

TEACHING POINTS

- 1 What do you consider to be the most important subjects taught in school/college?
- 2 Do you think a Nazi government would have the same priorities?
- 3 To gain influence over youth, would it be more important for the Nazis to manipulate the teachers or the curriculum?

B In what ways was education used as propaganda?

FOCUS ROUTE

- 1 Identify three important changes made by the Nazis to the education system.
- 2 Explain the purpose of each change.
- 3 Copy and complete the table below. In column 2, give specific examples of how the Nazis tried in schools to develop the spirit of *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Aims	Methods
Anti-intellectualism	
Anti-semitism	
Indifference to the weak	
Nationalism	
Militarism	
Obedience and discipline	
Hitler worship	

The Nazis' approach stemmed from their anti-intellectual prejudices and the importance they placed on healthy bodies and National Socialist character, as part of a racially pure *Volksgemeinschaft*. Bernhard Rust, the Nazi Education Minister, stated in 'Education and Instruction', the official manual for teachers, 'The chief purpose of the school is to train human beings to realise that the State is more important than the individual, that individuals must be willing and ready to sacrifice themselves for Nation and Führer.'

The Nazi strategy on education had a number of strands. They were initially concerned to exercise greater control over the schools. Regulations were issued, co-ordinating teachers and encouraging local Nazi officials to interfere in schools. Many teachers were already sympathetic to the Nazis and by 1936 over 30 per cent of teachers had voluntarily joined the Nazi Party. To ensure that all teachers followed the party line, they were pressurised into joining the National Socialist Teachers' League (NSLB). By 1937, 97 per cent had done so. Members had to attend one-month training courses, stressing Nazi ideology and physical education. By 1938, two-thirds had attended. Local Nazi officials kept records on individual teachers, and those who were insufficiently committed to National Socialism could be dismissed.

The other major strategy the Nazis used was to change the curriculum. Greater stress was put on physical exercise which, by 1936, took up at least two hours a day. Nazi ideas were incorporated into subjects, particularly biology and history. Religious education was downgraded and eventually replaced. From 1935, all textbooks had to be approved. New textbooks were produced, reflecting Nazi values.

There was also a move away from co-educational schools to ensure the different sexes received their appropriate education. Girls took needlework and music, not Latin; then language and home crafts, to become good homemakers and mothers. Local plebiscites were held, which due to government pressure led to parents voting to end denominational (religious) schools. By 1939 all the denominational schools had been abolished.

As in other areas, the Nazis did not initiate major structural reorganisation. They used the school system they inherited, and supplemented it with new Nazi institutions. Thus some new schools to train the future Nazi elite were created. In 1933 Education Minister Rust announced the formation of National Political Institutes of Education (NAPOLAs) for boys aged 10–18 to develop future leaders. In 1936 the NAPOLAs were taken over by the SS. There were 21 by 1938 and 39 by 1943. They provided a military-style boarding education, with classes called 'platoons' and with the atmosphere of a military camp. There was

even more stress on physical education, compulsory manual labour and further political training replaced religious education.

In 1937 Youth Leader Schirach and DAF Leader Ley set up new special leadership schools, the Adolf Hitler Schools. They were intended partly to rival the SS's NAPOLAs and to avoid Rust's interference. Only eleven were created. They were free boarding schools for 12- to 18-year-olds, selected mainly on grounds of physical appearance and leadership potential. In the curriculum physical, political and military training were even more dominant. Many features of normal schools were abandoned. Significantly, Nazi leaders did not send their own children there.

Worthy Nazi youths could finally progress to three new Ordensburgs (Castles of Order), partly modelled on medieval chivalric orders, where their training as future political and military leaders was completed. They were housed in vast castles, which held 1,000 students (called Ordensjunkers) aged 25-30, plus 500 staff. Hitler told Rauschning, 'My Ordensburgs will mould a youth from which the world will shrink in terror.'

