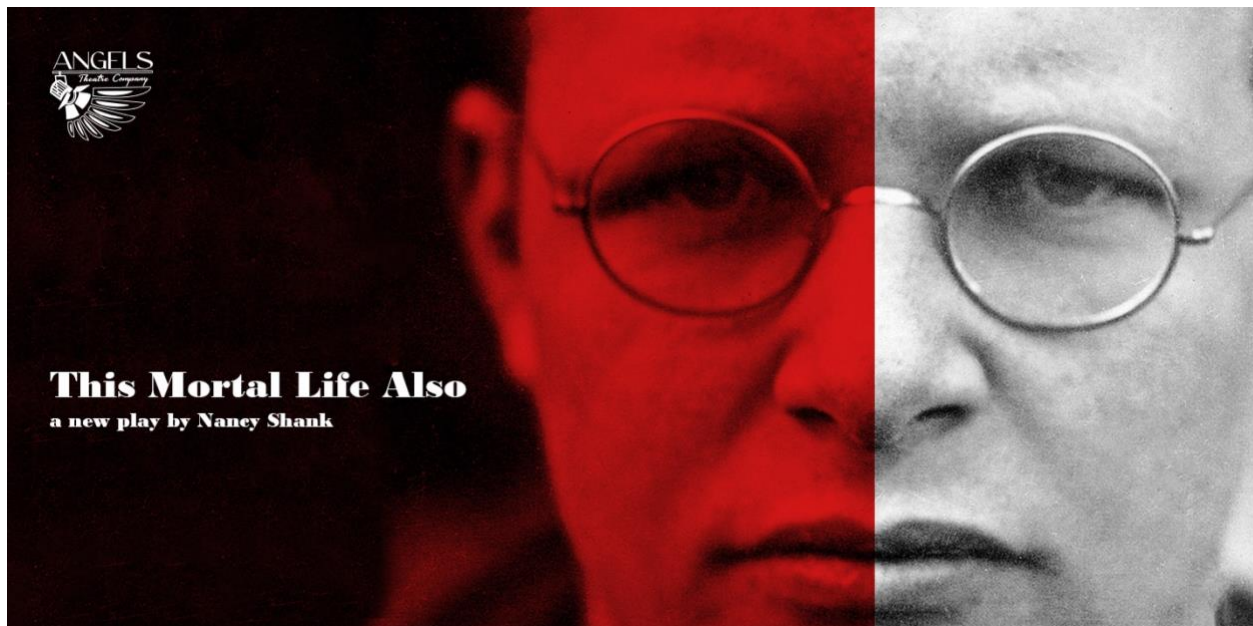


Actor Information Packet Angels Theatre Company 2022



Playwright: Nancy Shank
Director: Timothy Scholl
Dramaturg: Rhiannon Ling

Table of Contents

People

- Walter Bonhoeffer*.....pg. 3
- Ernst von Dohnanyi*.....pg. 3
- Hans von Wedemeyer*.....pg. 4
- Frau Ruth von Kleist-Retzow*.....pg. 4
- Professor Karl Barth*.....pg. 5
- Admiral Wilhelm Canaris*.....pg. 5
- Colonel Henning von Tresckow*.....pg. 6
- Commissioner Arthur Nebe*.....pg. 6
- Wolf-Heinrich Graf von Helldorff*.....pg. 7
- Major Rudolph-Christoph Freiherr von Gersdorff*.....pg. 7
- Colonel Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg*.....pg. 8

History

- The Structure of Nazi Germany*.....pgs. 9 - 11
 - The Regime and the Police State
 - The Loyalty Oath
- The Abwehr*.....pgs. 12 - 13
- The Confessing Church*.....pg. 14
- The German Resistance*.....pgs. 15 - 17
- Mass Arrests and the End*...pg. 18

Culture

- The Germans and Their Titles*.....pgs. 19 - 21
- The Weimar Republic (1918 – 1933)*.....pgs. 22 - 25
- The Rise of Nazism*.....pgs. 26 - 28
- Germany Under the Third Reich (1933 – 1945)*.....pgs. 29 - 32
- Nazi Germany and the Church*...pgs. 33 - 35

People

i. Walter Bonhoeffer (1899 – 1919)¹

The second eldest of the Bonhoeffer clan, Walter was killed in action during World War I. His death deeply affected the younger Bonhoeffers, especially Dietrich, who was given Walter's Bible for his confirmation.



Source: [The International Bonhoeffer Society](#)

Source: [Seattle Chamber Music Society](#)



ii. Ernst von Dohnanyi (Ernő Dohnány) (1877 – 1960)²

Father to Hans von Dohnanyi, Ernst von Dohnanyi was a Hungarian pianist, composer, conductor, teacher, and administrator. Often considered the “most versatile Hungarian musician next to Liszt,” von Dohnanyi was the architect of 20th century Hungarian musical culture. Following his studies at the Royal National Hungarian Academy of Music, he made his Budapest debut in 1897, followed by highly successful European and American tours shortly after. From 1905 to 1915, von Dohnanyi taught at the Hochschule in Berlin; Hans was born during his tenure there. Following a separation from his wife, von Dohnanyi returned to Budapest to teach at their Academy. In 1919, after an ousting from his teaching position, he became Chief Conductor of the Budapest Philharmonic. As Nazism grew, von Dohnanyi refused to fire his Jewish musicians, leading him to relocate to Austria

in 1944. In 1948, he left Europe as a political exile. He remained in America until his death in 1960, teaching at Florida State and conducting across the nation.

¹ Sabine Bonhoeffer-Leibholz's *The Bonhoeffers: Portrait of a Family*

² Seattle Chamber Music Society, Encyclopedia Britannica

iii. Hans von Wedemeyer (1888 – 1942)³

Maria von Wedemeyer's father was, indeed, her self-described "best friend." Descended from Prussian nobility, von Wedemeyer was what many would call a "gentleman farmer," owning an estate in Pätzig and often visiting Maria's grandmother near Finkenwalde. He was a highly respected individual, hard-working and assured, and would take his children out with him while he worked to grant them education and understanding. Originally, von Wedemeyer was a good friend of Franz von Papen, a conservative monarchist and Prussian representative who helped Hitler become Chancellor; after the corrupt election, von Wedemeyer immediately distanced himself from Papen and the Nazis. However, as a World War I cavalry veteran, he was called back to military service in the early 1940s. After volunteering for a front-line position, he was killed at Stalingrad in 1942.



Source: Alan Ferguson via [Geni](#)

Source: [Pejsa's Biography](#)



iv. Frau Ruth von Kleist-Retzow (1867 – 1945)⁴

Of Southern Prussian nobility, Ruth von Kleist-Retzow was born the Countess of Zedlitz-Trützschler. In 1886, on her 19th birthday, she married a landowner and government administrator from the north; according to her, it was a "true love match." After their marriage, they moved to Belgard, where four of their five children were born; after ten years there, the family relocated to the von Kieckow estate, co-inherited by her husband. Shortly after, her husband passed away, and, at the age of 30, von Kleist-Retzow took over the estate. Once her children grew to adulthood, she moved to a smaller country house and became quite the philosopher and theologian herself: she published a variety of works—including *Die soziale Krisis und die Verantwortung des Gutsbesitzers*, on the morality of wealth—and was a devoted member of the resistance's

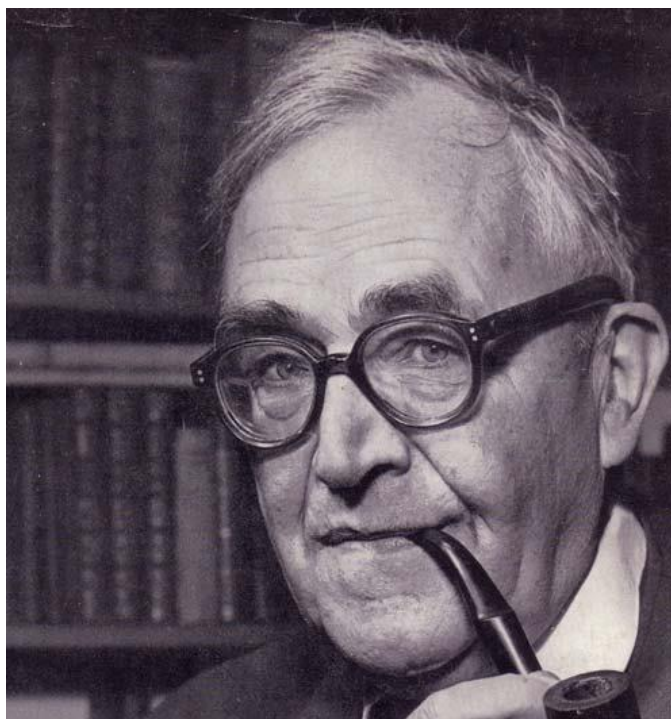
Confessing Church. She opposed Nazism and wrote of morality and progress until her death in 1945, just after the Soviet Army arrived in her beloved country home.

