



Key topic 2: Hitler's rise to power, 1919–33

1 Nazi policies towards women



What was the Nazi's view of women and the family?

The Nazis wanted women to adopt the traditional role of housewife and mother. The role of providing for the family was meant to be carried out by the man who would be looked after by his wife. This did not mean that women were not important to the Nazis. Indeed, Hitler stated that women were equally important to men – their roles were different, but vital to Germany.

Marriage and Family:

The Nazis wanted higher birth-rates. More people would mean more workers and soldiers. They believed women should devote themselves to rearing as many children as possible. The Nazis believed women should develop the skills of housecraft – cooking, needlework and cleaning.



A 1939 painting by an official Nazi party artist. It shows the ideal view of the Nazi family.

Appearance: A natural look was encouraged. No make-up. Hair should be plaited or tied back. Long skirts, flat shoes broad hips, blonde and athletic.

Employment: Women needed to stay at home and raise the family and care for their husbands. Men should be the main breadwinners. The Nazis disliked women being in the professions (e.g. doctor or lawyer).

What were the Nazi policies towards women and the family?

When the Nazis came to power in 1933, they introduced policies to try and implement their ideal view of women and the family. In 1934, Gertrud Scholtz-Klink was appointed **Reich Women's Leader** to oversee the policy towards women. Her aim was to make women serve the Nazi government's aims.

Deutsches Frauenwerk:

All women's organisations were forced to come together into one Nazi organisation called the **Deutsches Frauenwerk**, or **DFW** (German Women's Enterprise). Any organisation that refused to join, was banned. This gave the Nazis control over all of Germany's women's groups.

The DFW was able to influence millions of women and spread Nazi ideas. The DFW has 6 million members. By 1939, 1.7 million women had attended DFW courses in how to be a good housewife.

Law for the Encouragement of Marriage, 1933:

The Birth rate in Germany was falling. To encourage people to have more babies, the Nazis passed this law which:

- Gave loans of about 8 months wages to encourage couples to marry. The loans were only available if the wife stayed at home and did not have a job.
- If a couple had a baby, 25% of the loan was written off. If a couple had four children, the loan was paid off.

Poor families were given family allowance. These allowances sometimes provided more money than the families wages.

Divorce Laws, 1938:

If a woman could not, or would not have a baby with her husband, or if she had an abortion, he could divorce her.

The Mother's Cross:

This was a medal given to women for the number of children they had. Bronze for four or five, silver for six or seven, gold for eight.

The Hitler Youth had to salute wearers of the gold award.

Lebensborn, 1935:

In 1935, the SS leader, Heinrich Himmler, introduced the **Lebensborn** (Fount of Life) scheme. It provided childcare and payments to women who had babies with SS men. Later, it encouraged single women to have babies with SS men. It was an attempt to breed "genetically pure" children from the so-called elite SS men. Between 1938 and 1941, 540 mothers gave birth in just one of the Lebensborn hospitals. In total, about 8000 babies were born in this way.

Propaganda – Kinder, Küche and Kirche:

The Nazis used propaganda to encourage women to conform to their idea of a perfect woman. They told women to concentrate on the three Ks - Kinder, Küche and Kirche – Children, Kitchen and Church. This was a popular idea with many German women who liked the traditional view of women.

What were the Nazi policies towards women and employment?

As soon as they took power, the Nazis started to pass laws and adopt policies to encourage women not to go out to work:

- From 1933, women were banned from taking up jobs as civil servants, doctors and teachers. By 1934, 360,000 women had given up work.
- From 1936, women could not be lawyers or judges.
- Schoolgirls were trained for motherhood.
- From 1937, schools that trained girls for university were closed. The number of women entering university fell by almost two-thirds.

However, from 1937, Germany started to push men into the armed forces so there was a shortage of workers. Marriage loans were abolished and young women were encouraged to work. Some of this work was done unpaid.

How Successful were the Nazi policies towards women?

Success:

Many women enjoyed their role – They liked the traditional nature of the policies and wanted to be mothers and wives rather than going out to work. The policy was popular with most people.

Some women stopped working.

Fewer women went to university.

The birth rate increased.

Unemployment amongst men fell – they no longer competed with women for work.

Failure:

Some women, who wanted a wider role in society, hated the new policies.

Women in the professions were angry at losing their job.

Some women felt being at home was boring.