There were fewer changes in the nature of higher education. Most significant was a considerable contraction in numbers of students, from 113,000 in 1933 to 57,000 in 1939, reflecting the Nazi downgrading of academic education. Thereafter numbers rose to 82,000 by 1944, mainly due to a large increase in female students (11 per cent of students in 1939 were female; in 1944, 49 per cent) and to a growing realisation of the value of specialist education. In general, the government did not intervene very much in the universities, though some *Gauleiter* interfered more.

As with schools, the government tried to ensure the political compliance of the educators. In April 1933 the Law for the Restoration of the Civil Service led to about 1,200 university teachers (about 10 per cent) being dismissed (33 per cent for racial and 56 per cent for political reasons). There was little reaction to this purge in which the universities lost some of their greatest thinkers. In November 1933 all university teachers were made to sign a 'Declaration in Support of Hitler and the National Socialist State' and join the Nazi Lecturers' Association. New appointees had to attend a six-week ideological and physical training camp.

Students were forced to join the Nazi-controlled German Students' League, but 25 per cent seem to have avoided this. Students had to attend twice weekly sessions for ideological and fitness training. They had to score points in sporting activities (unless given medical exemption). University curricula were modified in some areas, for example, with racial and EUGENIC ideas in medicine, law, politics. However, there was a growing perception that standards were falling. Indeed, by the 1940s some Nazi leaders realised the adverse effects of their education policy and wanted to reverse its anti-intellectual stress, arguing that they needed to train more scientists to compete with other countries in research.

Berlin university students giving the Hitler salute



ACTIVITY

Study Sources 14.15–28.

- 1 What methods did the Nazis use to try to ensure schools were teaching correctly?
- 2 Schools/colleges today have a statement at the beginning of their prospectuses explaining the main educational aims of the institution. Using the sources, write one for a school in Nazi Germany.

SOURCE 14.15 A National Socialist Teachers' League (NSLB) official explains its role in 1937

Naturally, the German teacher must first be converted to this completely new task of German youth education. The real task of the NSLB is to create the new German educator in the spirit of National Socialism. It is being carried out with the same methods with which the movement has conquered the whole nation: indoctrination and propaganda.

SOURCE 14.16 Dr Schuster, a geography teacher, describes the problems he faced, in an interview in 1938: quoted in E. Amy Buller's *Darkness over Germany*, 1945

There is no longer any intellectual freedom ... and education is being degraded by political interference ... Political agents, often ignorant and stupid men ... interfere with my teaching of geography. Some of them don't seem to realise that any countries exist except Germany ...

My headmaster, who is new and young and a very keen Nazi – in fact he would not have the post if he were not a Party man – greatly hopes that I will leave. That is obvious, for he will get high praise if he can quickly establish an all-Nazi staff.

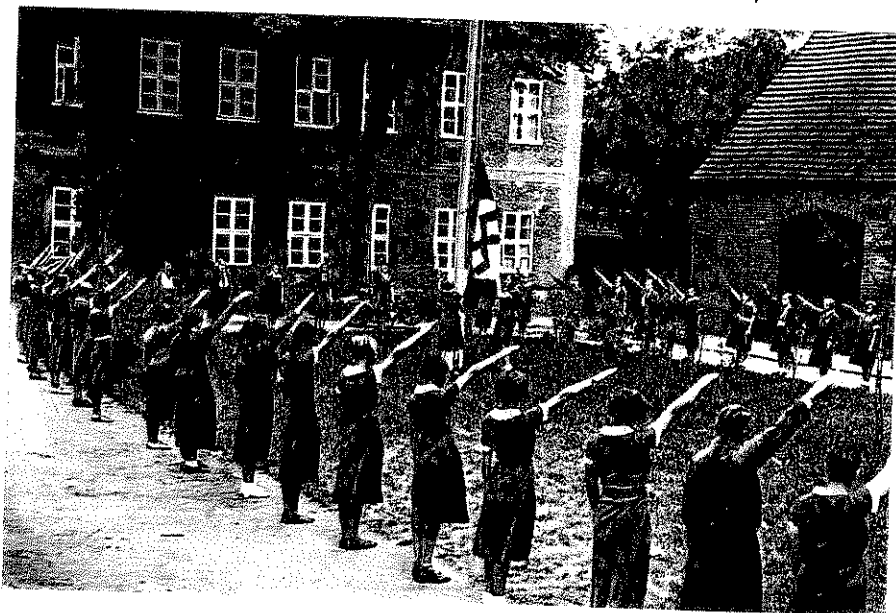
SOURCE 14.17 A British teacher in Germany describes the situation in schools in 1933

