Y10 History
Week beginning 01/06/20

Nazi Social and Economic Policies

Please spend ONE HOUR on each lesson this week.

Lesson One:

What was the impact of Nazi policies on women?

1. Read the quote and explain what it suggests about Nazi policies towards women.
2. Read the section entitled 'women and children in Nazi Germany' and answer the questions below using examples from the text.
   a. What role did the Nazis intend for women?
   b. Why were they an important part of the Volksgemeinschaft?
   c. Why do you think the Nazis wanted to limit the political, social and economic freedoms of women? How would this help them build the Volksgemeinschaft?

3. Read about what the Nazis believed was the role of women and mothers, and answer the questions below. Try to use as many specific examples as possible.
   a. What were the 3 Ks?
   b. In what different ways were women excluded from the job market?
   c. What was the role of Gertrude Scholtz-Klink in defining Nazi ideas of womanhood?
   d. Why was the German birth-rate so important to the Nazis? What policies were put into place to increase the size of the German population?
   e. What was the Nazi Cult of Motherhood?
   f. How did the needs of the 4-Year Plan conflict with Nazi ideology towards women?
   g. What was social engineering? What was the Spring of Life programme?

4. Read about how Nazi policies affected women and then create two lists:
   a. Evidence that women were highly regarded and considered important by the Nazis, and why; and
   b. Evidence that the Nazis considered women to be second class citizens (ie, less important than men, having fewer freedoms etc), and why.

5. Save or print your work.

According to Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, what did German women and female parrots have in common?

"The mission of women is to be beautiful and to bring children into the world. This is not at all as........unmodern as it sounds. The female parrot/bird pretties herself for her mate and hatches eggs for him. In exchange, the male takes care of gathering food, and stands guard and wards off the enemy."

What does this quotation suggest about Nazi policies towards women?
Women and Children in Nazi Germany

The primary role the Nazis envisaged for women was based upon domesticity (staying at home) and reproduction (having children). The Nazis believed women to be different to men and their primary function was to reproduce and to care for ethnically pure children. They had a very different role to play than men in creating the Volksgemeinschaft (the ‘People’s Community’- see last lesson), but the Nazis said it was equally as important.

For the Nazis, women were meant to be feminine and obedient. They had a duty to protect the racial purity of future generations of Germans.

The following terms can be used to identify the role of women within Nazi society:

- **Domesticity** – women were to give up employment and to concentrate upon domestic duties.
- **Reproduction** – A larger population of racially pure Germans was needed to establish a new German Empire. The German birth rate was in decline following the First World War, and Hitler believed that women’s primary function was to produce more children.
- **Subservience** – Women were meant to be subservient (obedient to their men) with regard to politics, decision making, employment opportunities and public life.
- **Protection** – German women were meant to protect the Volksgemeinschaft by ensuring that they only had children with healthy, Aryan men.
- **Guardianship** – Women were seen as the protectors of the domestic world and their role was to ensure the genetic health of the German ‘race’.
- **Purity** – the genetic purity of Germany could only be guaranteed if women checked the history/background of prospective partners. This way, the Nazis believed, ‘bad blood’ could be removed. People with bad blood would be those who were not Aryan, those with disabilities or those with ‘undesirable’ character traits, like alcoholism.
- **Femininity** – Women were meant to represent traditional, rural German values by dressing modestly, behaving politely, being well-mannered and dedicated to family life.

Between 1914-1930, women across Europe were becoming emancipated (gaining more freedoms and rights). These freedoms included the right to vote, greater job opportunities and more ability to make decisions about their own lives.

The Nazis believed that this greater freedom for women had had a negative impact upon German society. The number of births each year had dropped in Germany from over 2 million in 1900 to less than 1 million in 1933. At the same time the number of women in employment had increased by 1/3. In addition, women had better educational opportunities and greater independence.

Hitler set out to restore women to their ‘traditional role’ within society and created many new rules about women’s place in Nazi society. He believed that this would strengthen Germany’s racial community (Volksgemeinschaft).
How did the Nazis affect women’s lives?

What were the Three Ks?

The Nazi’s belief in a woman’s place in society can be summarised by the ‘Three Ks’. The Three Ks were Kinder (children), Kuche, (Kitchen) and Kirche (Church.) The meaning of each was as follows:

- **Kinder** – Women had a responsibility to produce as many children as possible for Germany.
- **Kuche** – Women needed to focus exclusively upon their domestic responsibilities, such as caring for their family.
- **Kirche** – This meant behaving in a moral way, not necessarily being part of the Reich Church.

The 3Ks were designed as part of Goebbels’ organised propaganda campaign to indoctrinate (‘Nazify’) the German people. Other actions of the Nazis were designed to encourage this, too.

**Restricting professional employment** – Women were banned from training in medicine, law, for the civil service, teaching and higher education generally.

**Labour exchanges** – Employment offices were ordered to discriminate in favour of men.

**Financial inducements for marriage/child birth** – Young women were offered a large loan to get married.

**Gertrude Scholtz-Klink** was the key figure in the National Socialist Womanhood organisation and the German Women’s Enterprise organisation. She argued that women should play a secondary role in German public life. She was responsible for creating cultural, social and educational schemes to advance Nazi concepts of femininity. She was the highest ranking female Nazi – but women were not allowed to take the higher positions of responsibility within the structure of the party.

**Nazi policies on increasing the size of the German population.**

If the Nazis were to achieve super power status they needed to expand, and this could only be justified if the German population increased significantly. To increase the population the Nazis made the following policies:

- introduced anti-abortion laws;
- contraception and birth control advice were restricted, making it harder for women to decide when they became pregnant;
- propaganda campaigns showed the importance of motherhood; and
- the Nazis created financial rewards for having many children.

