

History of the Nazi Party

Introduction

The word “*Nazi*” refers to a political party that controlled Germany from 1933 to 1945. It was associated with the fascist ideology. Fascism supports a strong central government and a strong police force.

Nazism in particular is associated with racist ideology.

“*Race*” is a category of dividing people into different groups based on what they look like. Historically, the most common way to do this has been by skin color. For example: white people, brown people, black people.

“*Racism*” is the idea that some races are good, and other races are bad. For example--the idea that white people are good, and black people are bad.

The Nazis believed in what they called “The Aryan Master Race”. This was the belief that the white people who lived in Northern Europe were the best people, and the other races were bad.

The Nazis are famous for their concentration camps. A concentration camp is a prison in which a large group of people are kept in very bad conditions. There were many people that the Nazis did not like, so the Nazis put lots of different kinds of people in the concentration camps: homosexuals, communists, Gypsies, swing kids (kids who listened to swing music), and anyone who spoke out against the government. However, the people who suffered most under the Nazis were the Jews.

The Nazis and the Jews

Jews are the descendants of the people who lived in Israel 2,000 years ago. They are associated with the Jewish religion, but anyone who is born into a Jewish family is considered a Jew whether they are religious or not. (For example, Karl Marx was Jewish, even though he did not believe in God.)

The Romans destroyed the ancient country of Israel 2,000 years ago, and ever since then, Jews have had no home country, but they have lived in Europe.

For many centuries, the Jews were able to live peacefully in Europe, although there was trouble from time to time. Even though Jews looked the same as white Europeans, Europeans were often suspicious of Jews because they had different customs and religion. Rumors and superstitions began to spread about Jews. Europeans sometimes said that Jews were dirty, or that they carried spread diseases with them, or that they were responsible for criminal activities.

When the Nazis came to power in Germany, they decided that the Jews were the enemies of the German people. Immediately, life became hard for many Jewish people. They were not allowed to go to good schools, or get good jobs. They faced a lot of violence and bullying in the street. Many Jews tried to leave Germany, but it was difficult. First of all they needed money to move, and secondly a lot of other countries wouldn't accept Jewish immigrants at that time.

During World War II, Nazi Germany invaded and occupied many other countries in Europe. Now it wasn't just German Jews that were in trouble, it was Jews in most of Europe.

In all of the countries they controlled, the Nazis began hunting all of the Jews they could find, and sending them to concentration camps.

But what to do with all of the Jews once they had them captured? Eventually the Nazis decided that the only solution was to kill all of the Jews. The Nazis called this "*The final solution to the Jewish problem.*"

The Jews tried to hide, but the Nazis went from house to house looking for the Jews. Once they found the Jews, they took them away to the death camp.

One Jewish girl who lived at this time was Anne Frank. Her family had to hide in the ceiling of a house. Anne Frank kept a diary for 2 years describing what it was like to hide from the Nazis. Unfortunately, the Nazis eventually found Anne Frank and her family, and they were taken to the death camps. Anne Frank died in the death camps. But her diary was found later, and is still famous today.

The Jews were taken to death camps, such as Auschwitz. Here they were separated. The Nazis kept alive 20% of the Jews who they thought could be used to do work--usually young strong men between 18 and 40. Everyone else was killed.

The Jews were killed in many different ways. At first, they were shot with guns, but this took a lot of time and money. To kill so many people is not easy. Imagine trying to kill 6 million people. It's almost impossible even to count to a million. At one number per second — with no breaks, at all, for any reason — it would take 11 days, 13 hours, 46 minutes, and 40 seconds just to count from one to 1,000,000. Now imagine trying to shoot 6 million people. How much time would it take? How many hours would it take? How many soldiers would you need?

So the Nazis decided to use poison gas to kill the Jews faster.

In order to control the Jews, and prevent panic, the Nazis usually told the Jews they were going into the showers. The Jews were made to take off their clothes, and were put into a big chamber, and then the door was closed, and the poison gas came out. After this, the dead naked bodies were taken out. There were piles and piles of dead bodies. Where could they put them all? At first they tried to dig huge holes to put all the bodies, but it was a lot of work and there were too many bodies. So it was decided to burn the dead bodies in huge fires. Every day in the concentration camp, smoke would go up from the chimney as the bodies of dead women, children and babies were being burned.

In total, 6 million Jews were killed in this way. We call this event "the holocaust".

Nothing like this had ever happened before in history. Of course, there had been many massacres before in history, and many people had been killed before by wars and bombs. But there was never such a big system designed for killing people. Nazi police (called SS) went from house to house to find Jews. Jews had to be taken to camps in trains. (Imagine how many trains you would need to transport 6 million people.) So many people were necessary to guard the

Jews, and transport the Jews, and kill the Jews, and burn the bodies. It was a whole complex organization.

After the War

After the war, the allied armies found the Nazi death camps. People couldn't believe that this had happened. How could people possibly be this evil? How could this have happened in modern times? How could this have happened in a civilized modern European country?

Some people survived the holocaust. They either escaped the death camps, or were freed by allied armies at the end of the war. Some of them wrote about what had happened to them at the Nazi death camp. A famous book is "*Night*" by Elie Wiesel. Elie Wiesel's family was brought to the Nazi death camps when he was 15. His mother, sister, and father were all killed in the death camp, but Elie Wiesel survived, and wrote about it.

Anne Frank's diary was found, and published. Many people read it.

Nazis Today

Surprising as it may seem, there are some people today who admire the Nazis, and want to bring back the Nazi ideology. They are sometimes called "Neo-Nazis" in order to distinguish them from the historical Nazi government. ("Neo" means new).

These groups are for an ideology called "white supremacy", which means they want white people to be in control of everything. They are against black or brown people, and they are against Jews.

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of Nazi and Neo-Nazi groups in Europe and the United States. They are proud of the Nazi symbols, and they draw or display the Nazi symbols in public places. These groups are associated with violent attacks on immigrants, black people, and Jewish people.

Questions

1. What is racism?
2. Who did the Nazis put into concentration camps/
3. Who are the Jewish people? Where did they live?
4. Who was Anne Frank? Why is she famous today?
5. Why did the Nazis decide to use poison gas to kill the Jews?
6. What is the holocaust? Why is it unique in history?
7. Who was Elie Wiesel? Why is he famous?
8. Do we have any Nazis left today?