Nazis were sent to schools, where they walked into the classes and cross-examined the teacher in front of his pupils. If they thought it necessary they arrested him at once.

SOURCE 14.18 From a newspaper report in Oldenburg

The State Ministry has ordered: the Hitler Greeting is also to be used in conversation between teachers and pupils ... Every day at the beginning of the first lesson the pupils will get up from their places as soon as the teacher enters the class, stand to attention and raise their outstretched arm level with their eyes. The teacher will go to the front of the class and offer the same greeting accompanied by the words 'Heil Hitler!' The pupils will reply 'Heil Hitler!'

SOURCE 14.19 Teenage girls salute the flag at the start of the school day in 1933



SOURCE 14.20 *Der Angriff*, 27 October 1939

All subjects, German Language, History, Geography, Chemistry and Mathematics – must concentrate on military subjects – the glorification of military service and of German heroes and leaders and the strength of a regenerated Germany. Chemistry will inculcate a knowledge of chemical warfare, explosives, Buna [artificial rubber], etc. while mathematics will help the young to understand artillery calculations, ballistics etc.

SOURCE 14.21 Extracts from a Nazi mathematics textbook

Question 95 *The construction of a lunatic asylum costs 6 million RM. How many houses at 15,000 RM each could have been built for that amount?*

Question 97 *To keep a mentally ill person costs approx. 4 RM per day, a cripple 5.5 RM, a criminal 3.50 RM. Many civil servants receive only 4 RM per day, white collar employees barely 3.50 RM, unskilled workers not even 2 RM per head for their families.*

(a) *Illustrate these figures with a diagram.*

According to conservative estimates, there are 300,000 mentally ill, epileptics, etc. in care.

(b) *How much do these people cost to keep in total, at a cost of 4 RM per head?*

(c) *How many marriage loans at 1,000 RM each . . . could be granted from this money?*

SOURCE 14.22 From official instructions on the teaching of history, issued by the German Central Institute of Education, 1938

The German nation in its essence and greatness, in its fateful struggle for internal and external identity is the subject of the teaching of history. It is based on the natural bond of the child with his nation and, by interpreting history as the fateful struggle for existence between the nations, has the particular task of educating young people to respect the great German past and to have faith in the mission and future of their own nation and to respect the right of existence of other nations . . . It must always show greatness . . . the powerless and insignificant have no history.

Should history teaching be used to develop pride in one's country's past?