³ The Bonhoeffer Center; *The 3rd Guard Uhlán Regiment in the World War 1914-1918*; Weiling's *Die "Christlich-deutsche Bewegung": Eine Studie zum konservativen Protestantismus in der Weimarer Republik*

⁴ Pejsa's *Mit dem Mut einer Frau. Ruth von Kleist-Retzow. Matriarchin im Widerstand.*; Verlag's "An Unusual Prussian"

v. Professor Karl Barth (1886 – 1968)⁵

Professor Karl Barth, one of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's contemporaries and colleagues, was a Swiss Protestant theologian who initiated radical change in Protestant thought, moving the church away from 19th century anthropocentrism. Beginning in 1921, Barth lectured throughout the university circuit, holding tenures at Göttingen, Münster, and Bonn. In 1933, when Hitler's rise to power began in earnest, Barth became one of the founding members of the Confessing Church, alongside Bonhoeffer: he was one of the co-writers of the Barmen Declaration, a confession of faith repudiating Nazi ideology. In 1935, this outspoken opposition cost him his chair at the University of Bonn, and he moved back home to Basel, Switzerland. There, he remained an advocate of oppressed peoples. Though he was offered a reinstatement at Bonn after the war, Barth remained in Basel until his death.



Source: [World Biographical Encyclopedia](#)

Source: [Britannica](#)



vi. Admiral Wilhelm Canaris (1887 – 1945)⁶

Much like Bonhoeffer, Canaris lived his life as a contradiction unto himself: outwardly, he supported Nazism; inwardly, he ran the greatest resistance network of World War II Germany. The man was a celebrated war hero, having served in the Navy in World War I; during the 1930s, he was called once more into action. In 1935, Canaris was appointed head of the Abwehr, initially organizing aid to Franco during the Spanish Civil War. Canaris seemed to be suspicious of the Nazi Party early on: believing the regime would annihilate traditional conservative values, he enlisted and shielded resistance workers soon after his assumption of Abwehr command. In the late '30s, as well, Canaris bore witness to the atrocities in Poland, present during several mass murders; this pushed him onward into the resistance's importance. In 1944, he was transferred to the economic staff of armed forces after an investigation, and, following the failure of Valkyrie in July, was arrested. Under horrific treatment, he still ran mental circles around the Nazis. This

“number one mystery man” was hanged alongside Bonhoeffer.

⁵ The Center for Barth Studies, Encyclopedia Britannica

⁶ Encyclopedia Britannica, the Jewish Virtual Library, Bassett's *Hitler's Spy Chief: The Wilhelm Canaris Betrayal*

vii. Colonel Henning von Tresckow (1901 – 1944)⁷

At the age of 16, von Tresckow volunteered for the military, serving in World War I. In 1920, he left to study law; following the degree's completion, he took over his father's estate for a short while, then leapt back into the Reichswehr. Though von Tresckow originally supported the Socialist takeover, he rapidly became skeptical. After the pogroms of 1938, his opposition became vehement, violent. Adopting a dominant position among officers of the opposition, von Tresckow held that it was necessary to "shoot Hitler down like a rabid dog" and use self-defense in a court of law. He was extremely well-informed on the movements of and killings by the Einsatzgruppen, having become a Major in 1939 and Lieutenant Colonel in 1940. In 1942, he was promoted to Lieutenant, and was transferred to the Führer's Reserve the following year. This position allowed him to plan the assassination attempts. In November 1943, after being appointed Chief of Staff, von Tresckow was sent to the front lines. There, on July 21, 1944, upon hearing of the failure of the coup, he took his own life.



Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Source: [Sinti und Roma](#)



viii. Commissioner Arthur Nebe (1894 – 1945)⁸

A young Arthur Nebe volunteered for military service first in World War I, where he was wounded by poison gas. A few years after his return, in 1924, Nebe was given the rank of Police Commissioner and became a liaison for the Nazi Party. In 1931, he joined the NSDAP; in 1936, he joined the SS. Throughout these years, he played an important role in establishing a totalitarian police system, so much so that, in 1939, he was given control of Einsatzgruppen B, an extermination unit in Minsk and Moscow. He was tasked with coming up with more efficient ways of mass murder: the gas chambers came from his advocacy. All the while (from the late '30s onward), Nebe was a member of the conspirators, saving thousands of Russians by falsifying records and claiming credit for nonexistent murders. In late 1942, he informed the resistance of the launch of the Final Solution,

which he had been present for. After the failure of Valkyrie and numerous investigations, Nebe, too, was arrested, and executed in 1945 in the Plötzensee prison. In short, Nebe was a true contradiction, a mass murderer who assisted the resistance for unknown reasons.

⁷ Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, the Jewish Virtual Library

⁸ The Holocaust Research Project, the Holocaust Historical Society

ix. Wolf-Heinrich Graf von Helldorff (1896 – 1944)⁹

Count Helldorff was, in short, a high-ranking Nazi official, the one largely responsible for Kristallnacht and the creation of Jewish ghettos. He turned to the resistance far later, and was involved in the final assassination attempt, for which he was executed.



Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Source: [Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand](#)



x. Major Rudolf-Christoph Freiherr von Gersdorff (1905 – 1980)¹⁰

Von Gersdorff began his military career in 1923, working his way up to become a regimental adjutant in Breslau ten years later. In 1938, he was transferred to Berlin's War Academy, where he took part in the occupation of the Sudetenland; in addition, he was deployed during the Polish invasion, and was a general staff officer in the Western offensive. His proximity to the horrors gave him a deep revulsion for Nazi crimes, especially when it came to the Kommissarbefehl (the murder of Soviet POWs). As he was a close friend of von Tresckow, von Gersdorff quickly became involved in the resistance movement. In March of 1943, he volunteered to be the suicide bomber for another assassination attempt, one which failed after Hitler changed his plans. Following this botched attempt, von Gersdorff remained involved with the resistance, but was never caught. He died at his home in 1980.

⁹ Institut für Zeitgeschichte

¹⁰ Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand

xi. Colonel Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg (1907 – 1944)¹¹

An “aristocratic, Catholic, career army officer,” von Stauffenberg first entered the military in 1926. Between 1939 and 1940, he earned military distinction with armored division campaigns in Poland and northern France; in short, he was a loyal member of the Nazi military. That changed after he was transferred to the Soviet front late in 1940: now witnessing it first-hand, Stauffenberg was horrified by the brutality towards Slavic and Jewish peoples. At his request, he transferred, instead, to North Africa, where he lost his left eye, right hand, and two left fingers in April 1943. While recovering from his wounds, von Stauffenberg decided that Hitler must be stopped, and joined the resistance. Upon his return to the military, in July 1944, he was assigned to the post of Chief of Staff to the Reserve Army Command, which gave him access to conferences attended by Hitler. He was the one to place the disastrous Valkyrie bomb. Von Stauffenberg was executed the following day, leaving behind a pregnant wife and four children.



