

Nazi Party

The **National Socialist German Workers' Party** (German: *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, abbreviated **NSDAP**), commonly referred to in English as the **Nazi Party** (English: ^[6] was a far-right political party in Germany that was active between 1920 and 1945 and practised the ideology of Nazism. Its precursor, the German Workers' Party (*Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* DAP), existed from 1919 to 1920.

The Nazi Party emerged from the German nationalist, racist and populist *Freikorps* paramilitary culture, which fought against the communist uprisings in post-World War I Germany.^[7] The party was created as a means to draw workers away from communism and into *völkisch* nationalism.^[8] Initially, Nazi political strategy focused on anti-big business, anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist rhetoric, although such aspects were later downplayed in order to gain the support of industrial entities and in the 1930s the party's focus shifted to anti-Semitic and anti-Marxist themes.^[9]

Pseudo-scientific racism theories were central to Nazism. The Nazis propagated the idea of a "people's community" (*Völksgemeinschaft*). Their aim was to unite "racially desirable" Germans as national comrades, while excluding those deemed either to be political dissidents, physically or intellectually inferior, or of a foreign race (*Fremdvölkische*).^[10] The Nazis sought to improve the stock of the Germanic people through racial purity and eugenics, broad social welfare programs and a collective subordination of individual rights, which could be sacrificed for the good of the state and the "Aryan master race". To maintain the supposed purity and strength of the Aryan race, the Nazis sought to exterminate Jews, Romani and Poles along with the vast majority of other Slavs and the physically and mentally handicapped. They imposed exclusionary segregation on homosexuals, Africans, Jehovah's Witnesses and political opponents.^[11] The persecution reached its climax when the party-controlled German state organized the systematic genocidal killing of an estimated 5.5 to 6 million Jews and millions of other targeted victims, in what has become known as the Holocaust.^[12]

The party's leader since 1921, Adolf Hitler, was appointed Chancellor of Germany by President Paul von Hindenburg on 30 January 1933. Hitler rapidly established a totalitarian regime^{[13][14][15][16]} known as the Third Reich. Following the defeat of the Third Reich at the conclusion of World War II in Europe, the party was "declared to be illegal" by the Allied powers,^[17] who carried out denazification in the years after the war

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National Socialist German W orkers' Party Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei	
 	
Führer	Anton Drexler (1920–1921) Adolf Hitler (1921–1945) Martin Bormann (1945)
Founder	Anton Drexler
Founded	24 February 1920
Dissolved	10 October 1945
Preceded by	German Workers' Party
Headquarters	Brown House, Munich, Germany ^[1]
Newspaper	<i>Völkischer Beobachter</i>
Student wing	National Socialist German Students' League
Youth wing	Hitler Youth <i>Deutsches Jungvolk</i> - League of German Girls
Paramilitary wings	<i>Sturmabteilung</i> <i>Schutzstaffel</i>
Sports body	National Socialist League of the Reich for Physical Exercise
Women's wing	National Socialist Women's League
Membership	Fewer than 60 (1920) 8.5 million (1945)^[2]
Ideology	Nazism <i>Lebensraum</i> Pan-Germanism
Political position	Far-right ^{[3][4]}
Colours	Black, white, red (official, German imperial colours)^[5] Brown (customary)
Slogan	" <i>Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer</i> " (English: "One People, One Nation, One Leader") (unofficial)
Anthem	"<i>Horst-Wessel-Lied</i>" "Horst Wessel Song"
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Etymology

The term "Nazi" derives from the name given in German to a party member *Nationalsozialist* (German pronunciation: [ˈnatsʃoˈnaːlzoʦi̯aˌlɪst]) and was coined in response to the German term *Sozi* (pronounced [ˈzoːtʃiː]), an abbreviation of *Sozialdemokrat* (member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany).^[18]^[19] Members of the party referred to themselves as *Nationalsozialisten* (National Socialists), rarely as Nazis. The term *Parteigenosse* (party member) was commonly used among Nazis, with the feminine form *Parteigenossin* used when it was appropriate.^[20]

The term was in use before the rise of the party as a colloquial and derogatory word for a backward peasant, characterising an awkward and clumsy person. It derived from Ignaz, being a shortened version of Ignatius.^[21]^[22] a common name in Bavaria, the area from which the Nazis emerged. Opponents seized on this and shortened the party's name in intentional association to the long-time existing *Sozi* to the dismissive "Nazi".^[22]^[23]

In 1933, when Adolf Hitler assumed power of the German government, usage of the designation "Nazi" diminished in Germany, although Austrian anti-Nazis continued to use the term derogatorily.^[19] The use of "Nazi Germany" and "Nazi regime" was popularised by anti-Nazis and German exiles abroad. Thereafter, the term spread into other languages and eventually was brought back to Germany after World War II.^[23]

History

Origins and early existence: 1918–1923

The party grew out of smaller political groups with a nationalist orientation that formed in the last years of World War I. In 1918, a league called the *Freier Arbeiterausschuss für einen guten Frieden* (Free Workers' Committee for a good Peace)^[24] was created in Bremen, Germany. On 7 March 1918, Anton Drexler, an avid German nationalist, formed a branch of this league in Munich.^[24] Drexler was a local locksmith who had been a member of the militarist Fatherland Party^[25] during World War I and was bitterly opposed to the armistice of November 1918 and the revolutionary upheavals that followed. Drexler followed the views of militant nationalists of the day, such as opposing the Treaty of Versailles, having antisemitic, anti-monarchist and anti-Marxist views, as well as believing in the superiority of Germans whom they claimed to be part of the Aryan "master race" (*Herrenvolk*). However, he also accused international capitalism of being a Jewish-dominated movement and denounced capitalists for war profiteering in World War I.^[26] Drexler saw the political violence and instability in Germany as the result of the Weimar Republic being out-of-touch with the masses, especially the lower classes.^[26] Drexler emphasized the need for a synthesis of *völkisch* nationalism with a form of economic socialism, in order to create a popular nationalist-oriented workers' movement that could challenge the rise of Communism and internationalist politics.^[27] These were all well-known themes popular with various Weimar paramilitary groups such as the *Freikorps*.

Drexler's movement received attention and support from some influential figures. Supporter Dietrich Eckart, a well-to-do journalist, brought military figure Felix Graf von Bothmer, a prominent supporter of the concept of "national socialism", to address the movement.^[28] Later in 1918, Karl Harrer (a journalist and member of the Thule Society) convinced Drexler and several others to form the *Politischer Arbeiterzirkel* (Political Workers' Circle).^[24] The members met



Nazi Party badge emblem

tobacco called *Anti-Semit*.^[32]

From the outset, the DAP was opposed to non-nationalist political movements, especially on the left, including the Social Democratic Party of Germany(SPD) and the Communist Party of Germany(KPD). Members of the DAP saw themselves as fighting against 'Bolshevism' and anyone considered a part of or aiding so-called "international Jewry". The DAP was also deeply opposed to the Versailles Treaty.^[33] The DAP did not attempt to make itself public and meetings were kept in relative secrecy, with public speakers discussing what they thought of Germany's present state of affairs, or writing to like-minded societies in Northern Germany.^[31]

The DAP was a comparatively small group with fewer than 60 members.^[31] Nevertheless, it attracted the attention of the German authorities, who were suspicious of any organisation that appeared to have subversive tendencies. In July 1919, while stationed in Munich army Gefreiter Adolf Hitler was appointed a *Verbindungsmann* (intelligence agent) of an *Aufklärungskommando* (reconnaissance unit) of the *Reichswehr* (army) by Captain Mayr the head of the *Education and Propaganda Department* (Dept Ib/P) in Bavaria. Hitler was assigned to influence other soldiers and to infiltrate the DAP.^[34] While attending a party meeting on 12 September 1919, Hitler became involved in a heated argument with a visitor, Professor Baumann, who questioned the soundness of Gottfried Feder's arguments against capitalism; Baumann proposed that Bavaria should break away from Prussia and found a new South German nation with Austria. In vehemently attacking the man's arguments, Hitler made an impression on the other party members with his oratorical skills; according to Hitler, the "professor" left the hall acknowledging unequivocal defeat.^[35] Drexler encouraged him to join the DAP.^[35] On the orders of his army superiors, Hitler applied to join the party^[36] and within a week was accepted as party member 555 (the party began counting membership at 500 to give the impression they were a much larger party).^{[37][38]} Among the party's earlier members were Ernst Röhm of the Army's District Command VII; Dietrich Eckart, who has been called the spiritual father of National Socialism;^[39] then-University of Munich student Rudolf Hess,^[40] *Freikorps* soldier Hans Frank; and Alfred Rosenberg, often credited as the philosopher of the movement. All were later prominent in the Nazi regime.^[41]

