

Revision 6: WAR AND ITS LEGACY IN GERMANY

SOCIAL EFFECTS ON THE GERMAN HOME FRONT:

German society experienced various changes:

Changing role of women in society

Changes to German family structure/unit

Psychological effects

- **CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN**

World War Two brought about a changing attitude towards women. Women made contributions to the war effort and were starting to be accepted into the workplace. In 1943: Hitler agreed to the conscription of women in factories and other areas and women were replacing the jobs of men who were called up to fight, tasked with jobs that were previously male dominated

- **DISTURBANCES AND CHANGES TO GERMAN FAMILY STRUCTURES:**

The war disturbed German family life.

Forced separation of mothers and fathers from their children.

The youth/children spent less time in the family due to the fact that fathers were sent to fight, and mothers were conscripted into the workforce.

Disturbance of family life = highly damaging to social relationships

1946 German Justice Ministry Report

"Lack of education, of supervision, and of authority often results from the absence of fathers, either captive or laboring in Germany; the mother who takes over as head of the family... (has no time) often must work outside the home"

- **PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS**

The majority of Germans suffered traumatic experiences during the Second World War. Most children remember that their parents never spoke about their experiences in the Third Reich.

- Gitta Sereny: 'Into that Darkness'

"There was a period in the beginning when my wife could not function at all, she could not cook, she could not play with the boy, she could not eat and hardly slept. This extreme condition lasted for about three weeks; she then became pathologically indifferent, she did everything like an automaton."

- **DEMORALISING EFFECTS OF WWII**

WWII left German families disillusioned and afraid

The attitude of Germans towards the Second World War was filled with growing disillusionment.

- Morale badly damaged by blanket bombing of major German cities.

Strategic bombing:



The impact of bombing on German morale was significant. Around a third of the urban population under threat of bombing had no protection at all. Some of the major cities saw 55–60 percent of houses destroyed. Mass evacuations were a partial answer for six million civilians, but this had a severe impact on morale as German families were split up to live in difficult conditions. In post-war analysis 91 percent of civilians stated bombing was the most difficult hardship to endure and was the key factor in the collapse of their own morale. The United States Strategic Bombing Survey concluded that the bombing was not stiffening morale but seriously depressing it; fatalism, apathy, defeatism were apparent in bombed areas. The *Luftwaffe* was blamed for not warding off the attacks and confidence in the Nazi regime fell by 14 percent. Some 75 percent of Germans believed the war was lost in the spring of 1944, owing to the intensity of the bombing.

British Air Staff paper, dated 23 September 1941:

"The ultimate aim of an attack on a town area is to break the morale of the population which occupies it. To ensure this, we must achieve two things: first, we must make the town physically uninhabitable and, secondly, we must make the people conscious of constant personal danger. The immediate aim, is therefore, twofold, namely, to produce (i) destruction and (ii) fear of death."

British and US Raids on Lubeck, Augsburg, Munich and Nuremberg resulted in the deaths of 305,000 and close to 800,000 injured. 1.8 million homes were destroyed. The most extreme examples of which were caused by [Operation Gomorrah](#), the [attack on Hamburg](#), (45,000 dead) and the [attack on Dresden](#) (25,000 dead).



RAF estimates of destruction of "built up areas" of major German cities * = population over 500,000

City	percent destroyed
Berlin*	33%
Cologne*	61%
Dortmund*	54%
Dresden*	59%
Düsseldorf*	64%
Essen*	50%
Frankfurt*	52%
Hamburg*	75%
Leipzig*	20%
Munich*	42%

Bochum	83%
Bremen	60%
Chemnitz	41%
Dessau	61%
Duisburg	48%
Hagen	67%
Hanover	60%
Kassel	69%
Kiel	50%
Mainz	80%
Magdeburg	41%
Mannheim	64%
Nuremberg	51%
Stettin	53%
Stuttgart	46%

ECONOMIC:

- **TOTAL WAR- Germany switched to this in 1943:**

- With the war draining more and more German resources, Albert Speer began to direct Germany's war economy. All effort focused on the armament industries and Goebbels increased censorship to try to rise morale. This tightening of control was carried out by the SS. In fact, the SS became a state within a state. The SS empire had its own armed forces, armament industries and labour camps. New branches of the SS emerged to tackle particular issues: the Waffen SS (the military branch); the Race and Resettlement Office (resettling Germans in occupied territories in Eastern Europe); and the Office for Strengthening of Germanhood (in charge of racial policy.)
- German civilians left homeless after World War 2
- Downfall of industry production = Downfall in employment rates
- 1939 –Rationing of clothes .
- 1939-Food rationing
- People were only allowed to use warm water twice a week – as a way of saving fuel.
- Soap rationing
- No toilet paper
- The result of rationing was that a flourishing black market developed, to exchange goods.
- In September 1940, arrangements were made to move children from Berlin because of air raids by the Allies. This wasn't very successful, as many stayed in Berlin.

Existence of a black market – workers and civilians lost all faith in the German currency.



Role of cigarettes:

Cigarettes had universal acceptability: and became a form of currency:
- acceptability of cigarettes on illegal markets was far greater than the Reichsmark

“Anything money will buy, and a good many things it won’t, can be had for cigarettes in Germany today.”

- Herald Tribune of 28 February 1947

- **Shortages and the black market**

- 1939: 700 grams of meat for each person per week.
- 1945: only 250 grams of meat for each person per week.
- In 1943, the zoo animals were slaughtered!

DENAZIFICATION:

- Demilitarisation was not much of a problem. Germany was shattered-it was in no state to fight on and its people had no will to do so. Most were struggling to simply find food and shelter amidst the ruins of war.
- People got on with re-building as soon as they could. Women known as 'rubble women' working individually or in groups started clearing the remains of bombed buildings with their bare hands.
- Germany was facing an extreme refugee crisis as Germans in East Europe fled or were forced to leave. Attacks on Germans in East Europe were frequent and brutal, Germans of the Czech Sudetenland suffered horrifically from the Soviet Army. An estimated 12-14 million German speakers became refugees.



Denazification: Western Zone:

- **Denazification** (German: *Entnazifizierung*) was an [Allied](#) initiative to rid German and Austrian society, culture, press, economy, judiciary, and politics of any remnants of the National Socialist ideology ([Nazism](#)). About 8.5 million Germans, or 10% of the population, had been members of the Nazi Party. Nazi-related organizations also had huge memberships, such as the German Labour Front (25 million), the National Socialists People's Welfare organization (17 million), the [League of German Women](#), [Hitler Youth](#), the Doctors' League, and others. It was through the Party and these organizations that the Nazi state was run, involving as many as 45 million Germans in total. Denazification after the surrender of Germany was thus an enormous undertaking, fraught with many difficulties.
- **West viewed Nazism as a result of decisions and choices made by individuals even so far as a psychological problem.**
- Initial policy of **non-fraternisation dropped** after recognition of the need for the involvement of Germans.
- **Policy of segregation** resented by Germans.
- Segregation a punishing policy. **Not clear if they were punishing or rehabilitating Germany.**
- **Denazification was chaotic and inefficient.**
- **Denazification was time consuming and costly.**
- **Policies emphasised re-education** in democratic values.

- **Internment** of those associated to Nazism in the west similarly to the Soviet Zone.
- Difficult to establish support based on keeping jobs and careers and those who were genuinely opposed.
- Those shown to have more **than nominal support for Nazism** were removed from public office. However this was **interpreted differently** in the four zones.
- The western zone required **questionnaires** to be completed and individuals were assigned to one of five categories.
- Those dismissed from jobs could appeal to an **arbitration tribunal** to present a testimony of good behaviour.
- Those who did not have an active role in the Nazi regime collected **Persil certificates**.
- **Tribunals** could not cope with cases.
- The process of denazification **wound down** in the 1950's.
- There became more **concern in the rebuilding** of West Germany.
- **1946 Law for Liberation from National Socialism** established **new tribunals staffed by Germans**. However easiest cases were addressed first.
- The **British Western Zone was most lenient** in terms of those exonerated.
- **The 1951 131 Law** allowed former Nazis back into civil service posts.
- **Re-form of the education system was limited**. University lecturers associated with Nazism retained their positions.
- The **legal profession** also retained a high number of previous Nazi party members.
- It must be remembered however there was **no re-emergence of Nazism**.
- The process of denazification in both the west and east became more the **action of individuals**.
- **Individuals and groups denounced Nazism openly**. The protestant church's **declaration of guilt**. Their failure to protest more openly about the Nazi regime.
- **Simon Wiesenthal**. Survivor of a concentration camp, worked to bring individuals to trial.
- Most of those condemned in 1945-1947 **regained their positions** consistent with their social and educational backgrounds. There were no alternative replacements.
- In this respect denazification was a failure. (ex) Nazi members allowed back into significant positions.
- **Nazi witch hunt**. Resentment caused by the Nazi witch hunt caused Germans to feel victimised. Germans renounced it.