Source: [Wikipedia](#)

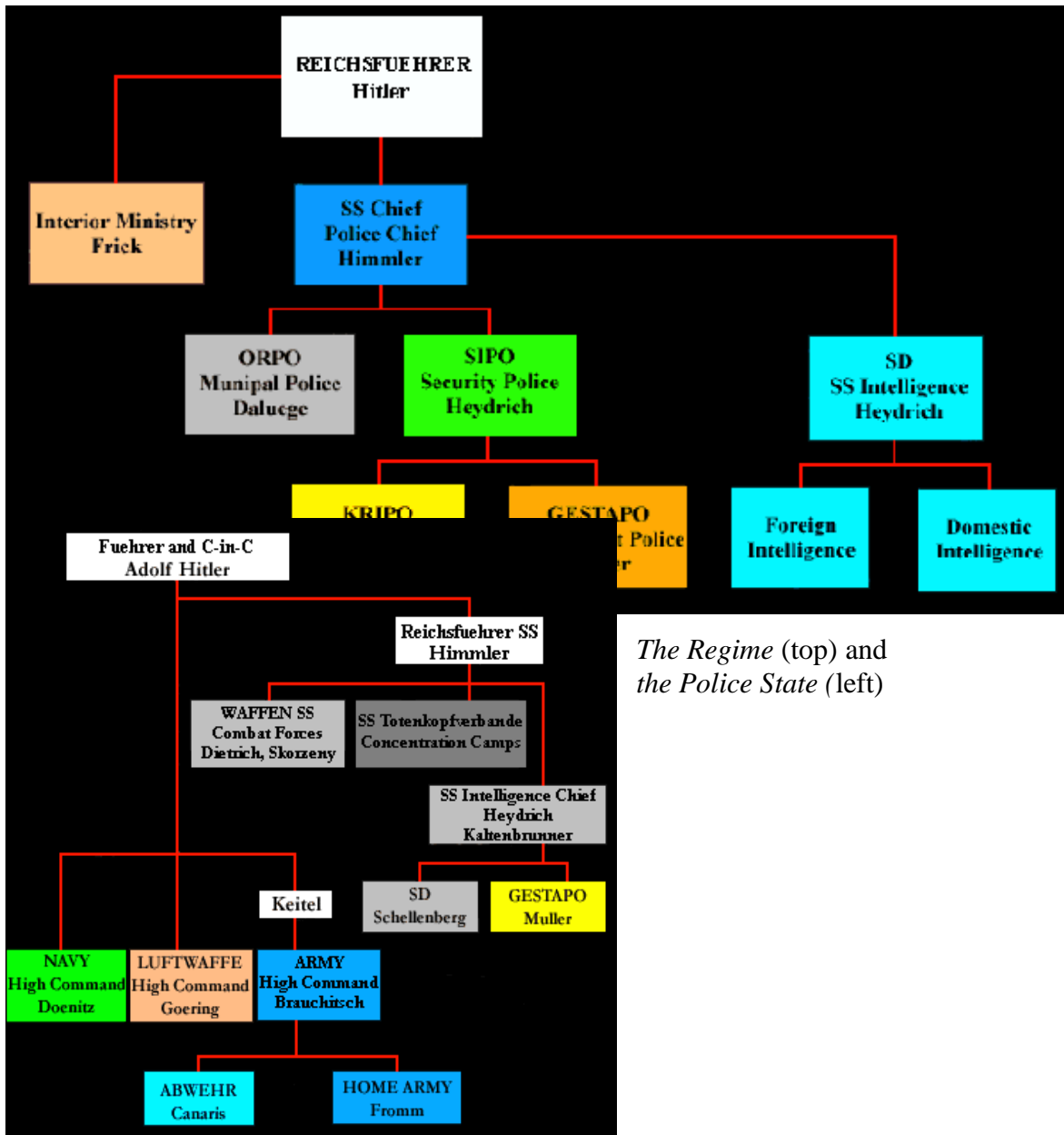
¹¹ Encyclopedia Britannica; BBC’s interview with Berthold von Stauffenberg

History

The Structure of Nazi Germany

The easiest way to digest the governmental structure of Germany under the Third Reich is through categorization, of which there are two: the Regime and the Police State. The Regime was composed of the heads, Nazis with political power down a descending list; the Police State was composed of everyone else. The majority of the Reich's power lay in the SS or some subdivision thereof: ultimately, the SS would have over 250,000 members.¹²

For ease, see the graphs below, provided by the Jewish Virtual Library.



The Regime (top) and the Police State (left)

¹² Amanda Onion, Missy Sullivan, and Matt Mullen via History.com

In July of 1935, the Führer Oath became law. Somewhat shockingly, this Oath was not crafted by Hitler himself; instead, it came from the Ministry of Defense, written shortly after the Röhm Purge (or the Night of Long Knives) in 1934, wherein SA officials were systematically murdered.¹³ To cease the killings, the German military agreed to support Hitler's decree of his status as Führer, and to swear an oath to serve him:

“I swear by God this holy oath, that I will render to Adolf Hitler, Führer of the German Reich and People, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, unconditional obedience, and that I am ready, as a brave soldier, to risk my life at any time for this oath.”¹⁴

After the law was enacted in 1935, all civil servants and German citizens were forced to swear by their own Oath, slightly modified for those non-military:

“I swear I will be true and obedient to the Führer of the German Reich and people, Adolf Hitler, observe the law and conscientiously fulfill the duties of my office, so help me God.”¹⁵

At first, those who refused to sign the oath were not arrested or violently harassed. Initial intimidation often came by way of job loss and the perpetual inability to find another. That, of course, soon changed.

In April of 1938, on Hitler's 49th birthday, the Reich Church, too, insisted upon allegiance. Church President Friedrich Werner proclaimed that all Protestant pastors must swear an “oath of allegiance to the Führer and Reich Chancellor” and that “anyone who refuses to take the oath is to be dismissed.” Many would swear by the oath, of course, desiring to keep their jobs and their lives.

The enactment of legal oaths integrated Hitler and the military, raising its refusal to the status of high treason. This integration, along with forced court referendums, gave Hitler “authority beyond the legal constraints of the Constitution and the state apparatus.”¹⁶ As the National District Attorneys Association notes, it also allowed for “agencies of the party, state, and armed forces to operate outside the law when necessary to achieve the ideological goals of the regime, while maintaining the fiction of adhering to legal norms.”

For members of the military, it made what many historians considered a draconian disciplinary system even worse. As the war grew in intensity and atrocity, over 15,000 deserters were executed and thousands more were assigned to fatal penal units.¹⁷

¹³ The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: “Timeline of the German Military and the Nazi Regime”

¹⁴ The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: “German Military Oaths”

¹⁵ The National District Attorneys Association: “The Courage to Say “No”: Martin Gauger and the Oath to Hitler”

¹⁶ The National District Attorneys Association

¹⁷ The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: “German Military Oaths”

1935 was, indeed, a year of many illegal enactments. On March 16th of the same, Hitler denounced (in action, not words) the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty, proclaiming immediate general military conscription in Germany.¹⁸ Ultimately, this empowered Germany to do three major things:

1. It put into action universal military service: all (Aryan-blooded) men under 25 were required to serve at least two years within the military.
2. It increased Germany's peacetime army from Versailles's allowance of 100,000 to what would become 550,000.
3. It empowered Germany's Defense Minister (von Blomberg) to take any necessary measures to carry out the law, even if they were not legal.

This combination put into effect Hitler's plan for rearmament, which had, up until then, remained in clandestine planning.



A simple understanding of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles provisions that so mutilated postwar Germany.

Source: [the Times Educational Supplement](#)

¹⁸ United Press Archives, March 16, 1935

The Abwehr¹⁹

To this day, it can be difficult to track down information about the Abwehr. For years, factual information was under an archival embargo, protected by Official Secrets Acts from a variety of European countries. Even now (much like historical documents from our own CIA), it's hard to gain access to the documents that have been declassified. Because of this, generations of historians have been torn as to the moral compass and the drive of the Abwehr, a rift worth noting.

The Abwehr, Germany's official intelligence organization, was established in 1921, following the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Originally designed to keep an eye on Germany's enemies (due to, once again, the objectively unfair treaty), the Abwehr was, as Bassett notes, at the "centre of clandestine wartime Anglo-German relations." Throughout WWII, they held bases within several European countries: Turkey, Soviet Russia, Spain, France, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, to name but a few.

The early Abwehr was run by old-school navy veterans, men who saw the Nazis as "gangster upstarts, amateurs...far removed from the concepts of old gentlemen spies."²⁰ They viewed the majority as below their aristocratic, educated heritage; that said, the Abwehr of the early Third Reich did as much as it could to support the Nazi regime. That all changed after Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, the head of the Abwehr from 1935 to 1944, bore firsthand witness to the anti-Semitic cruelty of Hitler and his followers.



A young Wilhelm Canaris.