Hitler later claimed to be the seventh party member (he was in fact the seventh executive member of the party's central committee^[42] and he would later wear the Golden Party Badge number one). Anton Drexler drafted a letter to Hitler in 1940—which was never sent—that contradicts Hitler's later claim:

No one knows better than you yourself, my Führer, that you were never the seventh member of the party, but at best the seventh member of the committee... And a few years ago I had to complain to a party office that your first proper membership card of the DAP, bearing the signatures of Schüssler and myself, was falsified, with the number 555 being erased and number 7 entered.^[43]

Hitler's first DAP speech was held in the Hofbräukeller on 16 October 1919. He was the second speaker of the evening, and spoke to 111 people.^[44] Hitler later declared that this was when he realised he could really "make a good speech".^[31] At first, Hitler spoke only to relatively small groups, but his considerable oratory and propaganda skills were appreciated by the party leadership. With the support of Anton Drexler, Hitler became chief of propaganda for the party in early 1920.^[45] Hitler began to make the party more public, and organised its biggest meeting yet of 2,000 people on 24 February 1920 in the *Staatliches Hofbräuhaus in München*. Such was the significance of this particular move in publicity that Karl Harrer resigned from the party in disagreement.^[46] It was in this speech that Hitler enunciated the twenty-five points of the German Workers' Party manifesto that had been drawn up by Drexler, Feder and himself.^[47] Through these points he gave the organisation a much bolder stratagem^[45] with a clear foreign policy (abrogation of the Treaty of Versailles, a Greater Germany, Eastern expansion and exclusion of Jews from citizenship) and among his specific points were: confiscation of war profits, abolition of unearned incomes, the State to share profits of land and land for national needs to be taken away without compensation.^[48] In general, the manifesto was antisemitic, anti-capitalist, anti-democratic, anti-Marxist and anti-liberal.^[49] To increase its appeal to larger segments of the population, on the same day as Hitler's *Hofbräuhaus* speech on 24 February 1920, the DAP changed its name to the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* ("National Socialist German Workers' Party", or Nazi Party).^{[50][51]} The word "Socialist" was added by the party's executive committee, over Hitler's objections, in order to help appeal to left-wing workers.^[52]

periodically for discussions with themes of nationalism and racism directed against the Jews.^[24] In December 1918, Drexler decided that a new political party should be formed, based on the political principles that he endorsed, by combining his branch of the Workers' Committee for a good Peace with the Political Workers' Circle.^{[24][29]}

On 5 January 1919, Drexler created a new political party and proposed it should be named the "German Socialist Workers' Party", but Harrer objected to the term "socialist"; so the term was removed and the party was named the German Workers' Party (*Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, DAP).^[30] To ease concerns among potential middle-class supporters, Drexler made clear that unlike Marxists the party supported the middle-class and that its socialist policy was meant to give social welfare to German citizens deemed part of the Aryan race.^[26] They became one of many völkisch movements that existed in Germany. Like other völkisch groups, the DAP advocated the belief that through profit-sharing instead of socialisation Germany should become a unified "people's community" (*Volksgemeinschaft*) rather than a society divided along class and party lines.^[31] This ideology was explicitly antisemitic. As early as 1920, the party was raising money by selling a



NSDAP membership book



Hitler's membership card in the DAP (later NSDAP)

In 1920, the Nazi Party officially announced that only persons of "pure Aryan descent [*rein arischer Abkunft*]" could become party members and if the person had a spouse, the spouse also had to be a "racially pure" Aryan. Party members could not be related either directly or indirectly to a so-called "non-Aryan".^[53] Even before it had become legally forbidden by the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, the Nazis banned sexual relations and marriages between party members and Jews.^[54] Party members found guilty of Rassenschande ("racial defilement") were persecuted heavily; some members were even sentenced to death.^[55]

Hitler quickly became the party's most active orator, appearing in public as a speaker 31 times within the first year after his self-discovery.^[56] Crowds began to flock to hear his speeches.^[57] Hitler always spoke about the same subjects: the Treaty of Versailles and the Jewish question.^[49] This deliberate technique and effective publicising of the party contributed significantly to his early success,^[49] about which a contemporary poster wrote: "Since Herr Hitler is a brilliant speaker, we can hold out the prospect of an extremely exciting evening".^[58] Over the following months, the party continued to attract new members,^[42] while remaining too small to have any real significance in German politics.^[59] By the end of the year, party membership was recorded at 2,000,^[57] many of whom Hitler and Röhm had brought into the party personally or for whom Hitler's oratory had been their reason for joining.^[60]

Hitler's talent as an orator and his ability to draw new members, combined with his characteristic ruthlessness, soon made him the dominant figure. However, while Hitler and Eckart were on a fundraising trip to Berlin in June 1921, a mutiny broke out within the party in Munich. Members of its executive committee wanted to merge with the rival German Socialist Party (DSP).^[61] Upon returning to Munich on 11 July, Hitler angrily tendered his resignation. The committee members realised that his resignation would mean the end of the party.^[62] Hitler announced he would rejoin on condition that he would replace Drexler as party chairman, and that the party headquarters would remain in Munich.^[63] The committee agreed, and he rejoined the party on 26 July as member 3,680. Hitler continued to face some opposition within the NSDAP, as his opponents had Hermann Esser expelled from the party and they printed 3,000 copies of a pamphlet attacking Hitler as a traitor to the party.^[63] In the following days, Hitler spoke to several packed houses and defended himself and Esser to thunderous applause.^[64]

His strategy proved successful; at a special party congress on 29 July 1921, he replaced Drexler as party chairman by a vote of 533 to 1.^[64] The committee was dissolved, and Hitler was granted nearly absolute powers as the party's sole leader.^[64] He would hold the post for the remainder of his life. Hitler soon acquired the title Führer ("leader") and after a series of sharp internal conflicts it was accepted that the party would be governed by the Führerprinzip ("leader principle"). Under this principle, the party was a highly centralized entity that functioned strictly from the top down, with Hitler at the apex as the party's absolute leader. Hitler saw the party as a revolutionary organization, whose aim was the overthrow of the Weimar Republic, which he saw as controlled by the socialists, Jews and the "November criminals" who had betrayed the German soldiers in 1918. The SA ("storm troopers", also known as "Brownshirts") were founded as a party militia in 1921 and began violent attacks on other parties.

For Hitler, the twin goals of the party were always German nationalist expansionism and antisemitism. These two goals were fused in his mind by his belief that Germany's external enemies – Britain, France and the Soviet Union – were controlled by the Jews and that Germany's future wars of national expansion would necessarily entail a war against the Jews.^[65] For Hitler and his principal lieutenants, national and racial issues were always dominant. This was symbolised by the adoption as the party emblem of the swastika or Hakenkreuz. In German nationalist circles, the swastika was considered a symbol of an "Aryan race" and it symbolized the replacement of the Christian Cross with allegiance to a National Socialist State.

The Nazi Party grew significantly during 1921 and 1922, partly through Hitler's oratorical skills, partly through the SA's appeal to unemployed young men, and partly because there was a backlash against socialist and liberal politics in Bavaria as Germany's economic problems deepened and the weakness of the Weimar regime became apparent. The party recruited former World War I soldiers, to whom Hitler as a decorated frontline veteran could particularly appeal, as well as small businessmen and disaffected former members of rival parties. Nazi rallies were often held in beer halls, where downtrodden men could get free beer. The Hitler Youth was formed for the children of party members. The party also formed groups in other parts of Germany. Julius Streicher in Nuremberg was an early recruit and became editor of the racist magazine Der Stürmer. In December 1920, the Nazi Party had acquired a newspaper, the Völkischer Beobachter, of which its leading ideologist Alfred Rosenberg became editor. Others to join the party around this time were Heinrich Himmler and World War I flying ace Hermann Göring.



Mein Kampf in its first edition cover

On 31 October 1922, a party with similar policies and objectives came into power in Italy, the National Fascist Party, under the leadership of the charismatic Benito Mussolini. The Fascists, like the Nazis, promoted a national rebirth of their country as they opposed communism and liberalism; appealed to the working-class; opposed the Treaty of Versailles; and advocated the territorial expansion of their country. The Italian Fascists used a straight-armed Roman salute and wore black-shirted uniforms. Hitler was inspired by Mussolini and the Fascists, borrowing their use of the straight-armed salute as a Nazi salute. When the Fascists came to power in 1922 in Italy through their coup attempt called the March on Rome, Hitler began planning his own coup.

