Topic 4: Life in Nazi Germany 1933-39

Nazi Policies Towards Women

- The Nazis were a very male-dominated organisation, with a traditional view of the role of women as wife and mother, and many women agreed with them. There was resentment towards working women in the 1930s.
- Hitler was alarmed by the falling birth rate, so he introduced incentives for German women to have lots of children – there was a financial incentive for having 4 children and a 'Gold Cross' for having 8.
- The birth rate increased from 15/1000 to 20/1000 between 1933 and 1939, and an increase in pregnancies outside marriage. The German Maiden's League reinforced the ideas of motherhood and homebuilding.
- However, there were some high-profile women, such as Leni Riefenstahl (a film-producer) and Gertrude Scholz-Klink (head of the Nazi Women's Bureau), although she was excluded from important decision-making.
- Furthermore, by the start of WWII, the Nazis drastically changed their policies as they realised they needed women to work when the men were off fighting in the armed forces.
- They still managed to keep their traditional stereotype of women during the years 1942-1945 – no women were allowed in the German army – this is not the case for the Allied armies.
- Married professional women had to give up their jobs and stay at home, which was deeply resented, although the Bureau offered some limited opportunities by gaining the chance to travel and meet people.

Nazi Policies Towards the Young

- Hitler also needed to control and influence the young in a pro-Nazi way in order to sustain his plans for a '1000 year Reich'.
- He changed the school curriculum to make it seem as if the Nazis were the only thing that was true and right in the world, in order to gain the children's loyalty.
- Jewish teachers were banned, and Jewish students may have even been bullied.
- For example, History would be focused around how Ebert 'stabbed Germany in the back', etc. after signing the Treaty of Versailles, and Biology would inform you that you were special – an 'Aryan' – who was superior in every way to the Untermenschen ('sub-humans' – the Jews, etc.)
- He also introduced groups for young boys and girls, called the HITLER YOUTH and the LEAGUE of GERMAN MAIDENS, which would take up their spare time in being devoted to Hitler and the Nazis.
- They effectively trained young boys for war in the Hitler Youth, making them march in ‘exciting’ parades and cross-country running, among other sports. Map-reading was also a skill they practised.
- Using these methods, children eventually became almost alienated from their parents, as they may not have been as devoted to the Nazis, probably remembering the Stresemann years and previously.
- The Nazis expected a person’s loyalty to be, first and foremost, to Adolf Hitler, and, although children may have found the intrusive inspection of people’s lives normal, adults probably did not.
- Some children even informed on their parents, resulting in the parents’ arrest, due to the children’s effective radicalisation.