SOURCE 14.23 History curriculum recommended by the *National Socialist Educator*

Weeks	Subject	Relations to Jews	Reading material
1-4	Pre-war Germany. The class war. Profits, strikes	The Jew at large!	Hauptmann: <i>The Weavers</i>
5-8	From agrarian to industrial state. Colonies	The peasant in the claws of the Jews	Descriptions of the colonies from Hermann Löns
9-12	Conspiracy against Germany	The Jew reigns. War plots	Beumelburg: <i>Barrage</i> . <i>Life of Hindenburg</i> Wartime letters
13-16	German struggle. German want. Blockade! Starvation!	The Jew becomes prosperous! Profit from German want	Manke: <i>Espionage at the Front</i> War reports
17-20	The stab in the back. Collapse	Jews as leaders of the November insurrection	<i>Secret Service in Enemy Country</i> Bruno Brehm: <i>That was the End</i>
21-24	Germany's Golgotha. Erzberger's crimes! Versailles	Jews enter Germany from the east. Judah's triumph	Volkman: <i>Revolution over Germany</i> Feder: <i>The Jews</i> <i>Der Stürmer</i> newspaper
25-28	Adolf Hitler National Socialism	Judah's foe!	<i>Mein Kampf</i> Dietrich Eckart
29-32	The Bleeding Frontiers. Enslavement of Germany. The Volunteer Corps. Schlageter [a young German killed by invading French troops in 1923]	The Jew profits by Germany's misfortunes. Loans (Dawes, Young)	Beumelburg: <i>Germany in Chains</i> Wehner: <i>Pilgrimage to Paris</i> Schlageter - a German hero
33-36	National Socialism at grips with crime and the underworld	Jewish instigators of murder. The Jewish press	Horst Wessel [a young Nazi killed in a brawl in 1930 and turned into a hero]
37-40	Germany's youth at the helm! The victory of faith	The last fight against Judah	The Reich Party Congress

SOURCE 14.24 Nazi School Assignments, from a Munich teachers' book, 1935

- 6 Collect propaganda posters and caricatures [exaggerated portraits] for your race book, and arrange them according to a racial scheme.
- 9 Observe people whose special racial features have drawn your attention, also with respect to their bearing when moving or speaking. Observe their expressions and gestures.
- 10 Observe the Jew: his way of walking, his bearing, gestures and movements when talking.
- 12 What are the occupations engaged in by Jews of your acquaintance?
- 13 What are the occupations in which Jews are not found? Explain this phenomenon in the basic character of the Jew's soul.
- 14 In what stories, descriptions and poems do you find the physical character of the Jew pertinently [relevantly] portrayed? (e.g. Grimms' Fairy Tales, The Merchant of Venice by Shakespeare, etc.)