In January 1923, France occupied the Ruhr industrial region as a result of Germany's failure to meet its reparations payments. This led to economic chaos, the resignation of Wilhelm Cuno's government and an attempt by the German Communist Party (KPD) to stage a revolution. The reaction to these events was an upsurge of nationalist sentiment. Nazi Party membership grew sharply to about 20,000.^[66] By November, Hitler had decided that the time was right for an attempt to seize power in Munich, in the hope that the Reichswehr (the post-war German military) would mutiny against the Berlin government and join his revolt. In this, he was influenced by former General Erich Ludendorff, who had become a supporter—though not a member—of the Nazis.

On the night of 8 November, the Nazis used a patriotic rally in a Munich beer hall to launch an attempted *putsch* ("coup d'état"). This so-called Beer Hall Putsch attempt failed almost at once when the local Reichswehr commanders refused to support it. On the morning of 9 November, the Nazis staged a march of about 2,000 supporters through Munich in an attempt to rally support. Troops opened fire and 16 Nazis were killed. Hitler, Ludendorff and a number of others were

The Nazi Party was banned on 9 November 1923; however, with the support of the nationalist Völkisch-Social Bloc (*Völkisch-Sozialer Block*), it continued to operate under the name "German Party" (*Deutsche Partei* or DP) from 1924 to 1925.^[67] The Nazis failed to remain unified in the DP, as in the north, the right-wing Volkish nationalist supporters of the Nazis moved to the new German Völkisch Freedom Party, leaving the north's left-wing Nazi members, such as Joseph Goebbels retaining support for the party.^[68]

Adolf Hitler was released from prison on 20 December 1924. On 16 February 1925, Hitler convinced the Bavarian authorities to lift the ban on the NSDAP and the party was formally refounded on 26 February 1925, with Hitler as its undisputed leader. The new Nazi Party was no longer a paramilitary organization and disavowed any intention of taking power by force. In any case, the economic and political situation had stabilized and the extremist upsurge of 1923 had faded, so there was no prospect of further revolutionary adventures. The Nazi Party of 1925 was divided into the "Leadership Corps" (*Korps der politischen Leiter*) appointed by Hitler and the general membership (*Parteimitglieder*). The party and the SA were kept separate and the legal aspect of the party's work was emphasized. In a sign of this, the party began to admit women. The SA and the SS members (the latter founded in 1925 as Hitler's bodyguard, and known originally as the *Schutzkommando*) had to all be regular party members.^{[69][70]}



Hitler with Nazi Party members in 1930

The party's nominal Deputy Leader was Rudolf Hess, but he had no real power in the party. By the early 1930s, the senior leaders of the party after Hitler were Heinrich Himmler, Joseph Goebbels and Hermann Göring. Beneath the Leadership Corps were the party's regional leaders, the *Gauleiters*, each of whom commanded the party in his *Gau* ("region"). Goebbels began his ascent through the party hierarchy as *Gauleiter* of Berlin-Brandenburg in 1926. Streicher was *Gauleiter* of Franconia, where he published his antisemitic newspaper *Der Stürmer*. Beneath the *Gauleiter* were lower-level officials, the *Kreisleiter* ("county leaders"), *Zellenleiter* ("cell leaders") and *Blockleiter* ("block leaders"). This was a strictly hierarchical structure in which orders flowed from the top and unquestioning loyalty was given to superiors. Only the SA retained some autonomy. Being composed largely of unemployed workers, many SA men took the Nazis' socialist rhetoric seriously. At this time, the Hitler salute (borrowed from the Italian fascists) and the greeting "Heil Hitler!" were adopted throughout the party.

Despite these strengths, the Nazi Party might never have come to power had it not been for the Great Depression and its effects on Germany. By 1930, the German economy was beset with mass unemployment and widespread business failures. The Social Democrats and Communists were bitterly divided and unable to formulate an effective solution: this gave the Nazis their opportunity and Hitler's message, blaming the crisis on the Jewish financiers and the Bolsheviks, resonated with wide sections of the electorate. At the September 1930 Reichstag elections, the Nazis won 18.3% of the votes and became the second-largest party in the *Reichstag* after the Social Democrats. Hitler proved to be a highly effective campaigner, pioneering the use of radio and aircraft for



Nazi Party election poster used in Vienna in 1930 (translation: "We demand freedom and bread")

this purpose. His dismissal of Strasser and his appointment of Goebbels as the party's propaganda chief were major factors. While Strasser had used his position to promote his own leftish version of national socialism, Goebbels was totally loyal to Hitler and worked only to improve Hitler's image.

The 1930 elections changed the German political landscape by weakening the traditional nationalist parties, the DNVP and the DVP, leaving the Nazis as the chief alternative to the discredited Social Democrats and the Zentrum, whose leader, Heinrich Brüning headed a weak minority government. The inability of the democratic parties to form a united front, the self-imposed isolation of the Communists and the continued decline of the economy, all played into Hitler's hands. He now came to be seen as *de facto* leader of the opposition and donations poured into the Nazi Party's coffers. Some major business figures, such as Fritz Thyssen, were Nazi supporters and gave generously^[72] and some Wall Street figures were allegedly involved,^[73] but many other businessmen were suspicious of the extreme nationalist tendencies of the Nazis and preferred to support the traditional conservative parties instead.^[74]



German NSDAP Donation Token
1932, Free State of Prussia elections

During 1931 and into 1932, Germany's political crisis deepened. Hitler ran for President against the incumbent Paul von Hindenburg in March 1932, polling 30.1% in the first round and 36.8% in the second against Hindenburg's 49% and 53%. By now the SA had 400,000 members and its running street battles with the SPD and Communist paramilitaries (who also fought each other) reduced some German cities to combat zones. Paradoxically, although the Nazis were among the main instigators of this disorder, part of Hitler's appeal to a frightened and demoralised middle class was his promise to restore law and order. Overt antisemitism was played down in official Nazi rhetoric, but was never far from the surface. Germans voted for Hitler primarily because of his promises to revive the economy (by unspecified means), to restore German greatness and overturn the Treaty of Versailles and to save Germany from communism. On 24 April 1932, the Free State of

Prussia elections to the Landtag resulted in 36.3% of the votes and 162 seats for the NSDAP

On 20 July 1932, the Prussian government was ousted by a coup, the Preussenschlag, a few days later at the July 1932 Reichstag election the Nazis made another leap forward, polling 37.4% and becoming the largest party in parliament by a wide margin. Furthermore, the Nazis and the Communists between them won 52% of the vote and a majority of seats. Since both parties opposed the established political system and neither would join or support any ministry, this made the formation of a majority government impossible. The result was weak ministries governing by decree. Under Comintern directives, the Communists maintained their policy of treating the Social Democrats as the main enemy, calling them "social fascists", thereby splintering opposition to the Nazis.^[75] Later, both the Social Democrats and the Communists accused each other of having facilitated Hitler's rise to power by their unwillingness to compromise.

Chancellor Franz von Papen called another Reichstag election in November, hoping to find a way out of this impasse. The electoral result was the same, with the Nazis and the Communists winning 50% of the vote between them and more than half the seats, rendering this Reichstag no more workable than its predecessor. However, support for the Nazis had fallen to 33.1%, suggesting that the Nazi surge had passed its peak—possibly because the worst of the Depression had passed, possibly because some middle-class voters had supported Hitler in July as a protest, but had now drawn back from the prospect of actually putting him into power. The Nazis interpreted the result as a warning that they must seize power before their moment passed. Had the other parties united, this could have been prevented, but their shortsightedness made a united front impossible. Papen, his successor Kurt von Schleicher and the nationalist press magnate Alfred Hugenberg spent December and January in political intrigues that eventually persuaded President Hindenburg that it was safe to appoint Hitler as Reich Chancellor, at the head of a cabinet including only a minority of Nazi ministers—which he did on 30 January 1933.

