

B In what ways was education used as propaganda?

TALKING POINTS

- 1 What do you consider to be the most important subjects taught in school/college?
- 2 Do you think a Nazi government would have the same priorities?
- 3 To gain influence over youth, would it be more important for the Nazis to manipulate the teachers or the curriculum?

FOCUS ROUTE

- 1 Identify three important changes made by the Nazis to the education system.
- 2 Explain the purpose of each change.
- 3 Copy and complete the table below. In column 2, give specific examples of how the Nazis tried in schools to develop the spirit of *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Aims	Methods
Anti-intellectualism	
Anti-semitism	
Indifference to the weak	
Nationalism	
Militarism	
Obedience and discipline	
Hitler worship	

The Nazis' approach stemmed from their anti-intellectual prejudices and the importance they placed on healthy bodies and National Socialist character, as part of a racially pure *Volksgemeinschaft*. Bernhard Rust, the Nazi Education Minister, stated in 'Education and Instruction', the official manual for teachers, 'The chief purpose of the school is to train human beings to realise that the State is more important than the individual, that individuals must be willing and ready to sacrifice themselves for Nation and Führer.'

The Nazi strategy on education had a number of strands. They were initially concerned to exercise greater control over the schools. Regulations were issued, co-ordinating teachers and encouraging local Nazi officials to interfere in schools. Many teachers were already sympathetic to the Nazis and by 1936 over 30 per cent of teachers had voluntarily joined the Nazi Party. To ensure that all teachers followed the party line, they were pressurised into joining the National Socialist Teachers' League (NSLB). By 1937, 97 per cent had done so. Members had to attend one-month training courses, stressing Nazi ideology and physical education. By 1938, two-thirds had attended. Local Nazi officials kept records on individual teachers, and those who were insufficiently committed to National Socialism could be dismissed.

The other major strategy the Nazis used was to change the curriculum. Greater stress was put on physical exercise which, by 1936, took up at least two hours a day. Nazi ideas were incorporated into subjects, particularly biology and history. Religious education was downgraded and eventually replaced. From 1935, all textbooks had to be approved. New textbooks were produced, reflecting Nazi values.

There was also a move away from co-educational schools to ensure the different sexes received their appropriate education. Girls took needlework and music, not Latin; then language and home crafts, to become good homemakers and mothers. Local plebiscites were held, which due to government pressure led to parents voting to end denominational (religious) schools. By 1939 all the denominational schools had been abolished.

As in other areas, the Nazis did not initiate major structural reorganisation. They used the school system they inherited, and supplemented it with new Nazi institutions. Thus some new schools to train the future Nazi elite were created. In 1933 Education Minister Rust announced the formation of National Political Institutes of Education (NAPOLAs) for boys aged 10–18 to develop future leaders. In 1936 the NAPOLAs were taken over by the SS. There were 21 by 1938 and 59 by 1943. They provided a military-style boarding education, with classes called 'platoons' and with the atmosphere of a military camp. There was

even more stress on physical education, compulsory manual labour and further political training replaced religious education.

In 1937 Youth Leader Schirach and DAF Leader Ley set up new special leadership schools, the Adolf Hitler Schools. They were intended partly to rival the SS's NAPOLAs and to avoid Rust's interference. Only eleven were created. They were free boarding schools for 12- to 18-year-olds, selected mainly on grounds of physical appearance and leadership potential. In the curriculum physical, political and military training were even more dominant. Many features of normal schools were abandoned. Significantly, Nazi leaders did not send their own children there.