Source: [The German Spy Museum](#)

¹⁹ Information pulled largely from Richard Bassett's *Hitler's Spy Chief: The Wilhelm Canaris Betrayal*, Edmund Blandford's *SS Intelligence: The Nazi Secret Service*, and Allen Dulles's *Germany's Underground: The Anti-Nazi Resistance*

²⁰ Blandford

Shortly after Canaris took over as head of the Abwehr, the intelligence agency began to play double agent. Outwardly, they were staunch supporters of the regime: they organized German support for Franco, reported on Allied movements, and, by 1941, had broken the majority of British and American ciphers (highly skilled in codespeak, the Abwehr were the reason the initial push on Soviet Russia was so successful). Internally, they were the largest resistance network within Germany proper.

The Abwehr's key role was in protecting anti-Nazi conspirators, creating an organization that was, for all intents and purposes, exempt from Aryanization. Militaristically, they misrepresented and misrepresented numbers, leading to Nazi withdrawals where there could have been charges and gains. Canaris himself worked closely with the then-Chief of MI6, Steven Menzies; the latter discreetly sent the Abwehr the latest in wireless intercept equipment. Throughout the war, the Abwehr compiled a dossier containing the war crimes of Nazi Germany, including Canaris's diary, von Dohnanyi's observations, and the Vatican and Fritsch papers; together, they became the Zossen papers that would later convict the Abwehr conspirators. Most notably, of course, the Abwehr saved countless Jewish people: the descendants of these saved men (one a Dr. Stefan Heyden, one choosing anonymity), recall two instances²¹:

- After thirteen Jewish men (one of them Heyden's father) were imprisoned on false charges, they "were [all] released, thanks to the combined efforts of Canaris and his staff."
- "Numerous Jews or half-Jews were dressed on army uniforms on Canaris' instigation, carrying official military intelligence ID cards."

Then, of course, there was "Operation Seven," noted within the play. In 1941, Bonhoeffer, von Dohnanyi, and their Abwehr conspirators saved fourteen Jewish peoples by appointing them as Abwehr agents (under false papers, of course) and sending them to Switzerland, where they mysteriously vanished. Von Dohnanyi and Canaris took care of the Germany side; Bonhoeffer utilized his contacts to procure visas and sponsors for the fourteen.²²

Before the disastrous Project Valkyrie of 1944, there was only once when Hitler came close to catching the Abwehr, and that was for entirely different reasons: from 1935 to 1937, Hitler placed a ban on all Abwehr operations, after a double agent was arrested in London and gave away key information. Outside of that, and outside of quiet suspicion, the skilled conspirators of the Abwehr worked largely unheeded until their demise.

²¹ Bassett

²² The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; Winfried Meyer's *Unternehmen Sieben: Eine Rettungsaktion*

The Confessing Church²³

The Bekennende Kirche (Confessing Church) emerged in the early years of Hitler's power, in direct (and vocal) opposition to Nazi ideology. Its founding document, the Barmen Declaration, was written in 1934, and stated that the Church's loyalty was to God and scripture, not Hitler and Germany. Its choice to remain a part of the German Evangelical Church created a *Kirchenkampf*, or "Church Struggle," between the Nazi-ruled German Christians and their own Confessing Church.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one of the earliest members, along with Karl Barth and Martin Niemöller. In 1935, he organized and was the head of a seminary for the Confessing Church near Finkenwalde, Pomerania, where he developed a cordial relationship with congregant Frau Ruth von Kleist-Retzow. It is also the place where Bonhoeffer gave his 1937 sermon on the Sermon on the Mount, which Maria speaks of within the play. That same year, numerous clergymen of the Confessing Church were arrested; the following year, the forced oath of the Reich Church (see: The Structure of Nazi Germany) provided a deep rift within the Confessing Church. By June 11, 1938, fearing for their lives, the majority had broken their ordination vow and acknowledged Hitler as the "bearer of a new Revelation" and "Germany's Jesus Christ." With this promise of allegiance, the Confessing Church was, effectively, no more.

Multiple members of the Confessing Church hid German Jews, financially and logistically (albeit silently) supporting their escape. Only Bonhoeffer and Niemöller remained outwardly against the regime.



A meeting of the Finkenwalde Seminary. Source: [Beeson Divinity School](#)

²³ Encyclopedia Britannica, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Samford University

The German Resistance

Within Germany itself, organized resistance was difficult. Eyes and ears were, quite literally, everywhere, and the indoctrination of innocents had well and truly taken effect. Outside of the Abwehr and the Confessing Church, only the movement of *Die Weisse Rose* (The White Rose) and Hans and Sophie Scholl gained any traction. Even that was stifled with the execution of the young students in 1943.

The resistance tide began to turn in 1942, following devastating defeats for the German military. In November of that year, Germany was in a forced retreat from North Africa, and was rapidly withdrawing from France. In January 1943 came the Battle of Stalingrad, where Germany lost over 250,000 of their own men in a brutal several-week-long standoff (ultimately, over 800,000 Axis soldiers were lost, and 91,000 captured; only around 5,000 of those men would make it back home). Loss after loss—largely caused by Hitler’s overconfident ignoring of his generals’ advice—plagued German morale. By 1944, Germany was on the defensive in a war they clearly couldn’t win. Top-ranking Nazi officials began to turn against Hitler.

These men “were often the traditional elite, the best educated, with foreign connections, and with a sense of obligation to the idea of Germany;”²⁴ instead of an “uprising of conscience,” their turning was about “perceived German national interests and how to pursue them.”²⁵ Their motivation came not from stopping genocide, but from protecting their homeland from invaders. These top officials would help the Abwehr with their final assassination attempts in the early 1940s.



The Battle of Stalingrad, 1943. Source: [Encyclopedia Britannica](#)

²⁴ Peter Hoffman, Roger Moorhouse, Christian Gerlach, and Jesse Greenspan: “The July Plot: When German Elites Tried to Kill Hitler”

²⁵ Hoffman, Moorhouse, Gerlach, and Greenspan

The Abwehr, of course, had not been idle. When thinking of their plans, it is easiest to separate them into four distinct projects.²⁶

1) Arrest

- i. The Abwehr's earliest thought, originating in 1939
- ii. Planned to utilize the court of public opinion and expose Hitler on an international stage
- iii. Relied heavily upon foreign cooperation, with diplomats sent to England, France, and the Vatican—one of the reasons it never came to pass was the inaction on the part of the Allies—and the idea of Hitler throwing Germany into an unnecessary war, hindered by the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact
- iv. The question became not how to overthrow Hitler, but how to convince the generals to do it themselves – without higher support, many feared a coup would erupt in civil war, and many of the generals approached were skeptical of the plan actually working
- v. Essentially, this plan was killed due to indecision, inaction, and lack of proper timing

2) Operation Spark/Operation Flash

- i. Organized by Colonel Henning von Tresckow and attempted on February 19, 1943
- ii. The plan: a British timebomb, disguised as two bottles of Cointreau, would be smuggled onto Hitler's plane at Smolensk (via acquaintance Lieutenant Schlabrendorff); the bomb would go off 30 minutes later, near enough to Minsk to be attributed to Soviet fighters; and General Friedrich Olbricht would seize control of Berlin, Munich, and Vienna after the announcement of Hitler's death
- iii. The bomb did not go off, as the percussion cap became too cold in the plane's hold
- iv. Schlabrendorff was able to smuggle it off before the conspirators were caught

3) The Gersdorff Suicide Bombing

- i. Helmed by von Tresckow, volunteered for by Major von Gersdorff, and attempted on March 21, 1943
- ii. The plan: Hitler would visit an exhibition at the Zeughaus (Arsenal) and Gersdorff, as the expert, would show him around; two previously-acquired explosives would be in Gersdorff's pockets, each with a 10-minute fuse; and Gersdorff would set off the explosives while he was next to Hitler, killing them both
- iii. Foiled after Hitler spent only 8 minutes at the exhibit, making the fuses ineffectual
- iv. Von Gersdorff was able to defuse the bombs safely after Hitler's leaving

²⁶ Peter Hoffmann's *The History of the German Resistance*; Roger Moorhouse's *Killing Hitler*; James Hawes's *The Shortest History of Germany*; Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand; the Cambridge University Library