At the same time the Nazis tried to prevent ‘genetically inferior’ humans from breeding. To do this, a huge sterilisation programme was put in place. This stopped men and women classed as ‘inferior’ from having children through surgery and medicine.
The population of Germany did increase between 1933-1939. However, sociologists have argued that there were a huge variety of reasons why this occurred and it was unlikely to have been simply because of Nazi policies.

**The Nazi Cult of Motherhood.**
Hitler argued that the most important function within society was reproduction as this gave societies and cultures strength. Women were therefore the most important figures in society, as they could expand the population. The Cult of Motherhood glorified the maternal role of women and propaganda fully supported this idea. The Honour Cross was introduced for women who produced between 4-8 children.

**The 1936 4-Year Plan**
Unfortunately for the Nazis, the realities of day-to-day life sometimes made it harder to put their ideals into practice. In 1936, the Nazis created a plan to make Germany the foremost world power. The 4-Year Plan was based upon building up the armed forces and making Germany self-sufficient. This meant that the Nazis needed more men to join the army and to work, but there were not enough men available to do all the jobs.

This made it necessary for women to retake their place within the workforce. By 1939 women represented 33% of the workforce. In 1933 there had been 5.9 million women in the workforce, but by 1939 this had increased to 6.9 million, even though the Nazis were still telling women that their place was at home.

**The Spring of Life programme**
The Nazis’ desire to build a pure racial community led to social engineering. This meant the Nazis tried to shape all parts of society to build their Volksgemeinschaft. To help with this they created The Spring of Life Programme. This involved taking ‘Aryan’ children from ‘non-Aryan countries’ and allowing them to be adopted by ‘pure’ Germans. The programme also led to some ‘racially pure’ women being impregnated by ‘racially pure’ SS men. This forced breeding would both increase the size of the population and create a new race of Nazi ‘superhumans’.
How did Nazi policies affect women?

One of the earliest laws passed by Hitler once he came to power in 1933 was the Law for the Encouragement of Marriage. This law stated that all newly married couples would get a government loan of 1000 marks (about 9 months average income). 800,000 newly-weds took up this offer. The birth of one child meant that 25% of the loan did not have to be paid back. Two children meant that 50% of the loan need not be paid back. Four children meant that the entire loan was cleared.

The Cross of Honour of the German Mother (German: Ehrenkreuz der Deutschen Mutter), referred to simply as Mutterkreuz (Mother’s Cross), was awarded to women who had given birth to the largest number of children. The gold cross went to women who had produced 8 children; silver was for 6 children and bronze was for 4 children. It entitled wearers to a special salute from Hitler Youth members, and a number of small benefits including preferential treatment, precedence and priority service within society and public services. As one woman recalls "...they were always given the best of everything: housing, food, clothing, and schooling for their children. Old people even had to give up their seats on the bus or streetcar. They were treated like royalty with the greatest respect. No standing in line for them. At the butchers shop the best cuts of meat would go into their baskets." The crosses were awarded annually on the second Sunday in May.

Everyday life:
As housewives and mothers, women’s lives were controlled. Women were not expected to wear make-up or trousers. The dyeing of hair was not allowed nor were perms; girls were encouraged to plait their hair whilst women should have long hair in a bun or ‘gretchen plaits’. Only flat shoes were expected to be worn. Women were encouraged to have a well-built figure and discouraged from slimming, as slim women, so it was taught, would have problems in pregnancy. The BDM (League of German Maidens) trained girls to be loyal, physically fit and mothers. They were not expected to grow into contributors to the economy; motherhood was their primary and sole purpose to the master race. Laws against abortion were enforced, though women considered to be ‘unfit’ for motherhood (often because they were deemed to be ‘feebleminded) were sterilized.

Women were not expected to work in Nazi Germany. Within months of Hitler coming to power, many female doctors and civil servants were sacked. This was followed by female teachers and lawyers.

There were some high profile women:
Leni Riefenstahl was a high profile film director, producer, screenwriter, editor, photographer, actress and dancer. Her most famous film was a piece of Nazi propaganda called Triumph of the Will. She knew Hitler personally, having become fascinated by him after hearing him speak at a rally in 1932.
Gertrude Scholz-Klink was head of the Nazi Women’s bureau, although she was excluded from any important discussions – she was essentially a figurehead. She agreed with this approach; despite her own position, Scholtz-Klink spoke against the participation of women in politics, and took the female politicians in Germany of the Weimar Republic as a bad example, saying, "Anyone who has seen the Communist and Social Democratic women scream on the street and the parliament, realize that such an activity is not something which is done by a true woman".

Change of policy

In the late 1930s the Nazis had to do a policy about-turn due to a shortage of workers. The supply of unemployed men began to dry up, which was made worse by the outbreak of WWII. In 1937 a law was passed which meant women had to do a "Duty Year". This meant that they could work ‘patriotically’ in a factory etc. to help the Nazi’s "Economic Miracle". The marriage loan was also abolished in this year. By 1939 more women were in paid work than had been in 1933.

In 1935 Himmler started a program called Lebensborn (Spring of Life). It prescribed that every SS member should father four children, whether with their wives or with women selected for the purpose. Lebensborn homes sheltered illegitimate offspring and their mothers, provided birth documents and financial support, and recruited adoptive parents for the children.

List evidence from the reading of to support each of the three statements below:

**Women were highly regarded in Nazi Germany**

Evidence:

**Women were second-class citizens in Nazi Germany**

Evidence:

**Women benefitted from Nazi rule.**

To what extent do you agree?