Ascension and consolidation

In Mein Kampf, Hitler directly attacked both left-wing and right-wing politics in Germany.^[76] However, a majority of scholars identify Nazism in practice as being a far-right form of politics.^[77] When asked in an interview in 1934 whether the Nazis were "bourgeois right-wing" as alleged by their opponents, Hitler responded that Nazism was not exclusively for any class and indicated that it favoured neither the left nor the right, but preserved "pure" elements from both "camps" by stating: "From the camp of bourgeois tradition, it takes national resolve, and from the materialism of the Marxist dogma, living, creative Socialism".^[78]

The votes that the Nazis received in the 1932 elections established the Nazi Party as the largest parliamentary faction of the Weimar Republic government. Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany on 30 January 1933.

The Reichstag fire on 27 February 1933 gave Hitler a pretext for suppressing his political opponents. The following day he persuaded the Reich's President Paul von Hindenburg to issue the Reichstag Fire Decree, which suspended most civil liberties. The NSDAP won the parliamentary election on 5 March 1933 with 43.9 percent of votes, but failed to win an absolute majority. After the election, hundreds of thousands of new members joined the party for opportunistic reasons, most of them civil servants and white-collar workers. They were nicknamed the "casualties of March" (German: Märzgefallenen) or "March violets" (German: Märzveilchen).^[79] To protect the party from too many non-ideological turncoats who were viewed by the so-called "old fighters" (*alte Kämpfer*) with some mistrust,^[80] the party issued a freeze on admissions that remained in force from May 1933 to 1937.^[81]

On 23 March, the parliament passed the Enabling Act of 1933, which gave the cabinet the right to enact laws without the consent of parliament. In effect, this gave Hitler dictatorial powers. Now possessing virtually absolute power, the Nazis established totalitarian control as they abolished labour unions and other political parties and



Reichsparteitag (Nuremberg Rally): Nazi Party leader Adolf Hitler and SA-leader Ernst Röhm, August 1933

imprisoned their political opponents, first at *wilde Lager*, improvised camps, then in concentration camps. Nazi Germany had been established, yet the *Reichswehr* remained impartial. Nazi power over Germany remained virtual, not absolute.

NSDAP federal election results (1924–1933) ^[82]						
Election	Votes			Seats		Notes
	No.	%	+/-	No.	+/-	
May 1924 (as <u>National Socialist Freedom Movement</u>)	1,918,300	6.5 (No. 6)		32 / 472		Hitler in prison
December 1924 (as <u>National Socialist Freedom Movement</u>)	907,300	3.0 (No. 8)	▼ 3.5	14 / 493	▼ 18	Hitler released from prison
May 1928	810,100	2.6 (No. 9)	▼ 0.4	12 / 491	▼ 2	
September 1930	6,409,600	18.3 (No. 2)	▲ 15.7	107 / 577	▲ 95	After the financial crisis
July 1932	13,745,000	37.3 (No. 1)	▲ 19.0	230 / 608	▲ 123	After Hitler was candidate for presidency
November 1932	11,737,000	33.1 (No. 1)	▼ 4.2	196 / 584	▼ 34	
March 1933	17,277,180	43.9 (No. 1)	▲ 10.8	288 / 647	▲ 92	During Hitler's term as Chancellor of Germany

After taking power: intertwining of party and state

During June and July 1933, all competing parties were either outlawed or dissolved themselves and subsequently the Law against the founding of new parties of 14 July 1933 legally established the Nazi Party's monopolyOn 1 December 1933, the Law to secure the unity of party and state entered into force, which was the base for a progressive intertwining of party structures and state apparatus.^[83] By this law, the SA—actually a party division—was given quasi-governmental authority and their leader was co-opted as an *ex officio* cabinet member. By virtue of a 30 January 1934 Law concerning the reorganisation of the *Reich*, the *Länder* (states) lost their statehood and were demoted to administrative divisions of the *Reich*'s government (*Gleichschaltung*). Effectively, they lost most of their power to the *Gaue* that were originally just regional divisions of the party, but took over most competencies of the state administration in their respective sectors.^[84]

During the Röhm Purge of 30 June to 2 July 1934 (also known as the "Night of the Long Knives"), Hitler disempowered the SA's leadership—most of whom belonged to the Strasserist (national revolutionary) faction within the NSDAP—and ordered them killed. He accused them of having conspired to stage a *coup d'état*, but it is believed that this was only a pretence to justify the suppression of any intraparty opposition. The purge was executed by the SS, assisted by the Gestapo and Reichswehr units. Aside from Strasserist Nazis, they also murdered anti-Nazi conservative figures like former chancellor Kurt von Schleicher.^[85] After this, the SA continued to exist but lost much of its importance, while the role of the SS grew significantly. Formerly only a sub-organisation of the SA, it was created a separate organisation of the NSDAPin July 1934.^[86]

After the death of President Hindenburg on 2 August 1934, Hitler merged the offices of party leader, head of state and chief of government in one, taking the title of Führer und Reichskanzler. The Chancellery of the Führer, officially an organisation of the Nazi Party, took over the functions of the Office of the President (a government agency), blurring the distinction between structures of party and state even further. The SS increasingly exerted police functions, a development which was formally documented by the merger of the offices of Reichsführer-SS and Chief of the German Police on 17 June 1936, as the position was held by Heinrich Himmlerwho derived his authority directly from Hitler.^[87] The Sicherheitsdienst (SD, formally the "Security Service of the Reichsführer-SS") that had been created in 1931 as an intraparty intelligence became the *de facto* intelligence agency of Nazi Germany. It was put under the Reich Main Security Office (RSHA) in 1939, which then coordinated SD, Gestapo and criminal police, therefore functioning as a hybrid organisation of state and party structures.^[88]

NSDAP election and referendum results in theReichstag under Nazi Germany (1933–1938)

Election	Votes	%	Seats
November 1933	39,655,224	92.11	661 / 661
1936	44,462,458	98.80	741 / 741
1938	44,451,092	99.01	813 / 813

Defeat and abolition

Officially, the Third Reich lasted only 12 years. The first Instrument of Surrender was signed by representatives of Nazi Germany at Reims, France on 7 May 1945. The war in Europe had come to an end. The defeat of Germany in World War II marked the end of the Nazi Germany era.^[89] The party was formally abolished on 10 October 1945 by the Allied Control Council and denazification began, along with trials of major war criminals before the International Military Tribunal (IMT) in Nuremberg.^[90]

Between 1939 and 1945, the Nazi Party led regime, assisted by collaborationist governments and recruits from occupied countries, was responsible for the deaths of at least eleven million people,^{[91][92]} including 5.5 to 6 million Jews (representing two-thirds of the Jewish population of Europe),^{[12][93]} and between 200,000 and 1,500,000 Romani people.^{[94][93]} The estimated total number includes the killing of nearly two million non-Jewish Poles,^[95] over three million Soviet prisoners of war,^[96] communists and other political opponents, homosexuals, the physically and mentally disabled.^{[97][98]}

Political programme

The National Socialist Programme was a formulation of the policies of the party. It contained 25 points and is therefore also known as the "25-point plan" or "25-point programme". It was the official party programme, with minor changes, from its proclamation as such by Hitler in 1920, when the party was still the German Workers' Party, until its dissolution.

Party composition

Command structure

Top leadership

At the top of the Nazi Party was the party chairman ("*Der Führer*"), who held absolute power and full command over the party. All other party offices were subordinate to his position and had to depend on his instructions. In 1934, Hitler founded a separate body for the chairman, Chancellery of the Führer, with its own sub-units.

Below the Führer's chancellery was first the "Staff of the Deputy Führer", headed by Rudolf Hess from 21 April 1933 to 10 May 1941; and then the "Party Chancellery" (*Parteikanzlei*), headed by Martin Bormann

Reichsleiter

Directly subjected to the Führer were the *Reichsleiter* ("Reich Leader(s)"—the singular and plural forms are identical in German), whose number was gradually increased to eighteen. They held power and influence comparable to the Reich Ministers' in Hitler's Cabinet. The eighteen *Reichsleiter* formed the "Reich Leadership of the Nazi Party" (*Reichsleitung der NSDAP*), which was established at the so-called Brown House in Munich. Unlike a *Gauleiter*, a *Reichsleiter* did not have individual geographic areas under their command, but were responsible for specific spheres of interest.