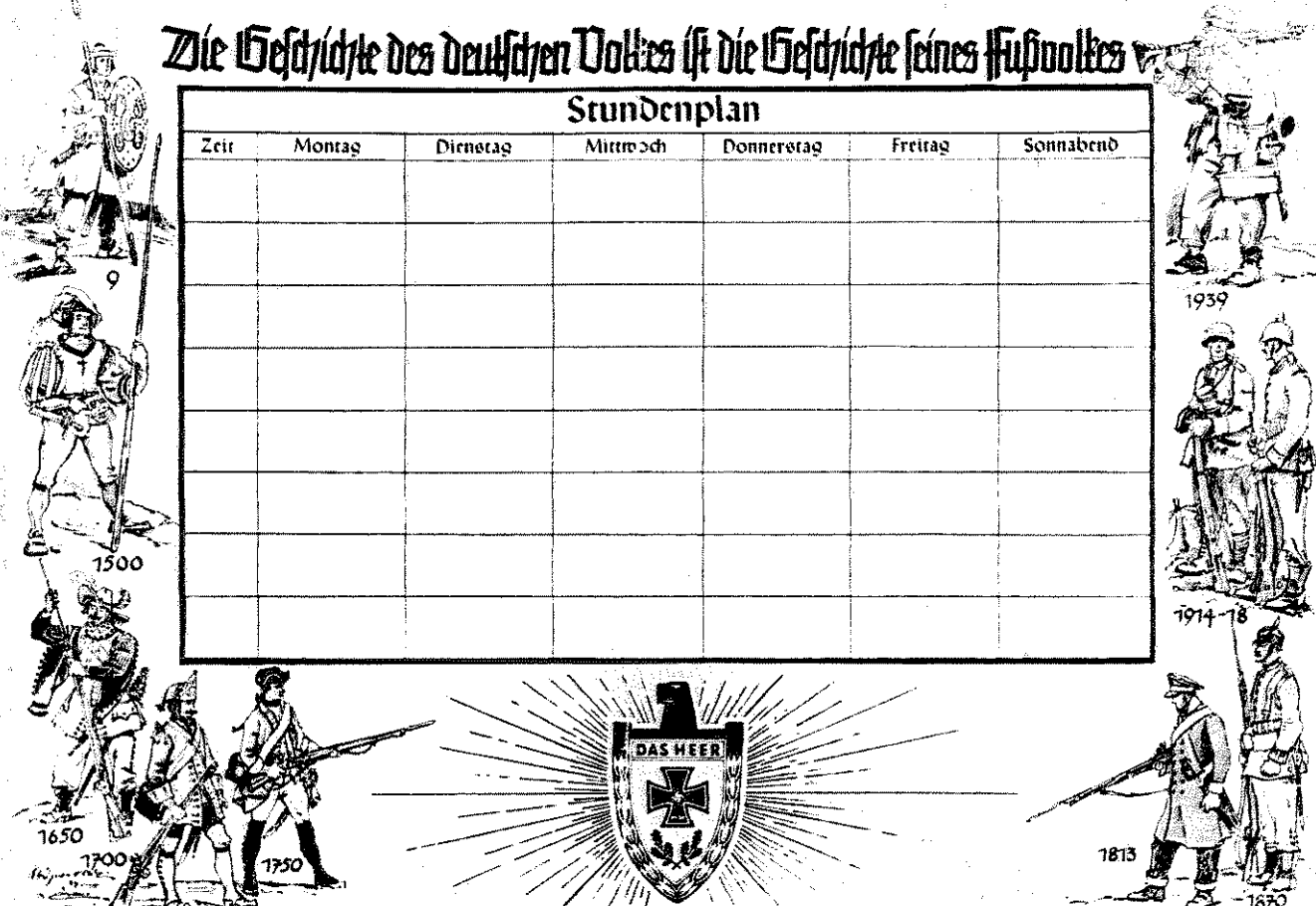
SOURCE 14.25 Dictation exercise from a Munich primary school in 1934

Just as Jesus saved people from sin and from Hell, Hitler saves the German Volk from ruin. Jesus and Hitler were persecuted, but while Jesus was crucified, Hitler was raised to the Chancellorship. While the disciples of Jesus denied their master and deserted him, the sixteen comrades of Hitler died for their leader. The apostles completed the work of their lord. We hope that Hitler will be able to complete his work himself. Jesus built for heaven: Hitler for the German earth.

SOURCE 14.26 This militaristic timetable from a 1939 schoolbook has the words 'The history of the German people is the history of its infantry' inscribed above it

Die Geschichte des deutschen Volkes ist die Geschichte seines Fußvolkes

Zeit	Montag	Dienstag	Mittwoch	Donnerstag	Freitag	Sonntag



Die Gesundung. Rückgang der Vielleserei

Im Krisenjahr 1932:
Besorgniserregendes Ansteigen von Entlehnungs-
siffern und Lesesaalbenutzung:
643000 Buchentlehnungen
315000 Lesesaalbesucher =
Arbeitslosigkeit trieb die Menschen in die Büchereien

nach 4 Jahren Aufbau 1937:
Gesundes Verhalten von Entlehnungsziffern und
Lesesaalbenutzung:
412000 Buchentlehnungen
217000 Lesesaalbesucher

Neue Aufgaben nahmen die Leser in Anspruch:
1. Die Rückkehr an die Arbeitsplätze
2. Die politische Betätigung für
Volk und Staat
3. Die Arbeitsdienstpflcht
4. Der Heeresdienst

Die Ausleihesziffer sank demnach um ein Drittel, die
Zahl der Leser nur um ein Siebtel (1932: 21765 Leser
1937: 18907 Leser). Das bedeutet, daß die Bücher
gründlicher gelesen werden und so eine nachhaltigere
Wirkung ausüben =