By 1939, there were 7 million women in work. This was much higher than the 5 million who had been in work in 1933.

Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, the Reich Women's Leader, was unpopular with many women.

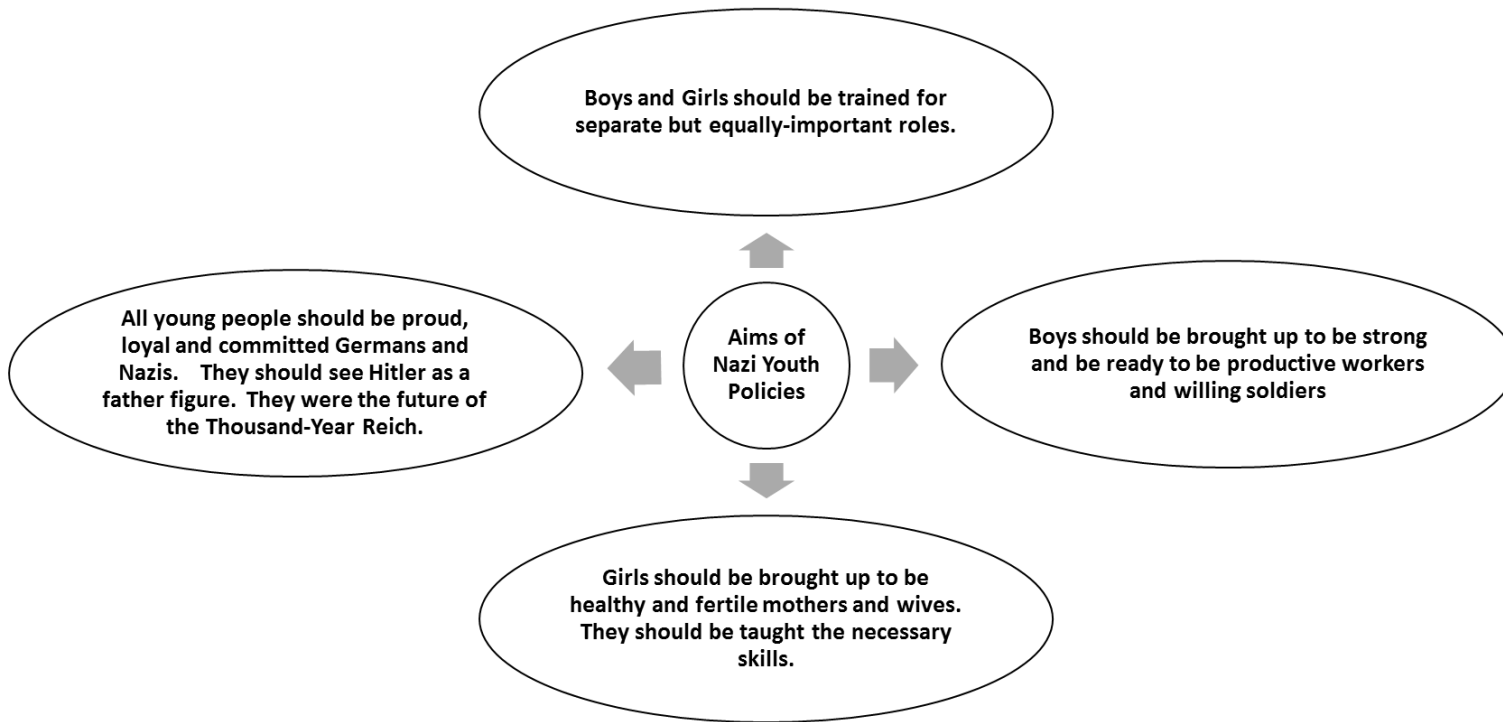
Key topic 2: Hitler's rise to power, 1919–33

2 Nazi policies towards the young



What were the aims of the Nazi policies towards young people?

The Nazi's policy towards young people was not aimed at helping them. It was about making sure that young people were suited to serve the Nazi state. Hitler wanted to create a "Thousand Year Reich" and that would mean training young people to serve the state as good Nazis.



Nazi Youth Movements:

Before Hitler became leader of Germany, many young people were members of youth groups. Many were members of Church youth groups and sports clubs. Some were members of political groups such as the Communists and Social Democrats.

In 1933, Hitler banned all other youth groups. Only the Nazi groups were allowed.