- **Collective amnesia** as a result of western policy, made the process of denazification difficult, no one was prepared to remember the past.
- **The new press** took great steps to discredit Nazism and to re-educate western Germany's society.
- **The greatest re-educator** of the west however was the **revival of the economy** and the **new political system**, ensuring that there was no desire to return to the past.

Denazification: Eastern Zone:

- The soviets viewed Nazism as part of a complete social and economic system that had to be destroyed and then remodelled on socialism. Denazification was part of an ideologically driven process towards the creation of a capitalist society.
- The USSR's process of denazification was thorough, but brutal.
- Nazis in prominent positions, political, administrative and educational posts were purged.
- Greater denazification process in education compared to the western zone. All Nazi teachers and administrators dismissed. New education guidelines established. Supposedly compatible with the USSR's ideologies.
- The need for trained professionals weakened the process of denazification, and denazification was therefore less effective. Less thorough procedures applied to individuals in the medical field.
- The USSR selectively denazified. Some Nazis were kept in high positions.
- Internment camps, some on former concentration camp sites, interned Nazi criminals. Political opponents and children interned. These camps had appalling conditions. Psychological torture of those interned. Many died.
- Soviet Special Camp Number 7/ Soviet camp number 2. Politically unreliable interned and those opposed to soviet rule in the eastern zone. Censoring on the information of these camps in a similar manner to under the Nazi regime.
- Denazification was used by the soviets as an excuse to attack political opponents opposed to socialism. Many political opponents were interned.
- In 1947 Russians offered an amnesty to all those prepared to help further socialist society. Irrelevant of individuals' pasts.
- 1948-1949 restrictions on former on the activities and rights of former Nazis removed.
- 1952 Full citizenship rights given to Nazis who were not deemed war criminals.

- In the soviet zone an intense re-education programme took place, this promoted socialism.
- The mass movement of people from the east to the west, reduced the possibility of revival of the eastern economy and it as a re-educator as in the western zone.



- **Responsibility and collective guilt**
- The Allies wanted to emphasise the moral responsibility of all Germans for Nazi crimes.
- The allies felt a sense of guilt was essential to the long term education of the German people.
- Using the German press, which was under Allied control, as well as posters and pamphlets, a program was conducted to publicise to the German people what had taken place in the concentration camps. For example, using posters with images of concentration camp victims coupled to text such as "YOU ARE GUILTY OF THIS!" or "These atrocities: Your Fault!"

End

- The West German political system, as it emerged from the occupation, was increasingly opposed to the Allied denazification policy. As denazification was deemed ineffective and counterproductive by the Americans, they did not oppose the plans of the West German chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, to end the denazification efforts.
- In 1951 several laws were passed, ending the denazification. Officials were allowed to retake jobs in the civil service.
- Several amnesty laws were also passed which affected about 792,176 people. Those pardoned included people with six-month sentences, 35,000 people with sentences of up to one year and include more than 3,000 functionaries of the SA, the SS, and the Nazi Party who participated in dragging victims to jails and camps; 20,000 other Nazis sentenced for "deeds against life" (presumably murder); 30,000 sentenced for causing bodily injury. As a result, several people with a

former Nazi past ended up again in the political apparatus of Western Germany.