4) Operation Valkyrie

- i. Carried out by top officials Colonel von Stauffenberg and Lieutenant von Haeften on July 20, 1944
- ii. The plan: von Stauffenberg would attend Hitler's conference at the Wolfsschanze (Wolf's Lair, Hitler's hideout), carrying two bombs in a briefcase; essentially, he would arm the bombs, get them close enough, and rig them to explode with enough time for the two to get away
- iii. Ran into too many problems: the meeting room was changed; only one bomb was armed because of a guard rushing von Stauffenberg; and one of Hitler's colonels moved the briefcase
- iv. When the bomb went off, Hitler was protected by the table, resulting in only a perforated eardrum for him, and the killing of three officers and a stenographer
- v. This failure ultimately resulted in the conviction and execution of the Abwehr



The destruction (and failure) of Operation Valkyrie. Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Mass Arrests and the End²⁷

The arrests of the Abwehr began as early as 1943, with the arrest of Bonhoeffer and von Dohnanyi on March 5th. Originally, the two were charged with corruption, put through lengthy, abusive interrogations (for von Dohnanyi, this included endless threats against his wife and children). During their time imprisoned in Berlin, von Dohnanyi suffered from phlebitis (extreme vein inflammation) and a brain embolism from an incendiary bomb landing near his cell. In October of 1944, following the mass arrests of the Abwehr, Bonhoeffer and von Dohnanyi were moved to the dread Gestapo prison in Berlin, undergoing torturous conditions; a few months later, in February of 1945, they were moved to Buchenwald, then to Flossenburg, what many call “the long spring nightmare.” While there, and in the midst of horrific conditions, Bonhoeffer spent some of his final days attending to the spiritual needs of his fellow prisoners, and even to a few repentant Nazis. On April 9, 1945, Bonhoeffer was hanged alongside Admiral Canaris; von Dohnanyi (and Bonhoeffer’s brother, Klaus) followed soon after. Bonhoeffer’s final message was to George Bell: “This is the end, for me the beginning of life.”

For the remainder of the Abwehr, their arrests followed directly after the failed Valkyrie bomb. Ultimately, nearly 6,000 were arrested, given sham trials, and many executed. On September 22, 1944, the Nazis located the Zossen files, the dossier detailing Nazi horrors and the Abwehr’s resistance involvement from 1938 onwards. As von Dohnanyi himself wrote, “They’ve discovered everything, absolutely everything. I cannot think who has betrayed us...and when all is said and done, I don’t care.” In April of 1945, upon seeing the files himself, Hitler ordered the full liquidation of the Abwehr. It resulted in nearly 200 brutal deaths.



Hans von Dohnanyi, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Wilhelm Canaris

²⁷ The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; *The New York Review*; Hoffman, Moorhouse, Gerlach, and Greenspan

Culture

The Germans and Their Titles

Germany's history with titles is quite long, rather storied, and, frankly, complicated. The use of peerage, lineage, and/or educational titles to claim superiority and power stretches back centuries. It can be a difficult thing for modern-day Americans to conceptualize: the closest one can get to an understanding is envisioning the von Dohnanyi and von Wedemeyer families as Dukes and Duchesses, and thinking of the Bonhoeffers as Rockefellers or Vanderbilts.

Within *This Mortal Life Also*, there is talk of Pomerania and Pomeranian (Prussian) aristocracy. This lineage finds its roots in the 15th century, with the arrival of the term *Junker*. Junkers were the male Prussian elite, not so much a class as “a caste...warrior elite living in isolated strongholds on bleak land.”²⁸ Originally, these elite did not see themselves as German, but, upon their growth of power after the Reformation, they became increasingly committed to maintaining their noble names. As James Hawes notes, they were “proud young men, bred to arms and semicolonial rule, with absolutely no money. But they all had the precious title *von* to their names—something money just couldn't buy.” In short (and this is, truly, an extremely short summary of centuries' worth of information), these nobles held power and prestige over those considered below them, but didn't necessarily work a day in their lives. Titles were of utmost importance.



Prussia, pre-German Unification. Source: [Encyclopedia Britannica](https://www.britannica.com)

²⁸ Hawes's *The Shortest History of Germany*

The importance of titles within Germany—and the dislike of them by the “common man”—can be seen immediately following WWI. The Weimar Constitution did away with noble names entirely, stating that: “Noble titles form part of the name only; noble titles may not be granted any more;” and “Legal privileges or disadvantages based on birth or social standing are to be abolished.”³⁰ Though it certainly didn’t do away with all of the power these people held, it did leave some folks scrambling.

The rise of Nazism continued that criteria with a far darker goal. Hitler’s January 1939 Reichstag speech stated that the Nazis would “brush aside the efforts of dying social classes to set themselves apart;” their “aryan certification” would act as a noble lineage, of sorts, allowing citizens with “common” blood to wear the badges of those elite: for instance, many Nazis wore an adapted black uniform of the 1st Imperial Hussar Life Guards, a military unit composed entirely of noble blood. This switch-up of power could be intoxicating to a non-noble German citizen: for generations, their families had been looked down upon by the state, unable to gain upward mobility. The Nazis promised power.

Oddly, many Prussian aristocrats also claimed loyalty to the Nazis, largely to keep their titles, their land, and their power. After a while, it became difficult to tell a “good Junker [from a] bad Nazi.”³¹

In short, titles and family names provided power, provided prestige, provided an easeful way of living. After centuries of that lifestyle ingraining itself in the German conscience, titles meant everything. It is why Heckel is protective of his, and why von Dohnanyi continuously mocks it.

English	Latin	German	French
Emperor	Imperator	Kaiser	Empereur
King	Rex	König	Roi
Duke	Dux	Herzog	Duc
Prince	Princeps	Fürst	Prince
Marquis / Margrave	Marchio	Markgraf	Marquis
Count / Earl	Comes	Graf	Comte / (ancient) Cuens
Viscount	Vicecomes	Vizegraf	Vicomte
Baron	[Liber] Baro	Freiherr	Baron
Lord	Dominus	Herr	Sire / Seigneur

A rough approximation between English and German titles, for some familiarity.

³⁰ The Weimar Constitution, Article 109

³¹ Hawes

The Weimar Republic (1918 – 1933)³²

The Weimar Republic, in which the majority of our characters came of age, was a time marked by progression and strife. Characterized by political turmoil, violence, economic hardship, social freedom, and vibrant artistic movements, the Republic was an experimentation for the newfound democracy.

At the end of WWI, Germany was a devastated nation: 19% of their men had been lost to war; their civilian population had suffered from malnutrition and starvation caused by Allied blockades; and working conditions were horrific, with 562 separate workers' strikes happening in 1917 alone. The Treaty of Versailles had placed all blame on Germany, was forcing them to pay impossible reparations, and had reduced their military to a shred of what it was. Ashamed and overwhelmed, military generals (those who were left after Wilhelm II's abdication) passed the baton to a civilian government, headed by moderate Max von Baden.

The new government had a less-than-auspicious start, with around 1200 Germans killed over nine days of infighting in Berlin. Ultimately, though, a new Constitution was enacted (named for the city it was signed in, Weimar) on August 11, 1919, written by such famed thinkers as Max Weber, Hugo Preuss, Friedrich Naumann, and Friedrich Meinecke. The new document aimed to satiate both sides of Germany, so became an odd combination of democratic (the President was elected, along with the Reichstag) and monarchal (the President could enact emergency powers to suspend civil rights or act without the Reichstag). The Constitution gave Germans an unprecedented voice in government, a good thing turned bad when too many parties formed to craft an actual majority voice; the party system, as a whole, showed remarkable continuity from monarchist German lines. They were "too deeply rooted in their original social constituencies and, because of the limited scope for the redistribution of wealth, too reluctant to compromise with other parties."³³ Essentially, the Weimar Republic became a political power vacuum, opening the stage for extremist groups to battle it out (Hitler was one of these, in his failed 1923 Beer Hall Putsch).



Street battles in early Weimar Berlin
Source: [History.com](https://www.history.com)

³² United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; the Deutscher Bundestag; Andrew Dickson's "Culture in Weimar Germany: on the edge of the volcano"

³³ The Deutscher Bundestag

The economy of Weimar was entirely shattered, a combination of WWI's devastation to the civilian economy and the exorbitant reparations demanded of Germany whilst the Allies occupied its most profitable land (overall, Germany lost 13% of its territory). By 1922, the cost of living in Germany had risen 12 times. The nation suffered from hyperinflation, the German government printing more money in an attempt to pay its debts: by November 1923, 4.2 trillion Marks were the equivalent of one US dollar. Because of this, the middle class—already somewhat new, arising in the 19th century—found themselves destitute; those who were in the lower classes beforehand were horribly poverty-stricken.