In 1936, all sports facilities for young people were taken over by the Nazi youth groups. If a young person wanted to play sport, they had to join the Nazis.

In March 1939, all Germans over the age of ten were made to join of the Nazi Youth Groups.

Were These Groups Successful:

Yes:

- Many children liked the activities.
- Many parents liked the free activities and uniforms.
- Parents liked the discipline and character building.
- Most children became members of one of the groups and were exposed to their ideas. Many young people became loyal Nazis who would obediently fight and work for the Nazis.

No:

- Many children hated the activities and rules. It was a bullying culture and they hated it.
- Parents felt they were losing control of their children – they were becoming loyal to the Nazis, not them.
- Attendance was not always that great (around 60%).

What were the Nazi youth groups for boys?

There were three groups for the boys:

Six to 10-years-old	<i>Pimpfe</i> (Little Fellows)
10 to 14-years old	<i>Deutsche Jungvolk</i> (German Young People)
14 to 18-years old	<i>Hitler Jugend</i> (Hitler Youth)

Military Training in the Hitler Youth:

- Taught map reading and signalling.
- Trained in using rifles.
- Specialist training in sailing, flying, and driving

Character Training in the Hitler Youth:

- Made to march in hot and cold weather.
- Encouraged to be loyal and obedient.

The Hitler Youth:

This was the most famous of the groups and was meant to make young men into ideal Germans and loyal Nazis by training them for their future roles.

Political Training in the Hitler Youth:

- Swear an oath of loyalty to Hitler.
- Attend meetings and residential courses on Nazi ideas.
- Study German heroes and history.
- Act as spies and report anyone who was disloyal to Hitler or the Nazis.

Physical Training in the Hitler Youth:

- Regular camping and hiking.
- Sports competitions.
- Physical fitness activities.
- Boxing.

What were the Nazi youth groups for Girls?

There were three groups for the boys:

10 to 14-years-old	<i>Jungmädel</i> (Young Maidens)
14 to 21-years old	<i>Bund Deutscher Mädel – BDM</i> (League of German Maidens).

Training to be wives and mothers:

- Cooking
- Ironing
- Making beds
- Sewing

Character Training:

- Encouraged to be loyal and obedient.

League of German Maidens:

This group had roughly the same aims as the boys – to be good Nazis. However, the role they were being prepared for was different.

Political Training:

- Took an oath to Hitler
- How to be a good Nazi
- German History and heroes.
- Taught the importance of “racial hygiene” – Keeping themselves pure and only having children with “pure” German men.

Physical Training:

- Marching
- Camping
- Keep fit classes

What was the Nazi Education Policy?

Before 1933, schools were run by local councils or the church. After Hitler came to power, the Nazis took over the school system to make sure they served the Nazi Party and spread their ideas.

Nazis and the teachers:

- Had to swear and oath to Hitler.
- Had to join the Nazi Teachers' League.
- Teachers who did not cooperate, were sacked.
- By 1936, 36% of teachers were members of the Nazi Party.
- Special training courses on Nazi ideas were made compulsory for teachers.

Nazis and the curriculum:

- The lessons were designed to prepare boys and girls for their future roles. Boys and workers and soldiers; girls and mothers and wives.
- Physical fitness and sport were important (15% of all lesson time).
- History and racial studies were important. Children were taught about how "dangerous" the Jews were.
- Maths and science were even turned into methods of promoting Nazi ideas.



Nazis and textbooks:

- These were all re-written to promote Hitler, the Nazis and their version of things.
- All books had to be approved by the Nazis.
- *Mein Kampf* was a compulsory text.
- Books made fun of Jews, celebrated German heroes and spread the Nazi view of History.

Nazis and lessons:

- Good behaviour was stressed.
- Discipline was strict.
- All lessons had to start with the *Heil Hitler* salute.
- Nazi posters and flags were displayed in classrooms.

Key topic 2: Hitler's rise to power, 1919–33

3 Employment and living standards



How did the Nazis try to solve the problem of unemployment?

One reason why so many people voted for Hitler was because he promised to cure the problem of unemployment. When he became Chancellor in 1933, 25% of the German workforce (around 5 million people) was unemployed. By 1939, there were just 300,000 people out of work. How did the Nazis do this?

Reich Labour Service (RAD):

In 1933 the Nazis set up the **Reichs Arbeiter Dienst** or RAD.

