

# The Nazi Worldview

The crimes that Nazis committed were linked to a system of belief and a set of practices.

Nazi ideology was synonymous with Hitler's worldview. According to this there was no equality between people, but only a racial hierarchy. In this view blond, blue-eyed, Nordic German Aryans were at the top, while Jews were located at the lowest rung. They were to be regarded as an anti-race, the arch-enemies of the Aryans. Other coloured people were placed in between depending upon their external features. Hitler's racism borrowed from thinkers like Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer. Darwin was a natural scientist who tried to explain the creation of plants and animals through the concept of evolution and natural selection. Herbert Spencer later developed the idea of survival of the fittest. According to this idea, only those species survived on earth that could adapt themselves to changing climatic conditions. We should bear in mind that Darwin never advocated human intervention in what he thought was a purely natural process of selection. However, his ideas were used by racist thinkers and politicians to justify imperial rule over conquered peoples. The Nazi argument was simple: the strongest race would survive and the weak ones would perish. The Aryan race was the best. It had to retain its purity, become stronger and dominate the world.

Another aspect of Hitler's ideology related to the geopolitical concept of *Lebensraum*, or living space. He believed that new territories had to be acquired for settlement. This would enhance the area of the mother country, while enabling the settlers on new lands to retain an intimate link with the place of their origin. It would also enhance the material resources and power of the German nation.

Hitler intended to extend German boundaries by moving eastwards, and concentrate all Germans geographically in one place. Poland became a laboratory for this experimentation.

## Establishment of the Racial State

Once in power, the Nazis quickly began to implement their dream of creating an exclusive racial community of pure Germans by systematically eliminating all those who were seen as 'undesirable' in the

### Source A

'For this earth is not allotted to anyone nor is it presented to anyone as a gift. It is awarded by providence to people who in their hearts have the courage to conquer it, the strength to preserve it, and the industry to put it to the plough... The primary right of this world is the right to life, so far as one possesses the strength for this. Hence on the basis of this right a vigorous nation will always find ways of adapting its territory to its population size.'

Hitler, *Secret Book*, ed. Telford Taylor.

### Source B

'In an era when the earth is gradually being divided up among states, some of which embrace almost entire continents, we cannot speak of a world power in connection with a formation whose political mother country is limited to the absurd area of five hundred kilometers.'

Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 644.

## Activity

Read Sources A and B

- What do they tell you about Hitler's imperial ambition?
- What do you think Mahatma Gandhi would have said to Hitler about these ideas?

### New words

Nordic German Aryans – One branch of those classified as Aryans. They lived in north European countries and had German or related origin.

extended empire. Nazis wanted only a society of 'pure and healthy Nordic Aryans'. They alone were considered 'desirable'. Only they were seen as worthy of prospering and multiplying against all others who were classed as 'undesirable'. This meant that even those Germans who were seen as impure or abnormal had no right to exist. Under the Euthanasia Programme, Helmuth's father along with other Nazi officials had condemned to death many Germans who were considered mentally or physically unfit.



Fig. 13 - Police escorting gypsies being deported to Auschwitz.

Jews were not the only community classified as 'undesirable'. There were others. Many Gypsies and blacks living in Nazi Germany were considered as racial 'inferiors' who threatened the biological purity of the 'superior Aryan' race. They were widely persecuted. Even Russians and Poles were considered subhuman, and hence undeserving of any humanity. When Germany occupied Poland and parts of Russia, captured civilians were forced to work as slave labour. Many of them died simply through hard work and starvation.

Jews remained the worst sufferers in Nazi Germany. Nazi hatred of Jews had a precursor in the traditional Christian hostility towards Jews. They had been stereotyped as killers of Christ and usurers. Until medieval times Jews were barred from owning land. They survived mainly through trade and moneylending. They lived in separately marked areas called ghettos. They were often persecuted through periodic organised violence, and expulsion from the land. However, Hitler's hatred of Jews was based on pseudoscientific theories of race, which held that conversion was no solution to 'the Jewish problem'. It could be solved only through their total elimination.

From 1933 to 1938 the Nazis terrorised, pauperised and segregated the Jews, compelling them to leave the country. The next phase, 1939-1945, aimed at concentrating them in certain areas and eventually killing them in gas chambers in Poland.

*Dial dunia*

### 3.2 The Racial Utopia

Under the shadow of war, the Nazis proceeded to realise their murderous, racial ideal. Genocide and war became two sides of the same coin. Occupied Poland was divided up. Much of north-western Poland was annexed to Germany. Poles were forced to leave their homes and properties behind to be occupied by ethnic Germans brought in from occupied Europe. Poles were then herded like

#### New words

- Gypsy - The groups that were called 'gypsy' had their own communities. Sinti and Roma were two such communities. Many of them traced their origin to India.
- Pauperised - Reduce to absolute poverty.
- Persecution - Systematic, organised punishment of those belonging to a particular race, religion or religion.
- Usurers - Moneylenders charging excessive interest; often used as a term of abuse.

cattle in the other part called the General Government, the destination of all 'undesirables' of the empire. Members of the Polish intelligentsia were murdered in large numbers in order to keep the entire people intellectually and spiritually servile. Polish children who looked like Aryans were forcibly snatched from their mothers and examined by 'race experts'. If they passed the race tests they were raised in German families and if not, they were deposited in orphanages where most perished. With some of the largest ghettos and gas chambers, the General Government also served as the killing fields for the Jews.

## Activity

See the next two pages and write briefly:

- What does citizenship mean to you? Look at Chapters 1 and 3 and write 200 words on how the French Revolution and Nazism defined citizenship.
- What did the Nuremberg Laws mean to the 'undesirables' in Nazi Germany? What other legal measures were taken against them to make them feel unwanted?

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## Chapter 3

### Nazism and the Rise of Hitler

class = 9



Q) What was the slogan coined by Hitler when he followed his aggressive foreign policy?

A) One people, one empire, and one leader.

Q) When and among which countries was the Tripartite Pact signed?

A) 1940, Germany, Italy and Japan.

Q) Which incident persuaded the USA to join the war?

A) Japan's attack on the US base at ~~Paris~~ Pearl Harbour.

Q) Who could enter Jungvolk?

A) Ten-year old boys

Q) Who were the worst sufferers in Nazi Germany?

A) Jews