

# Activity 6: Prejudice and Propaganda

## Background to Nazi Propaganda

### 1919 - Treaty of Versailles

- The mass destruction and loss of life caused by World War 1 (1914-1918) ushered in a new era of instability. In Germany, people of all political leanings were traumatised by war, the nation's humiliating defeat and the harsh terms of the peace settlement. The 1919 Treaty of Versailles held Germany responsible for starting the war. Germany became liable for the cost of massive material damages and faced a severe economic and political crisis. In the wake of this instability, extremist movements, such as the Nazi Party emerged.

### Antisemitism

The word antisemitism means prejudice or hatred of Jews.

- Anti-Jewish hatred dates back to ancient times and has a variety of causes. In the Middle Ages and early modern era, religious antagonism towards Europe's Jews resulted in anti-Jewish legislation, expulsions, and violence. In much of Europe, government policies, customs and laws segregated Jews from the rest of the population, relegated them to particular jobs and prohibited them from owning land. In the nineteenth century, many of these restrictions were lifted through political emancipation.
- The Nazis built upon centuries of anti-Jewish sentiment. They viewed the Jews as a separate and dangerous 'race' that could never be assimilated into European society.
- The Holocaust, the state-sponsored persecution and murder of European Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945, is history's most extreme example of antisemitism

### The Nazi ideal of a German 'national community'

- The Nazis wanted to shape a German 'national community' according to their racial ideals. This meant privileging 'Aryans' and persecuting so-called inferior races, such as Jews. In February 1920, Hitler presented a 25-point Program to a Nazi meeting, which declared the intention to segregate Jews from 'Aryan' society and to revoke Jews' political, legal, and civil rights. Point 4 of the program, for example, stated that:

*"Only a national comrade can be a citizen. Only someone of German blood, regardless of faith, can be a citizen. Therefore, no Jew can be a citizen."*



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### 1938 - a summary of historical events

- **Germany annexes Austria** - German troops entered Austria on 12 March 1938. The next day, Germany officially annexed the country and incorporated Austria into the Third Reich. This event is called the *Anschluss*.
- **Evian conference on refugees** - Germany's annexation of Austria started a refugee crisis. Tens of thousands of German and Austrian Jews applied to immigrate to countries outside Europe. Diplomats and representatives from 32 countries met in Evian-les-Bains, France, in July 1938, to discuss the refugee crisis. Most of the representatives said that their country was sympathetic but would not admit more refugees. Some claimed that an increase in immigration would hurt their economy, while others stated that they did not want Jews.
- **Nazi Anti-Jewish laws – for example:**
  - \* Prohibited Jews from owning businesses.
  - \* Expelled all Jewish children from school.
  - \* Removed driving licences from Jews.
  - \* Prohibited Jews from attending the theatre or cinema.
  - \* Barred Jews from all universities.
  - \* Prohibited Jews from attending sports facilities.
  - \* Barred Jews from entering 'Aryan' zones that had been established in many cities.
- **Kristallnacht** - On 9-10 November 1938, Nazi leaders unleashed a series of violent pogroms (or riots) against the Jewish population in Germany and recently incorporated territories. This event became known as *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass) because of the shattered glass that littered the streets after the vandalism and destruction of Jewish-owned businesses, synagogues, and homes. Approximately 30,000 Jewish men and boys were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Just under 100 Jewish people were murdered in the pogrom.
- **Kindertransport** (Children's Transport) - This was the informal name of a series of rescue efforts between 1938 and 1940 which brought Jewish children from Nazi-controlled territory to safety. Jewish parents sent their children on organised transports to live in children's homes, with foster families, or with distant relatives in Great Britain, the Netherlands, or France. The Kindertransport efforts brought about 10,000 children to safety in Great Britain.

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### Sources

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