

Tasks

1. Look carefully at date the sources were written. Select one of the following categories and colour code/highlight them accordingly:

- a. pre-war
- b. during the war
- c. after the war
- d. 1960s.



2. Highlight the two sources written by German historians.

3. Henderson's account of Nazi Germany in Source 1 is largely positive. How do you account for this?

4. What does Source 2 tell us about Churchill's view of Nazism as a political doctrine?

5. What 'document' is Nicholson talking about? What school of historical interpretation is this view linked to?

6. What point is Shirer making in Source 4 about responsibility for the Second World War?

7. Why do you think that view of Nazism given in Source 5 would prove popular in Germany after the Second World War?

8. How does Broszat's interpretation in Source 6 differ to that offered by Thyssen? How does his view relate to the context within West Germany in the 1960s?

Source 1: extract from N. Henderson, *Failure of a Mission* (published in 1940). Sir Neville Henderson was Britain's ambassador to Berlin from 1937-39.

He [Hitler] had restored to Germany her self-respect, and recreated orderliness out of the chaos and distress which had followed her defeat in 1918. It is true that the price that the Germans had had to pay was a heavy one - namely, complete loss of personal liberty, of independent thought, and of free speech. All were obliged to think, speak and act as they were told to do, or suffer exile or persecution. The rails of National Socialism were laid in a straight line, and any deviation from them met with instant punishment. Yet some sort of an operation had been necessary. In 1933, ten per cent - over six million men - of the population were out of work. Within four years the number of unemployed had been reduced to an infinitesimal figure, and by 1939 there was a labour shortage estimated at two million. That in itself, however much one may attribute it to war production, was no mean achievement. To the wheels of Hitler's chariot were, in fact, harnessed the amazing power of organisation thoroughness, and discipline of the German nation.

Source 2: Winston Churchill, 'Friendship with Germany' (17 Sept. 1937).

I have had from time to time conversations with eminent German supporters of the present regime. When they say as they often do, 'Will not England grasp the extended friendly hand of German?' nearly everyone in England will reply, 'Certainly, yes. We cannot pretend to like your new institutions, and we have long freed ourselves from racial and religious intolerance. We cannot say that we admire your treatment of the Jews or of the Protestants and Catholics of Germany. We even think our methods of dealing with Communism are better than yours. But, after all, these matters, so long as they are confined inside Germany, are not our business. It is our duty and our sincere desire to live in a good and neighbourly fashion with so great a nation united to us by many ties of history and of race. Indeed, we will grasp the out-stretched German hand.'...

One may dislike Hitler's system and yet admire his patriotic achievement. If our country were defeated I hope we should find a champion as indomitable to restore our courage and lead us back to our place in the nations.

Source 3: extract from H. Nicolson *Why Britain is at War* (1939). Harold Nicolson was a National Labour MP at the time of publication.

It seems almost unbelievable that any foreign Government, possessing knowledge of Adolf Hitler's origins and previous record, having before their eyes the document in which he had confessed the unlimited scope of his ambitions ... could still have hoped that this anarchist could be satisfied by minor concessions or controlled by reasonable persuasion.

Source 4: extract from W. L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (1964). Shirer was an American journalist, resident in Germany until 1941. His book was first published in 1960.

Germany never recovered from this setback [the Thirty Years War]. Acceptance of autocracy, of blind obedience to the petty tyrants who ruled as princes, became ingrained in the German mind. The idea of democracy, of rule by parliament which made rapid headway in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and which exploded in France in 1789, did not sprout in Germany. This political backwardness of the German, divided as they were into so many petty states and isolated in them from the surging currents of European thought and development, set Germany apart from and behind the other countries of the West. There was no natural growth of a nation. This has to be borne in mind if one is to comprehend the disastrous road this people subsequently took and the warped state of mind which settled over it. In the end the German nation was forged by naked force and held together by naked aggression.

Source 5: extract from F. Thyssen, *I Paid Hitler* (1941). Fritz Thyssen was a wealthy businessman who fled Germany in the second half of 1939.

Hitler deceived me, as he has deceived the German people as a whole and all men of good will. It may perhaps be said - to me and to all Germans - that we should not have allowed ourselves to be deceived. For my part I accept the validity of this charge. I plead guilty. I was completely mistaken regarding Hitler and his party. I believed in his promises, in his loyalty, in his political genius. The same mistake has been made by professional politicians. Hitler was trusted by the Catholics and even by the Jews. Of this I could give many examples.

Hitler has deceived us all. But after his accession to power he succeeded in misleading foreign statesmen just as he misled the Germans before 1933.

If I wished to attempt to justify myself, I might say that people outside Germany were better informed concerning the initial crime of the regime than we were in Germany. I speak of the burning of the Reichstag. Nevertheless, the great nations of Europe continued to maintain normal diplomatic relations with the Nazi incendiaries and assassins. Their ambassadors and ministers received them in their embassies and legations, and shook hands with them as with honest men. We in Germany can at least proffer the excuse that we did not know the truth.

Source 6: M. Broszat, *The Hitler State* (1981). Martin Broszat was a German historian and first published this work in West Germany in 1969.

Given the impression of resoluteness which he offered, Hitler knew how to articulate and at the same time to celebrate what his listeners half consciously desired and felt. He voiced what they secretly thought and wanted, reinforced their still unsure longings and prejudices, and thereby created for them a deeply satisfying self-awareness and the feeling of being privy to a new truth and certainty. Such leadership and oratory did not require a refined intellectual discrimination or a calm, mature individuality and personality, but - as with the leaders of other fascist or equally irrational mass and revivalist movements - a psychological and emotional disposition which was itself so infected by the mood of crisis and panic of the time that it instinctively sounded the correct note; a person who with the growing self-awareness of the successful agitator increasingly discovered his own mission in life and that meaning to his existence for which he had so long searched in vain.