The RAD provided jobs by carrying out public works (things that make the country better) such as planting trees, repairing roads and draining marshes.

At first it was voluntary, but after 1935 it became compulsory for young men to serve 6 months in the RAD. 422,000 men served in 1935.

RAD was unpopular. It was military in style and the men had to wear uniforms, live in camps, march and do parades. Rates of pay were low and food and working conditions were very poor.

Autobahns:

The Nazis set about building 7000 miles of **autobahns** (motorways). The autobahns were started in September 1933 and employed 125,000 men.

Building roads also created jobs by stimulating demand for the materials used. The money earned by the workers also created demand in the shops.

The better roads made moving goods around Germany much quicker and cheaper. This meant more goods could be sold and so more jobs were created.

Rearmament:

From 1935, the Nazis started to rebuild Germany's armed forces. When Hitler came to power, there were only 100,000 men in the armed forces. He soon pushed that figure to 1,360,000. This cut the number of men out of work.

The soldiers, sailors and airmen all needed equipment. Hitler raised military spending by around 700%. This created thousands of new jobs.

Government Jobs:

The new Nazi government needed more people to staff it. The Gestapo, police, courts, civil service and the Nazi Party itself all employed more people.

Invisible Unemployment:

The Nazis also found ways to cut the number of unemployed without actually creating any real jobs:

- Women were banned from working.
- Jews were sacked from some jobs.
- People in part-time jobs were counted as having full-time jobs.
- Thousands of people were in prison.

Did the policies actually work?

The 1930s did see a fall in unemployment in Germany. But:

- Unemployment fell in most countries as world trade picked up – the Nazis could not take all of the credit.
- Invisible unemployment hid the real number out of work.
- Many of the jobs were not real – there were RAD schemes.
- The jobs that were created were expensive and the Nazis were in danger of running out of money. Had the war not come along, Germany would have gone bankrupt.

What happened to the standard of living?

The standard of living is a measure which tells us whether people's lives are getting better or worse. There is a big debate as to whether the standard of living improved under the Nazis.

Evidence the standard of living improved:

- More jobs.
- Some workers had higher wages, especially after 1936. Armament workers did very well.
- Some skilled workers did very well and could buy new cars. The number of car owners trebled.

Evidence the standard of living declined:

- Not everyone could get jobs – women and Jew.
- People who worked in RAD were unhappy with their conditions and low wages.
- Wages did rise for most people. However, prices rose much more rapidly, so most people were worse off.
- Unskilled workers did not get higher wages.
- Most Germans had to work much longer hours.
- Trade unions were banned – this took away many rights at work and made the workers easier to bully and control.

What schemes were introduced to help the workers?

Most of the Nazi policies on the economy were aimed at rearmament and making Germany stronger. However, Hitler knew that he had to make sure his policies benefited the ordinary workers. If he did not, he would start to lose support. The Nazis therefore set up three organisations to help improve the lives of workers.

The German Labour Front (DAF):

Hitler abolished trade unions in 1933 because most of them supported his opponents. He replaced them with a Nazi organisation, the German Labour Front (**Deutsche Arbeitsfront** – DAF).

The DAF set out the rights of workers:

- Maximum working hours
- Rates of pay

The DAF also regulated how employers had to behave. In effect, the DAF controlled workers and employers so they could serve the Nazi state.

However, the workers were not really protected:

- They worked longer hours
- They could not complain or go on strike
- The DAF could punish workers who disrupted production.

Strength Through Joy (KdF):

Strength Through Joy (**Kraft durch Freude** – KdF) was part of the DAF and was meant to improve the worker's standard of living. The KdF aimed to make work more enjoyable and rewarding. The Nazis felt happy workers would produce more and so make Germany stronger.