Healthy Recovery.
Decline in Indiscriminate Reading

1932, year of crisis:
Disturbing increase in numbers of books
borrowed and in use of the reading room:
643,000 titles borrowed
315,000 reading-room users
Unemployment sends people into the libraries

1937, after 4 years of reconstruction:
Healthy response in numbers of books borrowed and
in use of the reading room:
412,000 titles borrowed
217,000 reading-room users

Readers are engaged in new tasks:

1. The return to employment
2. Political activity for the
people and the state
3. Labour Service duty
4. Military service

Thus, numbers of loans have fallen by one-third,
but the number of readers has fallen only by one-seventh
(1932: 21,765 readers; 1937: 18,907 readers). This shows
that books are being read more thoroughly and will
therefore have a more lasting effect.

SOURCE 14.28

Ordensburg cadets on parade



D Was Nazi youth policy successful?

It is very hard to judge the extent to which the Nazis succeeded in indoctrinating German youth. You have already encountered evidence that some children reacted against Nazi propaganda, whilst others absorbed it. Clearly a whole range of variables would affect the degree of impact.

FOCUS ROUTE

1 Read Sources 14.34–39, then copy and complete the chart below.

Responses to Nazi youth policies	Sources you could use	Evidence
Enthusiasm	14.35	
Conformity for career reasons	14.35, 14.37	
Conformity through fear	14.36, 14.38	
Conformity through apathy/natural obedience	14.34	
Nonconformity/disillusion	14.36	
Criticism/opposition	14.36, 14.37, 14.39	

- 2 Do the sources suggest that young people's reactions to the Nazis changed over time?
- 3 Most of these sources come from either the German opposition or the police. How reliable on this topic do you think these two types of source are?
- 4 Write your own judgement on the success of Nazi youth policy. Then compare it with those of the historians quoted in the chapter review (pages 290–1).

SOURCE 14.34 A German reflects back on his youth in the Third Reich: quoted in D. Peukert, *Life in the Third Reich*, ed. R. Bessel, 1987, p. 27

No one in our class ever read Mein Kampf. I myself only took quotations from the book. On the whole we didn't know much about Nazi ideology. Even anti-Semitism was brought in rather marginally at school – for example via Richard Wagner's essay 'The Jews in Music' – and outside school the display copies of Der Stürmer made the idea questionable, if anything...

Nevertheless, we were politically programmed: to obey orders, to cultivate the soldierly 'virtue' of standing to attention and saying 'Yes, sir', and to stop thinking when the magic word 'Fatherland' was uttered and Germany's honour and greatness were mentioned.

SOURCE 14.35 A 1934 report to the Social Democratic Party in exile (SOPADE)

Youth is still in favour of the system: the novelty, the drill, the uniform, the camp life, the fact that school and the parental home take a back seat compared to the community – all that is marvellous. A great time without any danger. Many believe that they will find job opportunities through the persecution of Jews and Marxists...

The new generation has never had much use for education... on the contrary, knowledge is publicly condemned... The children and young people follow the instructions of the HJ and demand from their parents that they become good Nazis... The parents cannot forbid the child to do what all children are doing, cannot refuse him the uniform... The secret of National Socialism is the secret of its youth. The chaps are so fanaticised that they believe in nothing but their Hitler.

Source 14.36 From SOPADE reports, 1935

[Bavaria] The reports dealing with youth and its enthusiasm for the regime are not uniformly in agreement. In as much as most of our colleagues detect tremendous support for the regime among the oncoming generation, some maintain that the sentiments among youth are diverse. It goes without saying that Hitler Youth does its utmost to create enthusiasm, but among working-class youths one can hear much criticism.