Political leadership corps

The political leadership corps of the Nazi Party were those persons who were most often associated as being "Nazis" in the stereotypical sense of the word, as it was these individuals who wore brown paramilitary Nazi uniforms, enforced Nazi doctrine and ran local government affairs in accordance with instructions from the Nazi Party.^[99]

The political leadership corps encompassed a vast array of paramilitary titles at the top of which were *Gauleiter*, who were party leaders of large geographical areas. From the Gauleiters extended downwards through Nazi positions encompassing county, city and town leaders, all of whom were unquestioned rulers in their particular areas and regions.^[100]

To the very end of its existence, the Nazi Party claimed to respect the traditional government of Germany; to that end, local and state governments were allowed to exist side-by-side with regional Nazi leaders. In reality, by 1936 the local governments had lost nearly all power to their Nazi counterparts, or were now controlled by persons who held both government and Nazi titles alike. This led to the continued existence of German titles such as *Bürgermeister*, as well as the existence of German state legislatures (*Landesrat*), but without any real power^[101]

Ordinary members

The general Nazi Party membership were known by the title of *Parteimitglieder*. This generic term applied to any member of the Party who did not otherwise hold a political leadership position. Translated simply as "Party Member", the *Parteimitglieder* could (and did) hold positions in other Nazi groups, such as the SS or Sturmabteilung. The only insignia for the *Parteimitglieder* was a Nazi Party lapel-pin; Nazi Party members who held no leadership posts had no specific designated uniform. Such persons often wore uniforms of other Nazi groups, uniforms of German government agencies and could also serve in the German armed forces. A special designation of *Parteigenosse* ("Party Comrade") was reserved for Nazi Party members who had been members of the party since the 1920s and early 30s, most of whom were also personal associates of Hitler

Nazi Party offices

The Nazi Party had a number of party offices dealing with various political and other matters. These included:

- *Rassenpolitisches Amt der NSDAP*(RPA): "NSDAP Office of Racial Policy"
- *Außenpolitische Amt der NSDAP*(APA): "NSDAP Office of Foreign Affairs"
- *Kolonialpolitisches Amt der NSDAP*(KPA): "NSDAP Office of Colonial Policy"
- *Wehrpolitisches Amt der NSDAP*(WPA): "NSDAP Office of Military Policy"
- *Amt Rosenberg* (ARo): "Rosenberg Office"

Paramilitary groups

In addition to the Nazi Party proper, several paramilitary groups existed which "supported" Nazi aims. All members of these paramilitary organizations were required to become regular Nazi Party members first and could then enlist in the group of their choice. An exception was the Waffen-SS, considered the military arm of the SS and Nazi Party, which during the Second World War allowed members to enlist without joining the Nazi Party. Foreign volunteers of the Waffen-SS were also not required to be members of the Nazi Party, although many joined local nationalist groups from their own countries with the same aims. Police officers, including members of the Gestapo, frequently held SS rank for administrative reasons (known as "rank parity") and were likewise not required to be members of the Nazi Party

A vast system of Nazi Party paramilitary ranks developed for each of the various paramilitary groups.

The major Nazi Party paramilitary groups were as follows:

- *Schutzstaffel* (SS): "Protection Squadron" (both Allgemeine SS and Waffen-SS)
- *Sturmabteilung* (SA): "Storm Division"
- *Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps* (NSFK): "National Socialist Flyers Corps"
- *Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrerkorps* (NSKK): "National Socialist Motor Corps"

The Hitler Youth was a paramilitary group divided into an adult leadership corps and a general membership open to boys aged fourteen to eighteen. The League of German Girls was the equivalent group for girls.

Affiliated organizations

Certain nominally independent organizations had their own legal representation and own property, but were supported by the Nazi Party. Many of these associated organizations were labour unions of various professions. Some were older organizations that were nazified according to the *Gleichschaltung* policy after the 1933 takeover

- Reich League of German Officials (union of civil servants, predecessor to German Civil Service Federation)
- German Labour Front (DAF)
- National Socialist German Physicians' League (NSDÄB)
- National Socialist League for the Maintenance of the Law (NSRB, 1936–1945, earlier National Socialist German Lawyers' League)
- National Socialist War Victim's Care (NSKOV)
- National Socialist Teachers League (NSLB)
- National Socialist People's Welfare (NSV)
- Reich Labour Service (RAD)
- German Faith Movement
- German Colonial League (RKB)
- German Red Cross
- Kyffhäuser League
- Technical Emergency Relief (TENÖ)
- Reich's Union of Large Families
- Reichsluftschutzbund (RLB)
- Reichskolonialbund (RKB)
- Bund Deutscher Osten (BDO)
- German American Bund

Regional administration

For the purpose of centralization in the *Gleichschaltung* process a rigidly hierarchal structure was established in the Nazi Party, which it later carried through in the whole of Germany in order to consolidate total power under the person of Hitler (*Führerstaat*). It was regionally sub-divided into a number of *Gaue* (singular: *Gau*) headed by a *Gauleiter*, who received their orders directly from Hitler. The name (originally a term for sub-regions of the Holy Roman Empire headed by a *Gaugraf*) for these new provincial structures was deliberately chosen because of its mediaeval connotations. The term is approximately equivalent to the English *shire*.

After the Anschluss a new type of administrative unit was introduced called a *Reichsgau*. In these territories the Gauleiters also held the position of Reichsstatthalter, thereby formally combining the spheres of both party and state offices. The establishment of this type of district was subsequently carried out for any further territorial annexations of Germany both before and during World War II.



Party Gau in 1926, 1928, 1933, 1937, 1939 and 1943

The *Gaue* and *Reichsgaue* (state or province) were further sub-divided into *Kreise* (counties) headed by a *Kreisleiter*, which were in turn sub-divided into *Zellen* (cells) and *Blocken* (blocks), headed by a *Zellenleiter* and *Blockleiter* respectively.

A reorganization of the *Gaue* was enacted on 1 October 1928. The given numbers were the official ordering numbers. The statistics are from 1941, for which the *Gau* organization of that moment in time forms the basis. Their size and populations are not exact; for instance, according to the official party statistics the *Gau* Kurmark/Mark



Administrative units of the Nazi Party in 1944

Brandenburg was the largest in the German Reich.^[102] By 1941, there were 42 territorial *Gaue* for Germany,^[103] 7 of them for Austria, the Sudetenland (in Czechoslovakia), Danzig and the Territory of the Saar Basin, along with the unincorporated regions under German control known as the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia and the General Government established after the joint invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939 at the onset of World War II.^[104] Getting the leadership of the individual *Gaue* to cooperate with one another proved difficult at times since there was constant administrative and financial jockeying for control going on between them.^[105]

The table below uses the organizational structure that existed before its dissolution in 1945. More information on the older *Gaue* is in the second table.

Nazi Party *Gaue*

Nr.	Gau	Headquarters	Area (km²)	Inhabitants (1941)	Gauleiter (exl. deputies)
01	Baden-Elsaß	Karlsruhe, after 1940 Strasbourg	23,350	2,502,023	Robert Heinrich Wagner from 1925 (later also Reichsstatthalter)
02	Bayreuth , renaming of Gau Bayerische Ostmark (Bavarian Eastern March)	Bayreuth	29,600	2,370,658	Fritz Wächtler (2 June 1942 – 19 April 1945) Ludwig Ruckdeschel from 19 April 1945.
03	Groß-Berlin	Berlin	884	4,338,756	Ernst Schlange (1925–1926) Joseph Goebbels (1 November 1926 – 30 April 1945)
04	Danzig-Westpreußen	Danzig	26,057	2,287,394	Hans Albert Hohnfeldt (1926–1928) Walter Maass (1928–1930) Albert Forster from 15 October 1930
05	Düsseldorf	Düsseldorf	2,672	2,261,909	Friedrich Karl Florian from 1 January 1930
06	Essen	Essen	2,825	1,921,326	Josef Terboven (Oberpräsident) from 1928
07	Franken	Nuremberg	7,618	1,077,216	Julius Streicher (1929 to 1940) Hans Zimmermann (16 February 1940 – 1942) Karl Holz from 19 March 1942
08	Halle-Merseburg	Halle an der Saale	10,202	1,578,292	Walter Ernst (1 August 1926 – 1927) Paul Hinkler (1927–1930) Rudolf Jordan (1930 – 20 April 1937) Joachim Albrecht Eggeling from 20 April 1937
09	Hamburg	Hamburg	747	1,711,877	Joseph Klant (1925–1926) Albert Krebs (1927–1928) Hinrich Lohse (1928 – 15 April 1929) Karl Kaufmann from 15 April 1929
10	Hessen-Nassau	Frankfurt	15,030	3,117,266	Jakob Sprenger from 1933
11	Kärnten	Klagenfurt	11,554	449,713	Hans vom Kothén (February 1933 to July 1934) Peter Feistritz (October 1936 –

