the Aryan race strong you would be taught about the ‘danger’ of mixing with other races.
- Maths was used to help young people understand guns and artillery.

The Hitler Youth
Outside of school all children aged between ten and eighteen were pressurised into joining the Hitler Youth. By 1939, nearly all young Germans had joined the Hitler Youth. All other youth movements were banned. The Hitler Youth provided holidays, camping and other sports activities for young people. Most Hitler Youth meetings also contained a short lecture on Nazi ideas, and members would be expected to be able to answer questions on Nazi achievements and military history. The main aims of the Hitler Youth were to make sure that young people grew up to be loyal Nazis and to prepare young men for a life in the army.

Boys spent a lot of their time doing physical activities that would make them brave, fit and tough soldiers. They were expected to be able to complete a one-and-a-half-day cross-country march, do close combat exercise, learn how to use weapons and even jump out of a first-floor window wearing full army battledress.

SOURCE 17
Hitler’s words on youth, from Hitler Speaks by Hermann Rauschning, 1939.

In my great educational work I am beginning with the young. My magnificent youngsters! With them, I can make a new world!

My teaching is hard. Weakness has to be knocked out of them. The world will shrink in alarm from the youngsters who grow up in my schools: a violent, masterful, brave, cruel, younger generation. I will have no intellectual training. Knowledge is ruin to my young men.

DISCUSS
What can you learn from Sources 17 and 18 about Hitler’s attitude towards educating young people?

SOURCE 18 – Hitler Youth members jumping over fire to demonstrate their bravery.