[Southwestern Germany] To youth in the secondary schools, the continuous force-feeding of National Socialism is having the same effect as the heavy emphasis on religious instruction in earlier decades. National Socialism is no longer a matter of youthful rebellion but has instead become the state-sponsored school curriculum. Consequently National Socialism has lost much of its appeal, especially since the suppression of political opponents and otherwise orientated youth organisations. This is why today the frequent dodging of the Hitler Youth and its events, as well as the transgression [violation] of National Socialist prohibitions, has become a favourite game for youths who eagerly outfox the authorities.

[Rhineland–Westphalia] Some of the teachers tried everything in order to force children into the Hitler Youth ... Teachers enquire whether or not one's father is a party member or is in the SA ... or which newspapers are read at home. Children whose parents are avowed opponents of the Nazis answer yes many times simply because they are afraid.

... In the rural areas as well as industrial cities one can see an increasing demoralisation of youth. In rural areas there has been a sharp decline in participation at Hitler Youth events. Many have resigned their membership, and membership dues are frequently unpaid. While at first uniforms and war games were quite appealing, the regimented routine is now regarded as burdensome by children. The power of authority which was bestowed upon some children has given rise to discontent and resistance. It is not unusual for a youthful group leader whose position of authority has gone to his head to receive a beating from his charges because he wanted to drill the already exhausted group even harder ...

SOURCE 14.37 From a SOPADE report, 1938

Young people are more easily influenced in terms of mood than are adults. This fact made it easier for the regime to win over young people in the first years after the seizure of power. It appears that the same fact is now making it hard for the regime to keep young people in thrall [submissive] ... They were made particularly large promises which for the most part were incapable of fulfilment. The great mass of young people today can see that the well-paying posts in public administration and the Party apparatus have been filled by comrades who had the good fortune of being a few years older ... in the long run young people too are feeling increasingly irritated by the lack of freedom and the mindless drilling that is customary in the National Socialist organisations ...

SOURCE 14.38 The title page of *Kamaradschaft* (Comradeship), an underground youth magazine of 1938



SOURCE 14.39 The Düsseldorf–Crafenberg branch of the National Socialist Party reported to the Gestapo on 17 July 1943

The said youths are throwing their weight around again. I have been informed that assemblages of young people have become more conspicuous than ever, especially since the last terror [bombing] raid on Düsseldorf. These youngsters, aged between 12 and 17 hang around into the late evening, with musical instruments and young females. Since this riffraff is to a large extent outside the Hitler Youth and adopts a hostile attitude towards the organisation, they represent a danger to other young people ... There is a suspicion that it is these youths who have been inscribing the walls of the pedestrian subway on the Altenbergstrasse with the slogans 'Down with Hitler', 'The OKW is lying', 'Medals for Murder!', 'Down with Nazi brutality', etc. However often these inscriptions are removed, within a few days new ones appear on the walls again.

E Review: Did the Nazis succeed in winning the hearts and minds of German youth?

Assessing the effectiveness of propaganda on the young in a totalitarian society is a notoriously difficult task. There is the problem of people at the time being too frightened to put their real views on paper. On the other hand, there is the danger that people recording their oral testimony at a later date exaggerate their degree of opposition to the regime. Furthermore, when we do find opposition from young people, is it really opposition to the regime or simply the normal rebelliousness of youth? Several historians have attempted to assess the overall impact of Nazi policies.

SOURCE 14.40 G. Mosse, *Nazi Culture*, 1981, p. 265

It is difficult to say just how successful the Nazi reshaping of education proved to be in practice. It must have varied greatly from school to school and depended a great deal on individual teachers and principals.

SOURCE 14.41 A. Wilt, *Nazi Germany*, 1994, p.66

It has been estimated that as many as 95 per cent of the German youth backed the Nazis, or at least Hitler, and that opposition for the most part remained vague and diffuse.

SOURCE 14.42 D. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany. Conformity and Opposition in Everyday Life*, 1987, pp. 152, 173

The second half of the 1930s reveals a growing crisis in the Hitler Youth, a crisis which during the war years developed into a massive opposition movement on the part of groups and gangs of young people. The SOPADE reports on Germany for 1938 already recorded this radical shift of attitude among the young, from initial attraction to growing rejection.