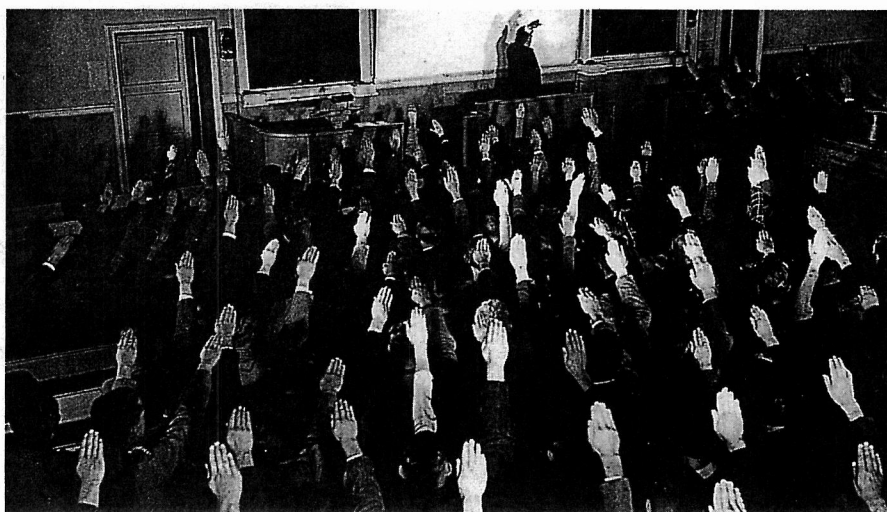
Worthy Nazi youths could finally progress to three new Ordensburgs (Castles of Order), partly modelled on medieval chivalric orders, where their training as future political and military leaders was completed. They were housed in vast castles, which held 1,000 students (called Ordensjunkers) aged 25-30, plus 500 staff. Hitler told Rauschnig, 'My Ordensburgs will mould a youth from which the world will shrink in terror.'

There were fewer changes in the nature of higher education. Most significant was a considerable contraction in numbers of students, from 113,000 in 1933 to 57,000 in 1939, reflecting the Nazi downgrading of academic education. Thereafter numbers rose to 82,000 by 1944, mainly due to a large increase in female students (11 per cent of students in 1939 were female; in 1944, 49 per cent) and to a growing realisation of the value of specialist education. In general, the government did not intervene very much in the universities, though some *Gauleiter* interfered more.

As with schools, the government tried to ensure the political compliance of the educators. In April 1933 the Law for the Restoration of the Civil Service led to about 1,200 university teachers (about 10 per cent) being dismissed (33 per cent for racial and 56 per cent for political reasons). There was little reaction to this purge in which the universities lost some of their greatest thinkers. In November 1933 all university teachers were made to sign a 'Declaration in Support of Hitler and the National Socialist State' and join the Nazi Lecturers' Association. New appointees had to attend a six-week ideological and physical training camp.

Students were forced to join the Nazi-controlled German Students' League, but 25 per cent seem to have avoided this. Students had to attend twice weekly sessions for ideological and fitness training. They had to score points in sporting activities (unless given medical exemption). University curricula were modified in some areas, for example, with racial and EUGENIC ideas in medicine, law, politics. However, there was a growing perception that standards were falling. Indeed, by the 1940s some Nazi leaders realised the adverse effects of their education policy and wanted to reverse its anti-intellectual stress, arguing that they needed to train more scientists to compete with other countries in research.

Berlin university students giving the Hitler salute



ACTIVITY

Study Sources 14.15–28.

- 1 What methods did the Nazis use to try to ensure schools were teaching correctly?
- 2 Schools/colleges today have a statement at the beginning of their prospectuses explaining the main educational aims of the institution. Using the sources, write one for a school in Nazi Germany.

SOURCE 14.15 A National Socialist Teachers' League (NSLB) official explains its role in 1937

Naturally, the German teacher must first be converted to this completely new task of German youth education. The real task of the NSLB is to create the new German educator in the spirit of National Socialism. It is being carried out with the same methods with which the movement has conquered the whole nation: indoctrination and propaganda.

SOURCE 14.16 Dr Schuster, a geography teacher, describes the problems he faced, in an interview in 1938: quoted in E. Amy Buller's *Darkness over Germany*, 1945

There is no longer any intellectual freedom... and education is being degraded by political interference... Political agents, often ignorant and stupid men... interfere with my teaching of geography. Some of them don't seem to realise that any countries exist except Germany...

My headmaster, who is new and young and a very keen Nazi – in fact he would not have the post if he were not a Party man – greatly hopes that I will leave. That is obvious, for he will get high praise if he can quickly establish an all-Nazi staff.

SOURCE 14.17 A British teacher in Germany describes the situation in schools in 1933:

Nazis were sent to schools, where they walked into the classes and cross-examined the teacher in front of his pupils. If they thought it necessary they arrested him at once.