That said, many historians argue that the Weimar Republic was actually quite skilled at reorganizing and renegotiating debts: before the Great Depression hit (causing a worldwide domino effect), the economy in Germany was slowly improving. Unfortunately, it simply wasn't fast enough to combat the rise of Hitler.



Money in Weimar Germany became so utterly worthless that they made dresses and toys out of it, even sometimes burning it to keep warm. Source: [News Dog Media](#)

In the sociocultural realm, however, the Weimar Republic was an (arguably) raucous success. As historian Peter Gay notes, “The republic created little; it liberated what was already there.”

Sociopolitically, there were tremendous increases in human rights. Via the Weimar Constitution: everyone over 20 received the right to vote (including women); women were allowed in positions of political power; equal opportunity in the workplace was enacted; freedom of religion, expression, peaceful assembly, and private property were all set in stone; and public education was both free and mandatory for all children. Of note, as well, is the increase in acceptance and legal rights for all Jewish citizens.

Within the burgeoning urban culture (fed by rural arrivals looking for work), Berlin became one of the most socially liberal places in Europe, possibly in the entire world. It held thriving night life, vibrant arts and culture, and unforeseen amounts of sexual liberation (with an LGBT+ rights movement led by Dr. Hirschfeld). As Andrew Dickson notes, it was “a roaring surge of modernist art, music, theatre, design, dance and film, when the constraints of 19th-century manners and mores were torn down, and experimentation of all kinds remade the cultural landscape.” For those familiar with musical theatre, this is the *Kabarett* culture illustrated in Kander and Ebb’s iconic work.

Within the realm of arts and culture:

- Authors such as Franz Kafka, Vladimir Nabokov, W.H. Auden, Virginia Woolf, Graham Greene, and Christopher Isherwood called Berlin home.
- Berlin filmmakers crafted significant contributions to film, including *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), *Nosferatu* (1922), and *The Blue Angel* (1930), making stars out of icons like Marlene Dietrich.
- Expressionism found a home with artists like Otto Dix and George Gros.
- Brechtian theatre came on the scene, introducing the likes of Kurt Weill (*The Threepenny Opera*).
- The Bauhaus movement exploded, part artistic movement, part utopian commune, all progressive artisans.

Art, in general, was a unique blend of thrilling divine and dark interpretation, Weimar Germany attempting to come to terms with what had just happened to their nation.

German culture nurtured incredible thinkers, as well, the likes of philosophers Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse entering the scene. From 1918 to 1933, a German scientist won at least one Nobel Prize a year (including Albert Einstein).

In short, the sociocultural and academic life of Germany blossomed during the Weimar Republic, perhaps pushed onward by the strife inflicted by citizens’ daily lives. The characters—the real people—of *This Mortal Life Also* came of age in a time of progression, education, and acceptance, part of wealthy families with educated backgrounds.

The Republic found its demise when the Great Depression caused a replay of post-WWI hardship, stoking fear and ushering in the age of Hitler.

Scenes from the Weimar Republic



The Rise of Nazism³⁴

To put it plainly, Hitler was a skilled manipulator who managed to utilize a power vacuum and public fear at precisely the right time. To quote directly from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, there are four (simplified) reasons for Hitler's rise in popularity:

1. Backlash against the Weimar Republic and the political, economic, and social changes in Germany that occurred during the 1920s
2. Anti-Communism
3. Nationalism
4. Resentment toward the international community in the wake of World War I, which Germany lost and for which it was forced to pay heavy reparations

There was a wide array of dissatisfaction and anger that Hitler played off of. In the wake of America's Great Depression causing a worldwide depression, the middle classes and lower were suffering once more: financial survival became increasingly harder by the day, replete with the struggles that come with poverty. Politically, there wasn't anyone taking control: the lack of majority vote meant that getting anything enacted through the Reichstag was difficult, and the vacuum that left was indecisive at best, violent at worst. There was warfare in the streets, infighting and striking and warring for sustenance.

On the other hand, the old nobility was rather unhappy at losing their previously innate power. Angry at losing their landed gentry to the Treaty of Versailles, desperate to keep their rank and title, these men formed the DNVP (German National People's Party) in 1919, to advance the interests of Pan-Germans and anti-Semites. Deeply monarchal and almost entirely Protestant, this group held majority in the Reichstag in 1924, an illustration of the deep-seated nationalism sparked by mistrust and power. In general, the representatives within the Reichstag, as the years went by, hoped to capitalize on Hitler's growing popularity to maintain their seat within the government.

To both sides, in different ways, Hitler and the Nazi Party represented stability, gain, providing them a place (and a people) on which to set blame. They had the appearance of young, strong leaders coming to replace those who were old and indecisive, men who promised a bright future for a wounded Germany. By 1930, they had 6.4 million votes, even before they began the intimidation pushes.

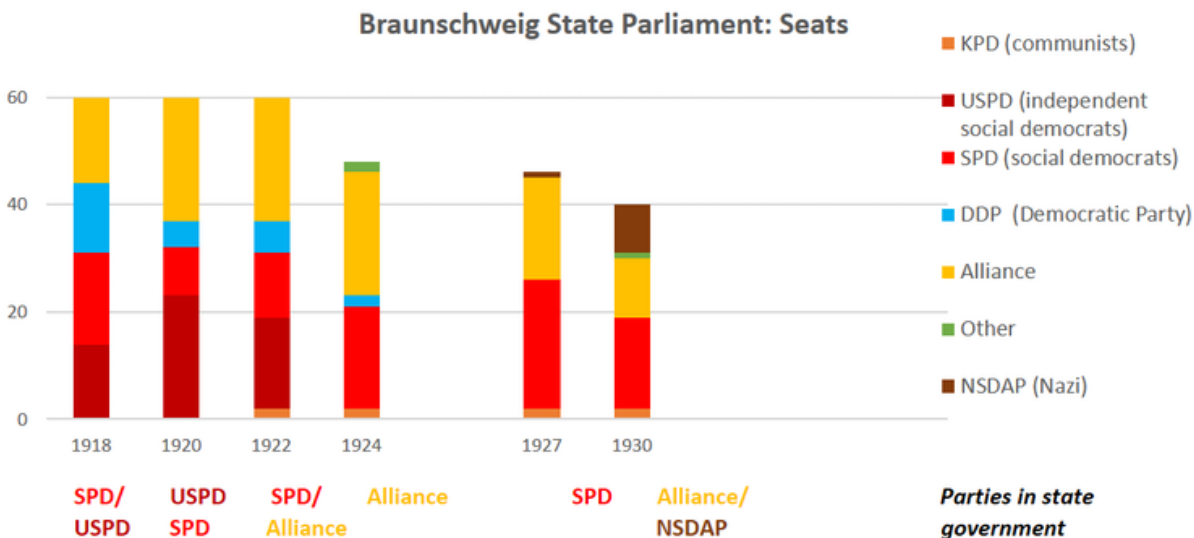
³⁴ Hawes; Nicolas Fairweather's 1932 "Hitler and Hitlerism: Germany Under the Nazis"; the Anne Frank House

Hitler had a 13-step campaign strategy, summarized below by 20th century journalist Nicolas Fairweather:

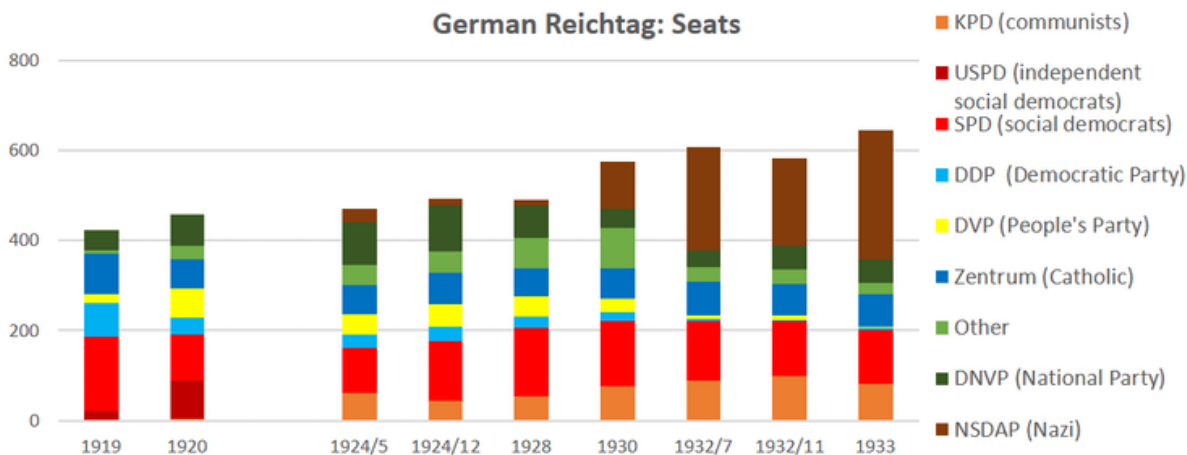
1. No social sacrifice is too great in winning over the masses. Employers must concede wage increases if need be. Economic sacrifice must be made for the goal.
2. The national education of the masses can be brought about only through a social uplift which will enable them to share in the cultural treasure of the nation, and so in its ideals.
3. To build up in the people a strong sense of their race and their nationality it is necessary to employ fanatical, narrow, one sided propaganda concentrated on the feelings of the masses. Dispassionate and judicial considerations are not for the masses.
4. The opponents of this nationalization programme must be destroyed. The masses know no halfway measures. The international poisoners of the soul must be done away with if the soul of the people is to be won.
5. The thing of fundamental significance is to maintain the purity of the race. Here is the key to world history.
6. This programme does not conflict with organization by occupations or the maintenance of proper occupational interests. The masses must rise to a higher level, social and cultural, and must break away from their internationally and unpatriotically minded leadership.
7. The goal of a political reform movement can never be attained by trying to persuade or influence the powers that be; the reform group must win power for itself. 'Success is the only earthly criterion of right or wrong in such a movement.'
8. The movement is against parliamentary government. It does not believe in control by majority vote. The leader only is elected. He appoints the next man below him, who appoints the next, and so on. Each leader has complete authority and complete responsibility. The movement aims to extend this system to the state. If it takes part in Parliament, it is only to destroy it.
9. The movement refuses to take any stand on matters outside its political sphere or not vital to it. It is not a religious reformation but a political reorganization that it seeks. Both religious communions (Catholic and Lutheran) are valuable bases, but those parties that use religion for their political advantage are to be opposed. The movement does not look toward the establishment of any particular form of government, whether monarchical or republican, but toward the creation of that fundamental social organism without which no government can endure —namely, a Germanic (that is, Teutonic, not merely German) state.
10. The inner organization of the movement is not a question of principle but of practicality; it must be so managed that the prestige and entire control of the leader and the Central Office are fully preserved. The magical glamour of a Mecca or a Rome is vital to such a movement. This is the explanation of the costly headquarters established in Munich ('The Brown House').
11. 'The future of the movement depends upon the intolerance yea, the fanaticism with which its followers maintain it to be the only right one.' Union with similar movements is dangerous. It must go its way alone, developing like the germ, all from its own inner power.
12. Its followers must be trained to love fighting with the enemy, and to rejoice in Jewish hate and slander; then is the movement unconquerable.

13. Reverence for great personalities, for genius, must be preserved. There must be no worship of the masses. The movement 'must never forget that in personal worth lies the value of everything human, that every idea every achievement, is the result of the creative power of a human being.'

This campaign was, clearly, quite successful.



Note: DVP, DNVP and other centrist parties formed a joint list ('Alliance') in Braunschweig for the 1918, 1920, 1922 and 1930 elections.



Source: [Klaus Meyer](#)

Germany Under the Third Reich³⁵

The change from the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich was, as many would know, a complete 180. It happened rather quickly, too, in the scheme of things.

One year before Hitler became Chancellor, in 1932, he gave a speech that proclaimed that there is “but one doctrine... What we have to fight for is to ensure existence and increase of our race and our people, the support of our children and the maintenance of the purity of their blood, the freedom and independence of the Fatherland; so that our people may be able to carry out the mission assigned them by the Creator of the universe. Every thought and every idea, every teaching and all learning, must serve this purpose. From this point of view everything is to be tested, and, according to its suitability, either applied or rejected.” He saw Germany’s loss in WWI to be from loss of morale, not military defeat; Germans needed to be retaught not to think for themselves, but to defend their “racial heritage” by force. As such, Hitler five major social goals from the very beginning:³⁶

1. Earlier marriage must be made possible by providing new housing facilities and such financial help as may be needed.
2. Education must train the body as well as the mind.
3. Medical treatment must be made available to all classes; hopeless incurables must be remorselessly sterilized.
4. Public morals must be taken in hand and all entertainments, placards, and advertisements made clean.
5. City life must be broken up by inducing slum dwellers to return to the land.

Under Hitler, there were three classes of Germans: citizens, nationals who were not citizens, and nationals of other states. According to his 1932 plan, “Men of pure German blood, having finished the full course of training, shall, upon completion of their military service, receive certificates of citizenship. German girls shall become citizens at marriage, sometimes otherwise. Persons not of German blood, and Germans who are unhealthy or otherwise objectionable, remain mere nationals.”³⁷ Under this categorization, it was incredibly easy ostracize and oppress.

Though Hitler and his Party proclaimed they would bring power to the people, they quickly became a dictatorship with a “façade of legality,” gaining power through intimidation and underhanded violence. Technically speaking, they were voted in (albeit without a majority), but it was most certainly not a free election. Early actions by the Party (namely, the Reichstag Fire Decree and the Enabling Act) outlawed Nazi opposition and allowed Hitler full authority. The democratic Weimar had become the totalitarian regime.

³⁵ Fairweather; the Anne Frank House; The Wiener Holocaust Library; Encyclopedia Britannica; Charu Gupta’s “Politics of Gender: Women in Nazi Germany”

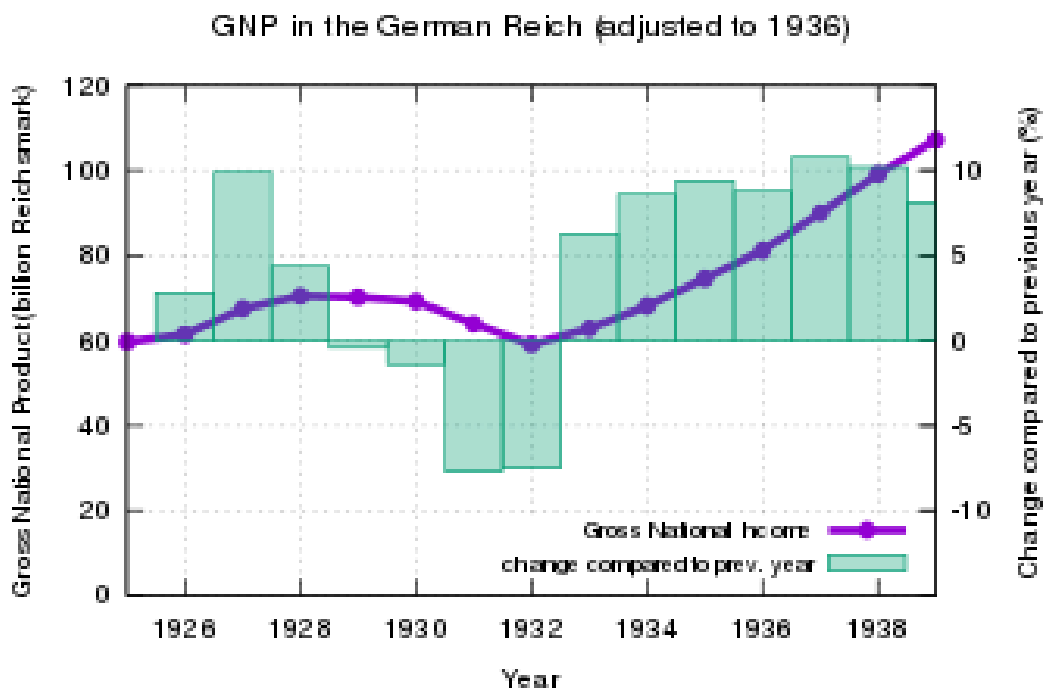
³⁶ Fairweather

³⁷ Fairweather

Economically, Hitler took power with three goals: economic stability, an end to unemployment, and Autarky (economic self-sufficiency). He aimed to return to a more “primitive” system, despising international economics and believing economic boundaries to coincide with political ones; it was this belief, largely, that led to his intense anti-Semitism: he saw the Jews as having an economic surplus that would potentially overthrow the state.