... The two central projects of National Socialist social policy – the nullification [cancelling] of class reality through the sentiment of Volksgemeinschaft; and the mobilisation of the people, militarised and schooled in CHAUVINISM, to smash the perceived threat to traditional influences posed by modernity [current fashion] and internationalism – seem to have miscarried even before the end of the Third Reich loomed into sight in the shape of military defeat.

SOURCE 14.43 K. Fischer, *Nazi Germany*, 1995, p. 353

Nazi educational efforts as a whole turned out to be poorly thought out and lacking in substance. At best, the Nazis put a thin ideological veneer [surface] on German education. It is not surprising that twelve years were not enough to break down 'two thousand years of European cultural heritage'. However, Nazi indoctrination was able to miseducate and misuse a whole generation of young people.

SOURCE 14.44 B. Sax, D. Kuntz, *Inside Hitler's Germany*, 1992, p. 308

Through the training of young men and women, the Nazis procured [acquired] a most impressionable group of individuals on whom to impose their ideas in the hope of creating the new men and women of the Volksgemeinschaft... What National Socialist training produced, however, were duller and stupider, though healthier, individuals. By the late 1930s, the authorities became increasingly aware of the fact that while students, no longer able to think for themselves, would therefore not resist the regime, they were incapable of either providing political leadership in the future or contributing the intellectual and technical skills necessary for running a modern industrial society. They proved to be the most willing to sacrifice themselves to the principles of National Socialism.

SOURCE 14.45 M. Housden, in *Resistance and Conformity in the Third Reich*, 1997, p. 81, summarises reasons for the support for Nazism

There were all manner of reasons for youngsters to support the Third Reich. [1] National Socialism provided a vehicle for conflict between generations. [2] It could be dynamic, exciting and purposeful. [3] Youngsters were socialised into National Socialist ways at school and [4] in the Hitler Youth. [5] When all else failed they could be intimidated. What is more, the longer the Nazi system was in place, the more hazy became the memories of younger Germans of the days before Hitler. Eventually youngsters knew no alternative. And yet, despite all this, support for Hitler was less than total.

ACTIVITY

- 1 a) Explain the limited success of Nazi education. Refer, with supporting evidence, to the following:
 - Nazi ideas on the aims of education
 - the complex institutional structure
 - the reactions of teachers, parents and students
 - the length of time the Nazis held power.
- b) Why are there problems in both finding and assessing the evidence for this question?
- 2 Find evidence to support all the statements we have numbered in Source 14.45.
- 3 'Natural youth behaviour' or 'political opposition'. Which is the more appropriate description of groups like the Edelweiss Pirates?
- 4 Now use your Focus Route answers (see page 277) to do your essay.

KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 14: Did the Nazis succeed in winning the hearts and minds of German youth?

- 1 The Nazis sought to indoctrinate the young from the age of four, using youth movements and the school system to impose their values.
- 2 The Nazis scorned intellectual learning and placed emphasis on physical strength and obedience.
- 3 Millions joined the Hitler Youth, initially attracted by adventurous activities. Pressure to join increased, and in 1936 membership was made compulsory.
- 4 There is evidence of increasing disillusion with aspects of the Nazi youth movements as the years passed.
- 5 During the war, organised groups of young people directly challenged Nazi orthodoxy, despite the danger of getting caught.
- 6 There was no major reorganisation of schools, except for a decline in denominational schools and the creation of a few elite schools.
- 7 The government attempted indoctrination via control of the curriculum and teachers.
- 8 Many parents disliked the Nazi training but felt it safer outwardly to conform.
- 9 One effect of the Nazi changes was to reduce the academic quality of the students.
- 10 There is mixed evidence as to the overall effectiveness of Nazi propaganda on German youth.