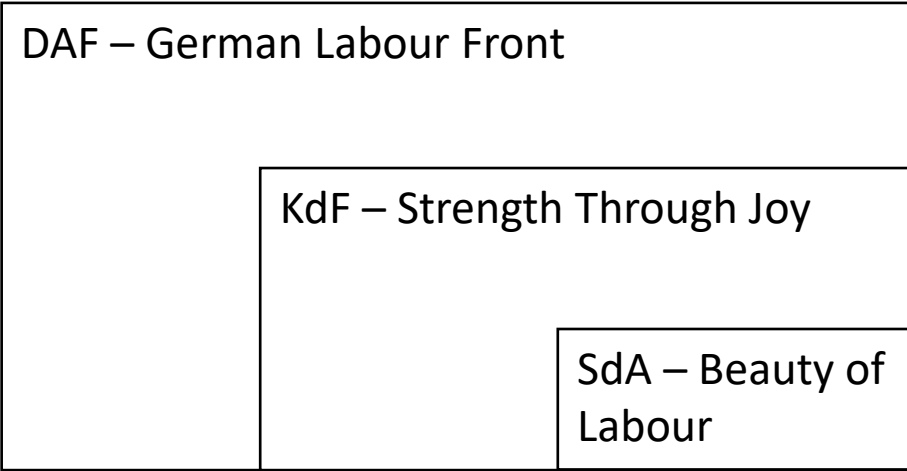
The KdF provided film shows, concerts, outings, theatre productions and even holidays. Membership was almost compulsory and 36 million Germans joined the KdF. Millions of people attended the KdF events each year.

The Volkswagen Swindle: The KdF organised a scheme where workers could save 5 marks per week to save up for one of the new Volkswagen cars. However, no cars were ever delivered as the factories concentrated on war preparations.

Beauty of Labour (SdA):

The Beauty of Labour (**Schönheit der Arbeit** – SdA) was part of the KdF and campaigned to get better facilities in workplaces. The SdA gave tax cuts to companies that provided better toilets, showers and changing facilities. Around 34,000 companies took part.

However, the employers often made the workers carry out the improvements in their own time for no extra pay.



Key topic 2: Hitler's rise to power, 1919–33

4 The persecution of minorities



What was the Nazi racial policy?

The Nazis wanted to make the German state as strong as possible. To them, this meant getting rid of what they saw as “undesirable” elements in the population and encouraging the “best” people to have more children. This policy was based on Hitler’s views and led to the Nazis adopting two main ideas – ***Eugenics*** and ***Racial Hygiene***.

Hitler’s view on race:

In 1925, Hitler had set out his ideas on race in his book, ***Mein Kampf***. He believed in a hierarchy of races:

The Aryan race was the superior race: The ***Herrenvolk*** (master race) were tall, strong, blond and blue eyed.

The other races, such as the people of Eastern Europe (Slavs), were seen as the ***Untermenschen*** (sub-humans). The worst of the ***Untermenschen*** were the Jews and “gypsies”. Hitler later said these people were ***Lebensunwertes*** – unworthy of life.

Eugenics:

This was a popular idea in Europe from the late 19th century onwards and became central to the Nazi’s policy.

It is a belief that humans should use “selective breeding” to ensure that future generations were stronger and fitter. Fit and healthy Aryan men and women were meant to have more babies to produce the “best” future population – the ***Herrenvolk***.

“Unsuitable” men and women should be banned from breeding to minimise and eventually eliminate the ***Untermenschen***. The Nazis introduced forced sterilisation for the “unsuitable” population.

Racial Hygiene:

This was the idea that Aryans should only breed with other Aryans to keep the race “pure”.

This idea was taught in schools and in the Hitler Youth and League of German Maidens.

The Nazis also banned mixed-race marriages and relationships.

How did the Nazis treat minority groups?

The Nazis introduced policies that led to the persecution of minorities and those who did not adhere to Nazi ideals, including Slavs, 'gypsies', homosexuals and those with disabilities. The Nazis wanted to eradicate these **Untermenschen**.

Slavs:

The Slavs were an ancient tribe who had settled in Eastern Europe. Some of their decedents lived in Germany.

Propaganda and school lessons told Germans that the Slavs were **Untermenschen** who needed to be wiped out.

On the whole, Slavs were not persecuted that much in the 1930s.

Gypsies:

"Gypsies" was the name used by the Nazis for the Roma people. They usually travelled around. There were around 26,000 Roma in Germany and the Nazis hated their lifestyle as it did not fit with the ideal view of what a German should be like. The Roma were also unwilling to follow the Nazi rules and pay taxes:

- After 1933 they were often arrested and sent to concentration camp.
- In 1936 they were forced to live in special camps with poor facilities.
- In 1939 orders were drawn up to forcibly deport the Roma to Eastern Europe.

Homosexuals:

The Nazis believed that homosexuals lowered moral standards and the purity of the German race.