Initially, Hitler calmed big business worries by outlawing trade unions, freezing workers’ wages, and appointing Hjalmar Schacht (the man who had pulled Germany out of the hyperinflation crisis) as President of the Reichsbank and Minister of Finance. Schacht and Hitler utilized a policy of state investment to pull Germany out of recession once more, allowing the Nazis to slowly take control of all industry. By 1938, the Nazis had almost entirely eradicated unemployment (outside of those who opposed them) via work-creation schemes: however, those who were employed had little to no choice in where they worked, what they did, and what they got paid. They were simply employed. Ultimately, workers’ conditions didn’t fully improve: their total income never reached pre-Depression levels. In fact, nearly all workers “a drop in dispensable income, and in turn, in the ability to buy food, which became more scarce and more expensive as the war went on.”³⁸

In September 1934, Schacht’s plan for Autarky (reducing international reliance) was enacted. In 1936, after economic stability was reached, new goals were laid out: regulation on imports and exports, achievement of economic self-sufficiency specifically in raw materials needed for rearmament, and retraining the labor force with industrial skills. This would build Hitler’s army, and allow the push for Lebensraum. At this point, Schacht, who did not support rearmament, was pushed out in favor of Göring, who did. Nazi control of the economy was complete.



Source: Federal Statistical Office of Germany

³⁸ Wiener

The biggest outward shift between the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany came in the sociocultural life of its peoples. Following Hitler's assumption of Chancellor in 1933, after the Enabling Act and the *Gleichschaltung* (the "bringing in line"), anything considered un-German had to disappear.

Books by Jewish, left-wing, and pacifist writers were burned. Cabarets were shuttered with immediacy, and many arrested. In 1937, there was an exhibition of degenerate art, featuring pieces by every major artist of the Weimar period: many fled, never to return to their German home. There were intense, often violent, campaigns against feminism, jazz, architecture, and anything considered "art." "Foul theatre" and "insane art" were thought to be indicative of a Bolshevik mindset. Freedom of expression was outlawed by the Reichstag Fire Decree.

Hitler saw what he thought as degenerative effects of sexual freedoms concentrated in the cities, places which lacked "individuality" and "artistic treasures," and didn't have a center place to gather, like the churches of the Middle Ages. It bred unfit people. As stated in 1932, "The state must control marriage, must prevent reproduction of the unfit, must see that good parents are not kept from breeding by poverty, and must concentrate on the well being of the healthy, racially pure child."³⁹

Even education changed. Hitler deplored pre-Nazi education, as it trained thought and not action. In Nazi ideology, the body must be trained as well as the mind, culminating in military training and service. Only after that would the man be provided a certificate of "fitness for marriage," and the woman he married would become a citizen herself.

Women, too, lost their identities. Under the Third Reich, they were told to submit, their main goal being the bearing of Aryan children. They were "beautiful and useful," epitomes of loyalty, duty, and sacrifice. A Mother's Cross would be awarded to them after four births, illustrating their service to the state; as Hitler himself stated, "There is no greater honor for a woman than to be mother to the sons and daughters of a people. This is the highest nobility that she can attain."⁴⁰ Later, as the war raged on and men perished, German women would serve as armaments workers, anti-aircraft service workers, and nurses, though this held much embarrassment for the misogynistic Reich.

³⁹ Fairweather

⁴⁰ Encyclopedia Britannica

Scenes from the Third Reich



Nazi Germany and the Church⁴¹

Religion held a fascinating position within Nazi ideology, meaning both everything and nothing. Religion was utilized more as a chess piece than anything else: in the scapegoating and murder of Jewish peoples, in the supposed ordination of the Third Reich, in Hitler being described as “Germany’s Christ.” It didn’t necessarily mean anything to the men utilizing this language, but it was incredibly powerful rhetoric. The utilization of religion and churches gave the Nazis a power base they otherwise may not have gained.

Article 24 of the 1920 Nazi platform decreed: “We demand the freedom of all religious confessions in the state, insofar as they do not jeopardize the state's existence or conflict with the manners and moral sentiments of the Germanic race. The Party as such upholds the point of view of a positive Christianity without tying itself confessionally to any one confession. It combats the Jewish-materialistic spirit at home and abroad and is convinced that a permanent recovery of our people can only be achieved from within on the basis of the common good before individual good.” In short, the Nazi Party prided itself on its faux religious equality, condoning all Christian denominations (“positive Christianity”) whilst condemning Judaism. For many, this made the Party appear devout, an example offered by many church-going Nazi elites. It was the reason many supported them in the beginning. That changed shortly after Hitler took office.

From 1933 to 1935, the Act for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service allowed Nazis to removed “impure” theologians and pastors from office. On January 4, 1934, the new Reich Church passed a muzzling decree forbidding pastors' criticism of the Nazi state and church. A 1939 Reichstag speech promised a *Vernichtung* (annihilation) of any priest standing against Hitler. Truly, it just kept going, intimidation, threats, arrests, and murders increasing each year. Hitler’s design of a future Germania (his “Thousand Year Reich”) left no room for churches, and he often talked as if he were God himself.

In the midst of this was created the Aryan Bible. Crafted by the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life (and assisted by eleven Protestant churches), it:

- Omitted the Old Testament
- Crafted a bizarre version of Jesus wherein he became a follower of an Indian religion that opposed Judaism
- Created the narrative that Galilee was populated by Assyrians, Iranians, or Indians, all forcibly converted to Judaism (meaning Jesus was opposed and killed by Jews)

This Bible was circulated throughout the Reich Church, its sacrilegious edits preached as truth.

⁴¹ “Nazi Germany and the Holy See;”United States Holocaust Memorial Museum- German Churches; United States Holocaust Museum – Christianity; Hawes; William D. Wilson’s “The Orthodox Betrayal: How German Christians Embraced and Taught Nazism and Sparked a Christian Battle;” The Wiener Holocaust Library; Doris L. Bergen’s Bergen’s “Nazism and Christianity: Partners and Rivals?”; Susannah Heschel’s *The Aryan Jesus*



“The Cross Was Not Heavy Enough,”
 made by John Heartfield, 1934
 Source: [BigThink](#)

Whether by fear tactics or acceptance, the majority of the religious population within Germany did not speak out. By the late 1920s, most of Germany was a part of the German Evangelical Church, a collection of 28 *Landeskirchen* (regional churches) composed of Lutheran, Reformed, and United churches. Historically, they viewed themselves as “one of the pillars of German culture and society, with a theologically grounded tradition of loyalty to the state.” In 1933, there were 40 million Protestants and 20 million Catholics, most considering themselves highly devout.

The early 1930s brought about the development of the *Deutsche Christen* movement, which attempted to fuse Christianity and pro-Nazi ideology, promoting a “racially pure” church and attacking Jewish contributions. Immediately, this provoked a backlash from the Protestant community, resulting in the founding of the Confessing Church in 1934 (see: The Confessing Church). The Confessing Church attempted to nationalize, but the majority kept themselves to maintaining the integrity and autonomy of the Protestant Church, not questioning the legitimacy or actions of the State.

At the beginning, the Catholic Church was suspicious of the Nazi Party: many of the Party's leaders were anti-Catholic, and the Church itself had become heavily involved with Social Democrats during the era of the Republic. However, these suspicions were allayed after Hitler's 1933 Reichstag speech, wherein Christianity was described as the foundation of Germany; any further action by the Catholics was quelled both by the Vatican choosing to cooperate and the killing of Catholic party leaders during the Night of Long Knives. Survival won out for many.

It was the same for Protestants. Over 700 of their pastors were arrested in 1935; many barely escaped with their lives. Their Confessing Church was shuttered in 1937. Their voices were silenced by decrees and threats. Papal protest papers were banned in 1937. Several priests, after speaking out, were beheaded in a show of power.

In short, the church was a chess piece, and the voices of the moral were silenced, by force and by fear.



Church leaders and the Third Reich. Source: [USHMM](#)