

Racial Sciences and Religion in Germany:

From Unification to the Fall of Hitler, 1871-1945

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I. Introduction

When looking at the complexity of German political affairs in the early to mid 20th Century, one cannot ignore the presence of the question of race within its early existence as a nation. Race policies held a significant position within the various government apparatuses that existed between German unification in 1871 to the fall of the Third Reich, and the subsequent era of restructuring of the German nation, in 1945. While not linear in its application to German policies, racial purity became an ideological concept that politicians of all different statuses and backgrounds came to accept as part of the traditionally normative approach to political maneuvering. With this came its early application to foreign policies after German unification into the Imperial State of Germany under Prussian hegemony with Bismarckian politics at the young empire's center. The conservative Prussian-Bismarckian policies that were utilized in forming the nation contributed to the growth of successive policies that allowed for continuously deeper racial policies to be adopted and implemented by later administrations in the German Empire, particularly after the acquisition and international recognition of colonial rule in areas like Africa and Asia. Taking leads from Great Britain in the imperial oversight of its colonies, German approaches to its administration of its colonies was heavily focused on race as an issue, and would adopt an ever-increasingly hostile approach to non-German elements in its colonies. At the turn of the century, tribal groups bore the brunt of German hostility in its African colonies, while almost simultaneously in Asia the German approach to suppression of native ethnic groups labeled as subversive were deemed as enemies of the German people. In the cases of both colonial missions in Africa and Asia, race was cited publicly by the German leadership in the regions as one of the key reasons that the aforementioned groups were deemed enemies.

Growth from these ideas would plague the mentality of subsequent German states because of politicians who considered those approaches as the norm, with the German people existing racially above non-German, particularly non-white, communities. When coupled with the political instability that existed throughout the Weimar Republic period of 1918 to 1933, radical nationalist policies contributed to extremist racial policies by a multitude of far-right and far-left political parties. One such party, the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeit Partie*, or National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP), became the preeminent party at the end of the Weimar era meaning that the extremist racial politics espoused by the National Socialists became state policy when the Party assumed control of the German nation in 1933. Superiority of the German people as a group over those who were not Indo-European, otherwise known throughout much of Europe as the Aryan race, became commonly accepted by most Germans who fit the description of Aryan as ascribed by the Party.¹ The concept of race justified the extreme aggression that came with the policies, both domestic and foreign, of National Socialism.

To fully understand the extent of German racial purity and the policies that came from them, it must be evaluated in the context of racial purity in the late 19th early and 20th Century German understanding of it. Additionally, the varying differences in how racial purity was approached as a policy in foreign affairs versus domestic policies dealing with application of race in the German sphere of influence is significant. It presents the image of change and continuity in how the German government approached its own people versus others, while also demonstrating how during the tumultuous time of the end of the 19th century to the mid-20th century the definition of what a German was had changed. These concepts must also be

¹ *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. "Aryan," accessed November 23, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Aryan>.

evaluated in the context of the political backdrop of the era, such as with the rise of nationalism and the height of European imperialism throughout the world. With those ideas at the forefront, the question of race in the German Empire, Weimar Republic, and National Socialist Germany allows for a deeper understanding of how changing racial theories affected the German state and those impacted by it.

II. Racial Origins in Eugenic Sciences

Eugenic science was integral to the development of racial policies of successive German state. A significant body of German academia focused on eugenic sciences in the pre-First World War period which later increased in size in the following Weimar and National Socialist states. Young academics gathered to analyze the works of many leading academics whose ideas contributed to the expansion of eugenics like Charles Darwin, author of *On the Origin of Species*, and Ernst Haeckel, a leading proponent of Darwinism in Germany and internationally renowned biologist.² A student of Darwinist theory, Haeckel brought Darwin's concepts into the spheres of German intelligentsia that garnered significant interest by younger generations of biologists and political theorists.³ Haeckel, amongst others, paved the way for the generation of eugenicists and racial theorists that brought the pseudo-science to prominence in the German Empire.

Under the stewardship of Alfred Ploetz, a student of Darwinist theory who learned from Haeckel, eugenics evolved into the concept of racial hygiene. Racial hygiene, the term coined by Ploetz, described the selection of physical characteristics passed through generations. Through his book, *Foundations of a Eugenics, Part I, The Efficiency of Our Race and the Protection of the Defectives* (1895), Ploetz established himself as the father of the German strand of 20th

² Robinson, Gloria. 2020. "Ernst Haeckel | German Embryologist". *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ernst-Haeckel>.