					20 February 1938) <u>Hubert Klausner</u> (1938–1939) <u>Franz Kutschera</u> (1940–1941) <u>Friedrich Rainer</u> (1942–1944)
12	<u>Köln-Aachen</u>	<u>Köln</u>	8,162	2,432,095	<u>Joseph Grohé</u> from 1931
13	<u>Kurhessen</u>	<u>Kassel</u>	9,200	971,887	<u>Walter Schultz</u> (1926–1927) <u>Karl Weinrich</u> (1928–1943) <u>Karl Gerland</u> from 1943
14	<u>Magdeburg-Anhalt</u>	<u>Dessau</u>	13,910	1,820,416	<u>Wilhelm Friedrich Loeper</u> from 1927 to 23 October 1935 with a short replacement by <u>Paul Hofmann</u> in 1933 <u>Joachim Albrecht Leo Eggeling</u> (1935–1937) <u>Rudolf Jordan</u> from 1937
15	<u>Mainfranken</u> , renaming of <u>Gau Unterfranken</u>	<u>Würzburg</u>	8,432	840,663	<u>Otto Hellmuth</u> from 3 September 1928
16	<u>Mark Brandenburg</u>	<u>Berlin</u>	38,278	3,007,933	<u>Wilhelm Kube</u> (6 March 1933 – 7 August 1936) <u>Emil Stürtz</u>
17	<u>Mecklenburg</u>	<u>Schwerin</u>	15,722	900,427	<u>Friedrich Hildebrandt</u> from 1925 onwards with a short replacement by <u>Herbert Albrecht</u> (July 1930 – 1931)
18	<u>Moselland</u> , renaming of <u>Gau Koblenz-Trier</u> in 1942	<u>Koblenz</u>	11,876	1,367,354	<u>Gustav Simon</u> from 1 June 1931
19	<u>München-Oberbayern</u> ,	<u>Munich</u>	16,411	1,938,447	<u>Adolf Wagner</u> (1933–1944) <u>Paul Giesler</u> from April 1944
20	<u>Niederdonau</u>	Nominal capital: <u>Krems</u> , District Headquarters: <u>Vienna</u>	23,502	1,697,676	<u>Roman Jäger</u> (12 March 1938 – 24 May 1938) <u>Hugo Jury</u> (24 May 1938 – 8 May 1945)
21	<u>Niederschlesien</u>	<u>Breslau</u>	26,985	3,286,539	<u>Karl Hanke</u> from 1940
22	<u>Oberdonau</u>	<u>Linz</u>	14,216	1,034,871	<u>Andreas Bolek</u> (June 1927 – 1 August 1934) <u>August Eigruher</u> from March 1935
23	<u>Oberschlesien</u>	<u>Kattowitz</u>	20,636	4,341,084	<u>Fritz Bracht</u> from 27 January 1941
24	<u>Ost-Hannover</u> (also known as <u>Hannover-Ost</u>)	<u>Harburg</u> , then <u>Buchholz</u> , after 1 April 1937 <u>Lüneburg</u>	18,006	1,060,509	from 1 October 1928 <u>Otto Telschow</u>
25	<u>Ostpreußen</u>	<u>Königsberg</u>	52,731	3,336,777	<u>Bruno Gustav Scherwitz</u> (1925–1927) <u>Erich Koch</u> from 1928
26	<u>Pommern</u>	<u>Stettin</u>	38,409	2,393,844	<u>Theodor Vahlen</u> (1925–1927) <u>Walter von Corswant</u> (1928–1931) <u>Wilhelm Karpenstein</u> (1931–1934) <u>Franz Schwede-Coburg</u> from 1935
27	<u>Sachsen</u>	<u>Dresden</u>	14,995	5,231,739	<u>Albert Wierheim</u> around 1925/1926 <u>Martin Mutschmann</u> from 1925
28	<u>Salzburg</u>	<u>Salzburg</u>	7,153	257,226	<u>Leopold Malina</u> from 1926 to ?? <u>Karl Scharizer</u> (1932–1934) <u>Friedrich Rainer</u> (1939–1941) <u>Gustav Adolf Scheel</u> from 1941
29	<u>Schleswig-Holstein</u>	<u>Kiel</u>	15,687	1,589,267	<u>Hinrich Lohse</u> from 1925
30	<u>Schwaben</u>	<u>Augsburg</u>	10,231	946,212	<u>Karl Wahl</u> from 1928
31	<u>Steiermark</u>	<u>Graz</u>	17,384	1,116,407	<u>Walther Oberhaidacher</u> (25 November 1928 – 1934)

					Sepp Helfrich (1934–1938) Siegfried Uiberreither from 22 May 1938
32	Sudetenland , until 1939 known as Gau Sudetengau	<u>Reichenberg</u>	22,608	2,943,187	Konrad Henlein from 1939
33	Südhanover-Braunschweig	<u>Hannover</u>	14,553	2,136,961	Bernhard Rust (1 October 1928 – November 1940) Hartmann Lauterbacher from November 1940
34	Thüringen	<u>Weimar</u>	15,763	2,446,182	Artur Dinter (1925–1927) Fritz Sauckel from 1927
35	Tirol-Vorarlberg	<u>Innsbruck</u>	13,126	486,400	Franz Hofer from 1932
36	Wartheland , (until 29 January 1940 known as Gau Warthegau)	<u>Posen</u>	43,905	4,693,722	Arthur Karl Greiser from 21 October 1939
37	Weser-Ems	<u>Oldenburg</u>	15,044	1,839,302	Carl Röver (1929–1942) Paul Wegener from 1942
38	Westfalen-Nord	<u>Münster</u>	14,559	2,822,603	Alfred Meyer from 1932
39	Westfalen-Süd	<u>Bochum</u>	7,656	2,678,026	Josef Wagner (1932–1941) Paul Giesler (1941 – 1943/1944) Albert Hoffmann from 1943/1944
40	Westmark , renaming of Gau Saar-Pfalz (also known as <i>Saarpfalz</i>)	Neustadt an der Weinstraße, after 1940 <u>Saarbrücken</u>	14,713	1,892,240	Josef Bürckel (1935 – 28 September 1944) Willi Stöhr from 28 September 1944
41	Wien	<u>Vienna</u>	1,216	1,929,976	Alfred Eduard Frauenfeld (1932–1938) Odilo Globocnik (May 1938 – January 1939) Josef Bürckel (1939–1940) Baldur von Schirach from 1940
42	Württemberg-Hohenzollern	<u>Stuttgart</u>	20,657	2,974,373	Eugen Mander (1925–1928) Wilhelm Murr from 1928
43	Auslandsorganisation (also known as NSDAP/AO)	Berlin			Hans Nieland (1930–1933) Ernst Wilhelm Bohle from 8 May 1933

Later Gaue:

- **Flanders**, existed from 15 December 1944 (*Gauleiter* in German exile: Jef van de Wiele)
- **Wallonia**, existed from 8 December 1944 (*Gauleiter* in German exile: Léon Degrelle)

Gaue dissolved before 1945

Simple re-namings of existing *Gaue* without territorial changes is marked with the initials **RN** in the column "later became". The numbering is not based on any official former ranking, but merely listed alphabetically.