SOURCE 14.18 From a newspaper report in Oldenburg

The State Ministry has ordered: the Hitler Greeting is also to be used in conversation between teachers and pupils... Every day at the beginning of the first lesson the pupils will get up from their places as soon as the teacher enters the class, stand to attention and raise their outstretched arm level with their eyes. The teacher will go to the front of the class and offer the same greeting accompanied by the words 'Heil Hitler!' The pupils will reply 'Heil Hitler!'

SOURCE 14.19 Teenage girls salute the flag at the start of the school day in 1933



SOURCE 14.20 *Der Angriff*, 27 October 1939

All subjects, German Language, History, Geography, Chemistry and Mathematics – must concentrate on military subjects – the glorification of military service and of German heroes and leaders and the strength of a regenerated Germany. Chemistry will inculcate a knowledge of chemical warfare, explosives, Buna [artificial rubber], etc. while mathematics will help the young to understand artillery calculations, ballistics etc.

SOURCE 14.21 Extracts from a Nazi mathematics textbook

Question 95 The construction of a lunatic asylum costs 6 million RM. How many houses at 15,000 RM each could have been built for that amount?

Question 97 To keep a mentally ill person costs approx. 4 RM per day, a cripple 5.5 RM, a criminal 3.50 RM. Many civil servants receive only 4 RM per day, white collar employees barely 3.50 RM, unskilled workers not even 2 RM per head for their families.

(a) Illustrate these figures with a diagram.

According to conservative estimates, there are 300,000 mentally ill, epileptics, etc. in care.

(b) How much do these people cost to keep in total, at a cost of 4 RM per head?

(c) How many marriage loans at 1,000 RM each . . . could be granted from this money?

SOURCE 14.22 From official instructions on the teaching of history, issued by the German Central Institute of Education, 1938

The German nation in its essence and greatness, in its fateful struggle for internal and external identity is the subject of the teaching of history. It is based on the natural bond of the child with his nation and, by interpreting history as the fateful struggle for existence between the nations, has the particular task of educating young people to respect the great German past and to have faith in the mission and future of their own nation and to respect the right of existence of other nations . . . It must always show greatness . . . the powerless and insignificant have no history.

TALKING POINT

Should history teaching be used to develop pride in one's country's past?

SOURCE 14.23 History curriculum recommended by the National Socialist Educator

Weeks	Subject	Relations to Jews	Reading material
1–4	Pre-war Germany. The class war. Profits, strikes	The Jew at large!	Hauptmann: <i>The Weavers</i>
5–8	From agrarian to industrial state. Colonies	The peasant in the claws of the Jews	Descriptions of the colonies from Hermann Löns
9–12	Conspiracy against Germany	The Jew reigns. War plots	Beumelburg: <i>Barrage. Life of Hindenburg</i> Wartime letters
13–16	German struggle. German want. Blockade! Starvation!	The Jew becomes prosperous! Profit from German want	Manke: <i>Espionage at the Front</i> War reports
17–20	The stab in the back. Collapse	Jews as leaders of the November insurrection	<i>Secret Service in Enemy Country</i> Bruno Brehm: <i>That was the End</i>
21–24	Germany's Golgotha. Erzberger's crimes! Versailles	Jews enter Germany from the east. Judah's triumph	Volkman: <i>Revolution over Germany</i> Feder: <i>The Jews</i> <i>Der Stürmer</i> newspaper
25–28	Adolf Hitler National Socialism	Judah's foe!	<i>Mein Kampf</i> Dietrich Eckart
29–32	The Bleeding Frontiers. Enslavement of Germany. The Volunteer Corps. Schlageter [a young German killed by invading French troops in 1923]	The Jew profits by Germany's misfortunes. Loans (Dawes, Young)	Beumelburg: <i>Germany in Chains</i> Wehner: <i>Pilgrimage to Paris</i> <i>Schlageter – a German hero</i>
33–36	National Socialism at grips with crime and the underworld	Jewish instigators of murder. The Jewish press	Horst Wessel [a young Nazi killed in a brawl in 1930 and turned into a hero]
37–40	Germany's youth at the helm! The victory of faith	The last fight against Judah	The Reich Party Congress