- Laws against homosexuality were strengthened in 1935 and more men were imprisoned.
- Homosexuals were sent to concentrations camps – 5000 in camps in the 1930s.
- Nazi laws encouraged the voluntary castration of homosexuals.

Lesbians were seen as less of a threat and were not persecuted with the same intensity.

People with disabilities:

The Nazis believed that people with disabilities drained valuable resources and threatened racial purity.

- In 1933, the **Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring** was passed and introduced compulsory sterilisation for the mentally ill, deaf, blind, alcoholic, deformed or epileptic. This was known as euthanasia.
- In 1939, the Nazis ordered that all babies with mental or physical disabilities should be killed by starvation or an overdose of drugs. This was known as the **T4 Programme** and was eventually expanded to include anyone up to the age of 17 with a disability. Over 5000 children were killed.

Why were the Jews persecuted?

The persecution of Jews was not new. The Nazis were just one of many groups in history to persecute Jews. The persecution of Jews, known as ***Antisemitism***, had a number of causes.

Why were
the Jews
persecuted?

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Antisemitism was nothing new:

Jews had been bullied all across Europe for over 1000 years. In the Middle Ages in England, there were frequent attacks on, and massacres of, Jews. The Jews were bullied because they were different. Some Christians blamed the Jews for the death of Jesus. Some Jews were successful businesspeople and became rich – this created jealousy. There were lots of lies made up about Jews killing children and causing the plague or natural disasters. This all meant that many German people were already quite Anti-Semitic long before Hitler came to power.

Hitler's early life:

Hitler spent time in Vienna as a young man. There was a strong history of Antisemitism in Vienna and this shaped his beliefs. During this time Hitler was poor and resented the wealth of some of the Jews he saw there. He started to blame the Jews for his problems and then for Germany's. He said the Jews caused Germany's defeat in the War, the crisis of 1923 and the Great Depression.

Belief in the Master Race:

Hitler was influenced by his experiences as the long history of Antisemitism. He therefore believed that the Jews should be persecuted and eventually wiped out in order to create a more "pure" race.

How were the Jews persecuted?

There were only 437,000 Jews in Germany in 1933; less than 1% of the population. However, the Nazis introduced a series of measures that were aimed at persecuting them.

Early Measures - 1933:

- The Nazis used propaganda and schools to spread the message that the Jews were “vermin” and “filth”.
- Jews were banned from jobs as teachers and in the government.
- Jews could not inherit land.
- Jews were banned from parks and swimming pools.
- Jewish shops and businesses were officially boycotted (not used). SA men painted stars and the word “Jew” on shops and stand guard to stop people entering.

Nuremberg Laws 1935:

This was a series of laws that aimed to strengthen the persecution. The two main law were:

The Reich Law on Citizenship:

- Jews could not be German citizens as they were not of “pure blood”.
- Jews lost their citizenship rights – their passports and the right to vote.
- Jews had to wear a yellow star so “true” Germans could recognise them.

The Reich Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour:

- Jews could not marry Germans.
- Sex between Jews and Germans was made illegal.

Kristallnacht: 9-10 November 1938:

On 7 November 1938 Herschel Grynszpan, a Polish Jew whose parents had been deported from Germany, went into the German embassy in Paris and shot and wounded one of the officials. Grynszpan had been living in Hanover in Germany, so Joseph Goebbels ordered the local SS, SA and Gestapo to attack Jewish homes, businesses and synagogues.

When the Nazi official died on 9 November, the Nazi leadership ordered undercover gangs of Nazis to attack Jewish property on a national scale. The Nazis wanted it to look as if the ordinary German people were attacking the Jews. Some ordinary Germans did join in. Some watched with pleasure. Others were shocked and outraged.

Hundreds of shops, businesses, homes and synagogues were damaged and destroyed. Many Jews were rounded up and arrested and 100 died during the violence. The damage was extensive and the streets were filled with the shattered windows. The event became known as **Kristallnacht** – the Night of Broken Glass.

The Nazis blamed the Jews for the whole incident. They were forced to pay 1 billion marks in compensation. Around 20,000 Jews were rounded up and sent to concentration camps.

Further Persecution 1939:

- The Reich Office for Jewish Emigration was formed to drive the Jews out of Germany. 250,000 Jews left Germany by 1939.
- Jews had to surrender all jewellery and precious metals.
- Jews were evicted from their homes and moved into Jewish ghettos.
- Jews were forced to hand over their radios.