Nr.	Gau	consisted of	later became	... together with	Gauleiter
01	Anhalt		Magdeburg-Anhalt (1927)	Elbe-Havel	<u>Gustav Hermann Schmischke</u>
02	Baden		Baden-Elsaß (22 March 1941) RN		see above
03	Bayerische Ostmark	Oberfranken & Niederbayern-Oberpfalz (II) (19 January 1933)	Bayreuth (2 Juni 1942) RN		Hans Schemm from 19 January 1933 to 5 March 1935, then from 5 March 1935 <u>Fritz Wächtler</u>
04	Berlin	Berlin-Brandenburg (1.	Groß-Berlin RN		Dr. <u>Joseph Goebbels</u>

		Oktober 1928)			
05	Berlin-Brandenburg		Berlin & Brandenburg (1 October 1928)		<u>Ernst Schlange</u> from 1925 to 1926, then from 1 November 1926 <u>Joseph Goebbels</u>
06	Brandenburg	Berlin-Brandenburg (1 October 1928)	Kurmark (6 March 1933)	Ostmark	from 1 October 1928 to 1932 <u>Emil Holtz</u> and from 18 October 1932 to 16 March 1933 Dr. <u>Ernst Schlange</u>
07	Braunschweig		Süd-Hannover-Braunschweig (1 Oktober 1928)	Hannover-Süd	from 1925 to 30 September 1928 <u>Ludolf Haase</u> (perhaps also only for Hannover-Süd)
08	Danzig		Danzig-Westpreußen (1939) RN		see above
09	Elbe-Havel		Magdeburg-Anhalt (1927)	Anhalt	from 25 November 1925 to 1926 [?] <u>Alois Bachschmidt</u>
10	Groß-München ("Traditionsgau")		München-Oberbayern (1933)	Oberbayern	[?]
11	Hannover-Süd		Süd-Hannover-Braunschweig (1 Oktober 1928)	Braunschweig	from 1925 to 30 September 1928 <u>Ludolf Haase</u> (perhaps also only Braunschweig)
12	Hessen-Darmstadt		Hessen-Nassau (1933)	Hessen-Nassau-Süd	from 1 March 1927 to 9 January 1931 <u>Friedrich Ringshausen</u> , then only in 1931 <u>Peter Gemeinder</u> , then from 1932 to 1933 <u>Karl Lenz</u>
13	Hessen-Nassau-Nord		Kurhessen (1934)		[?]
14	Hessen-Nassau-Süd		Hessen-Nassau (1933)	Hessen-Darmstadt	from 1925 to 1926 <u>Anton Haselmayer</u> , then from 1926 to 1927 Dr. <u>Walter Schultz</u> , then from 1927 to 1933 <u>Jakob Sprenger</u>
15	Koblenz-Trier	Rheinland-Süd (1931)	Moselland (1942) <i>merger</i>		[?]
16	Kurmark	Ostmark & Brandenburg ([?])	Mark Brandenburg (1938) RN		see above
17	Lüneburg-Stade		Ost-Hannover (1928) RN		from 22 March 1925 to 30 September 1928 <u>Bernhard Rust</u>
18	Mittelfranken		Franken (1929)	Nuremberg-Forth-Erlangen	<u>Julius Streicher</u> ("Frankenführer")
19	Niederbayern	Niederbayern-Oberpfalz (I) (1 Oktober 1928)	Niederbayern-Oberpfalz (II) (1 April 1932)	Oberpfalz	from 1 October 1928 to 1929 <u>Gregor Strasser</u> , then from 1929 to 1 April 1932 <u>Otto Erbersdobler</u>
20	Niederbayern-Oberpfalz (I)		Oberpfalz & Niederbayern (1 Oktober 1928)		from 1925 to 30 September 1928 <u>Gregor Strasser</u>
21	Niederbayern-Oberpfalz (II)	Oberpfalz & Niederbayern (1 April 1932)	Bayerische Ostmark (19 January 1933)	Oberfranken	from 1 April 1932 to 19 January 1933 <u>Franz Mayerhofer</u>
22	Niederösterreich		Niederdonau ([?]) RN [??]		from 1927 to 1937 <u>Josef Leopold</u> [possibly <u>Lücke</u> from 1937 to 1939, since he is the first Gauleiter for Niederdonau who is actually known]
23	Nuremberg-Forth-Erlangen		Franken (1929)	Mittelfranken	from 3 September 1928 <u>Wilhelm Grimm</u>

24	Oberbayern		München-Oberbayern (1933)	Groß-München	[?]
25	Oberfranken		Bayerische Ostmark (19 January 1933)	Niederbayern-Oberpfalz (II)	from 1928 <u>Hans Schemm</u>
26	Oberösterreich		Oberdonau ([?]) RN		[precise moment of leader designation unknown, see also "Oberdonau"]
27	Oberpfalz	Niederbayern-Oberpfalz (I) (1 October 1928)	Niederbayern-Oberpfalz (II) (1 April 1932)	Niederbayern	from 1 October 1928 to 1 April 1932 <u>Franz Mayerhofer</u>
28	Ostmark		Kurmark (6 March 1933)	Brandenburg	from 2 January 1928 to 1933 <u>Wilhelm Kube</u>
29	Rheinland		Saar-Pfalz (1935)	Saar(land)	from 1926 Josef Bürckel (from 1 March 1933 also administrator of Saarland)
30	Rheinland-Nord		Ruhr (1926)	Westfalen	from 1925 to 1926 <u>Karl Kaufmann</u>
31	Rheinland-Süd	[?Koblenz-Trier also autonomous before 1931?]	Köln-Aachen & Koblenz-Trier (1931)		1925 Heinrich Haake (also known as "Heinz Haake"), then from 1925 to 1931 <u>Robert Ley</u>
32	Ruhr	Rheinland-Nord & Westfalen (1926)	Westfalen-Nord & Westfalen-Süd (1932)	Düsseldorf (1930) <i>partially; creation of Düsseldorf nicht gesichert</i>	from 1926 to 1929 Karl Kaufmann, then from 1929 to 1931 [?not 1932?] <u>Josef Wagner</u>
33	Saarland , also merely <i>Saar</i>		Saar-Pfalz (1935)	Rheinland	from August 1929 to 28 February 1933 Karl Brück, from 1 March 1933 Josef Bürckel (also administrator of Rheinland)
34	Saar-Pfalz , also Saarpfalz	Rheinland & Saar(land) (1935)	Westmark (1937) RN		see above
35	Schlesien		Niederschlesien & Oberschlesien (1940)		from 15 March 1925 to 25 December 1935 (possibly until only 12 December 1934) <u>Helmuth Brückner</u> , then to 1940 <u>Josef Wagner</u>
36	Sudetengau		Sudetenland (1939) RN		[?]
37	Unterfranken		Mainfranken (1935) RN		see above
38	Warthegau		Wartheland (29 January 1940) RN		see above
39	Westfalen		Ruhr (1926)	Rheinland-Nord	from 1925 to 1926 <u>Franz Pfeffer von Salomon</u>

Associated organizations abroad

Gaue in Switzerland

The irregular Swiss branch of the Nazi Party also established a number of Party *Gaue* in that country, most of them named after their regional capitals. These included *Gau Basel-Solothurn*, *Gau Schaffhausen*, *Gau Luzern*, *Gau Bern* and *Gau Zürich*.^{[106][107][108]} The *Gau Ostschweiz* (East Switzerland) combined the territories of three cantons: *St. Gallen*, *Thurgau* and *Appenzell*.^[109]

Membership

General membership

The general membership of the Nazi Party mainly consisted of the urban and rural lower middle classes. 7% belonged to the upper class, another 7% were peasants, 35% were industrial workers and 51% were what can be described as middle class. In early 1933, just before Hitler's appointment to the chancellorship, the party showed an under-representation of "workers", who made up 29.7% of the membership but 46.3% of German society. Conversely, white-collar employees (18.6% of members and 12% of Germans), the self-employed (19.8% of members and 9.6% of Germans) and civil servants (15.2% of members and 4.8% of the German population) had joined in proportions greater than their share of the general population.^[110] These members were affiliated with local branches of the party, of which there were 1,378 throughout the country in 1928. In 1932, the number had risen to 11,845, reflecting the party's growth in this period.^[110]

When it came to power in 1933, the Nazi Party had over 2 million members. In 1939, the membership total rose to 5.3 million with 81% being male and 19% being female. It continued to attract many more and by 1945 the party reached its peak of 8 million with 63% being male and 37% being female (about 10% of the German population of 80 million).^{[2][111]}

Military membership

Nazi members with military ambitions were encouraged to join the Waffen-SS, but a great number enlisted in the *Wehrmacht* and even more were drafted for service after World War II began. Early regulations required that all *Wehrmacht* members be non-political and any Nazi member joining in the 1930s was required to resign from the Nazi Party.

However, this regulation was soon waived and there is ample evidence that full Nazi Party members served in the *Wehrmacht* in particular after the outbreak of World War II. The *Wehrmacht* Reserves also saw a high number of senior Nazis enlisting, with Reinhard Heydrich and Fritz Todt joining the *Luftwaffe*, as well as Karl Hanke who served in the army.

Student membership

In 1926, the party formed a special division to engage the student population, known as the National Socialist German Students' League (NSDStB). A group for university lecturers, the National Socialist German University Lecturers' League (NSDDB), also existed until July 1944.

Women membership

The National Socialist Women's League was the women's organization of the party and by 1938 it had approximately 2 million members.

Membership outside Germany

Party members who lived outside Germany were pooled into the *Auslands-Organisation* (NSDAP/AO, "Foreign Organization"). The organization was limited only to so-called "Imperial Germans"; and "Ethnic Germans" (*Volksdeutsche*), who did not hold German citizenship were not permitted to join.

Under Beneš decree No. 16/1945 Coll, in case of citizens of Czechoslovakia membership of the Nazi Party was punishable by between five and twenty years of imprisonment.

Deutsche Gemeinschaft

Deutsche Gemeinschaft was a branch of the Nazi Party founded in 1919, created for Germans with *Volksdeutsche* status.^[112] It is not to be confused with the post-war right-wing *Deutsche Gemeinschaft* which was founded in 1949.

Notable members included^[113]

- Oswald Menghin (Vienna)
- Herbert Czaja (Province of Silesia inside Prussia)
- Hermann Neubacher who was responsible for invading Yugoslavia.
- Rudolf Much (Vienna)
- Arthur Seyß-Inquart (Vienna)

Party symbols

- Nazi flags: The Nazi Party used a right-facing swastika as their symbol and the red and black colours were said to represent *Blut und Boden* ("blood and soil"). Another definition of the flag describes the colours as representing the ideology of National Socialism, the swastika representing the Aryan race and the Aryan nationalist agenda of the movement; white representing Aryan racial purity; and red representing the socialist agenda of the movement. Black, white and red were in fact the colours of the North German Confederation flag (invented by

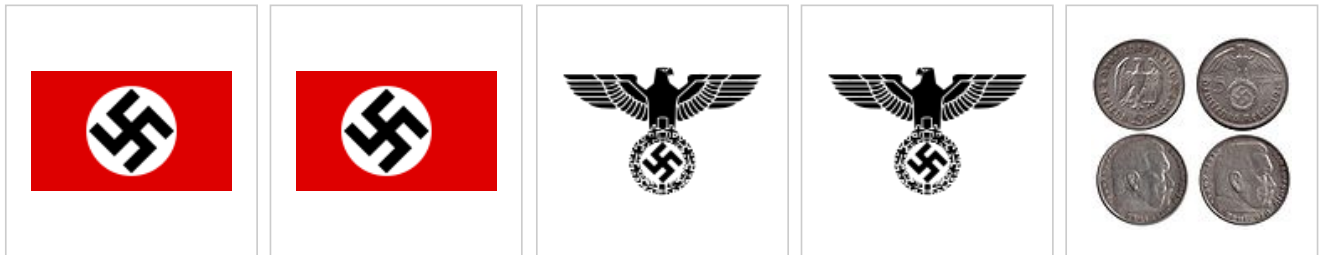


Membership of the Nazi Party from 1939

Otto von Bismarck based on the Prussian colours black and white and the red used by northern German states). In 1871, with the foundation of the German Reich the flag of the North German Confederation became the German *Reichsflagge* ("Reich flag"). Black, white and red became the colours of the nationalists through the following history (for example World War I and the Weimar Republic).

The *Parteiflagge* design, with the centred swastika disc, served as the party flag from 1920. Between 1933 (when the Nazi Party came to power) and 1935, it was used as the National flag (*Nationalflagge*) and Merchant flag (*Handelsflagge*), but interchangeably with the black-white-red horizontal tricolour. In 1935, the black-white-red horizontal tricolour was scrapped (again) and the flag with the off-centre swastika and disc was instituted as the national flag, and remained as such until 1945. The flag with the centred disk continued to be used after 1935, but exclusively as the *Parteiflagge*, the flag of the party.

- German eagle: The Nazi Party used the traditional German eagle, standing atop of a swastika inside a wreath of oak leaves. It is also known as the "Iron Eagle". When the eagle is looking to its left shoulder it symbolises the Nazi Party and was called the *Parteiadler*. In contrast, when the eagle is looking to its right shoulder it symbolises the country (*Reich*) and was therefore called the *Reichsadler*. After the Nazi Party came to national power in Germany they replaced the traditional version of the German eagle with the modified party symbol throughout the country and all its institutions.



Parteiflagge ("party flag"), used 1920–1945 and also used as the national flag between 1933 and 1935, though never used interchangeably with the black-white-red horizontal tricolour

Flag with the off-centre swastika and disc, which was used as the national flag of Germany after 1935, though never used to represent the party

Parteiadler design, used as party emblem

Reichsadler design, representing Germany in general as the national insignia (*Hoheitszeichen*)

5-Reichsmark coins before (1936) and after adding the Nazi swastika (1938)

Ranks and rank insignia



1: Anwärter (not party member), 2: Anwärter, 3: Helfer, 4: Oberhelfer, 5: Arbeitsleiter, 6: Oberarbeitsleiter, 7: Hauptarbeitsleiter, 8: Bereitschaftsleiter, 9: Oberbereitschaftsleiter, 10: Hauptbereitschaftsleiter



11: Einsatzleiter, 12: Obereinsatzleiter, 13: Haupteinsatzleiter, 14: Gemeinschaftsleiter, 15: Obergemeinschaftsleiter, 16: Hauptgemeinschaftsleiter, 17: Abschnittsleiter, 18: Oberabschnittsleiter, 19: Hauptabschnittsleiter



20: Bereichsleiter, 21: Oberbereichsleiter, 22: Hauptbereichsleiter, 23: Dienstleiter, 24: Oberdienstleiter, 25: Hauptdienstleiter, 26: Befehlsleiter, 27: Oberbefehlsleiter, 28: Hauptbefehlsleiter, 29: Gauleiter, 30: Reichsleiter

Slogans and songs

- Nazi slogans: ["Sieg Heil!"; "Heil Hitler"](#)
- Nazi anthem: [Horst-Wessel-Lied](#)

Election results

German Reichstag

Election year	Votes	%	Seats won	+/-	Notes
<u>1928</u>	810,127	2.6	12 / 491 	▲ 12	
<u>1930</u>	6,379,672	18.25	107 / 577 	▲ 95	
<u>July 1932</u>	13,745,680	37.27	230 / 608 	▲ 123	
<u>November 1932</u>	11,737,021	33.09	196 / 584 	▼ 34	
<u>March 1933</u>	17,277,180	43.91	288 / 647 	▲ 92	
<u>November 1933</u>	39,655,224	92.11	661 / 661 	▲ 373	Sole legal party
<u>1936</u>	44,462,458	98.80	741 / 741 	▲ 80	Sole legal party
<u>1938</u>	44,451,092	99.01	813 / 813 	▲ 72	Sole legal party

Presidential election

Election year	Candidate	First round			Second round		
		Votes	%	Place	Votes	%	Place
<u>1925</u>	endorsed Ludendorff (1.1%)				endorsed Hindenburg (48.3%)		
<u>1932</u>	Adolf Hitler	11,339,446	30.1	2nd	13,418,547	36.8	2nd

Volkstag of Danzig

Election year	Votes	%	Seats won	+/-
<u>1927</u>	1,483	0.81	1 / 72 	▲ 1
<u>1930</u>	32,457	16.40	12 / 72 	▲ 11
<u>1933</u>	107,331	50.12	38 / 72 	▲ 26
<u>1935</u>	139,423	59.31	43 / 72 	▲ 5

See also

- [Glossary of Nazi Germany](#)
- [List of books about Nazi Germany](#)
- [List of Nazi Party leaders and officials](#)
- [Mass suicides in 1945 Nazi Germany](#)
- [Neo-Nazism](#)
- [Sino-German cooperation until 1941](#)
- [Socialist Reich Party](#)
- [Volkssturm](#)

Notes

- ↑ Rick Steves. *Rick Steves' Snapshot Munich, Bavaria & Salzburg*Berkeley, California, USA; New York City, USA: Avalon Travel, 2010. p. 28.

"Though the Nazis eventually gained power in Berlin, they remembered their roots, dubbing Munich "Capital of the Movement". The Nazi

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Online

- ["Introduction to the Holocaust" United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#) Retrieved 23 October 2017.

External links

- [Text of *Mein Kampf*](#)
 - [Program of the Nazi Party](#) its "Manifesto"
 - [\(in German\) Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei \(NSDAP\) 1920–1933](#) at *Lebendiges Museum Online*
 - [\(in German\) Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei \(NSDAP\) 1933–1945](#) at *Lebendiges Museum Online*
 - [Organisationsbuch NSDAP](#) An encyclopedic reference guide to the Nazi Party organisations, uniforms, flags etc. published by the party itself
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