³ Ibid. Robinson, Gloria. 2020. "Ernst Haeckel | German Embryologist"

Century eugenics which adhered to Galtonian ideas of the preservation of good racial characteristics and elimination of bad habits, like alcoholism or physical deficiencies by discouraging reproduction of those who were afflicted with those traits.⁴ While not being aware of Galton's ideas at the time of writing his book, Ploetz arrived at very similar conclusions on race that later were modified by the inclusion of Galtonian thought; however, even with the lack of knowledge on Galton's thoughts, Ploetz and Galton both advocated for the prioritization of good physical traits over ones that they deemed as bad stock.

The ideas of Ploetz served to generate large-scale interest in racial hygiene, which spurred the growth of eugenicist societies and periodicals that further purported the benefits to German society that its purveyors claimed. Under Ploetz, the publication and distribution of the journal "Archive for Race and Social Biology" occurred with his pupil, Fritz Lenz, as its chief editor.⁵ Lenz, Ploetz, and others would continue espousing the theories of racial hygiene well into the 1920s via this publication. It served as the basis for intellectual thought on eugenic science because of the proximity to Ploetz and his adherents. As it was his periodical, this cultivated interest in racial hygiene and precipitated the entrance of eugenics into the political world of German society. Exacerbated by the German loss of the First World War, the ideas of Ploetz on racial hygiene began mixing with the radical thoughts of some extremist political groups that emerged from the war.

Association with radical ideology caused the message of racial hygiene to change throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, during the Weimar period. One of the first known accounts of mixing of the ideas of Ploetz and Lenz, who began assuming a far-right stance in the

⁴ Stahnisch, F. 2020. "Racial Hygiene And Nazism". *The Eugenics Archives*. <https://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/connections/545134d251854fef65000001>.

⁵ Lenz, Fritz EUGENICS IN GERMANY, *Journal of Heredity*, Volume 15, Issue 5, May 1924, Pages 223–231, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jhered.a102455>

years after the First World War, comes from the prison cells of Landsberg Prison in 1924. Imprisoned for a failed attempt at initiating a right-wing *putsch* in Munich in 1923, Adolf Hitler poured over the writings of Ploetz and Lenz while incarcerated to build the National Socialist ideology on race and racial purity.⁶ Becoming prominent of his own nature, Lenz, along with fellow racial hygienists wrote what served as the basis for National Socialist racial theory, *Principles of Human Heredity and Racial Hygiene*, with Eugen Fischer and Erwin Baur.⁷ This work not only gave Lenz, Fischer, and Baur international recognition as the leading German academics on race, but also served as the general outline for all of National Socialist policy, enabling Lenz to serve on National Socialist commissioned state committees during the Hitler era.

While the emphasis on race and hereditary stock are emphasised heavily in the works of the prominent racial hygienists, it is likely that they were more concerned with the maintaining of their position within German society, as the intellectual middle-to-upper class. Lenz and Ploetz argue that traits like alcoholism, laziness, and other personality faults were linked to inheritance of traits, traits which were typically associated with the lower echelons of society. With the political turmoil of the Weimar era, like the Spartacist Uprising and November Revolution following the end of the First World War, much of the German middle class feared the rise of people of the lowest strata of society that maintained leftist sympathies. The shift towards the culling of the physically or mentally unfit did not become central until the National Socialist seizure of power, when racial hygienist literature switched from the preservation of good characteristics to the removal of social or medical undesirables from their place in society. With that, eugenicists like Ploetz and Lenz served on state-run advisory committees to help

⁶ Ibid. Stahnisch, F. 2020. "Racial Hygiene And Nazism". *The Eugenics Archives*.

⁷ Kurbegovic, E. 2020. "Lenz, Fritz". *The Eugenics Archives*.

<https://eugenicsarchive.ca/database/documents/5233d05d5c2ec500000000b1>.

oversee the introduction of race legislation, such as the Sterilization Laws or the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, which legally defined the people in society who were not allowed to reproduce and were legally inferior to the German race.⁸ Racial hygienists who followed the line of thinking of Lenz generally did well in National Socialist Germany because of their adherence to the concept of racial planning by removing elements considered undesirable. Many served in similar capacities on state committees that oversaw questions of race, mental health, and the Jewish question for National Socialist organizations and state apparatuses.

III. Race and Racial Purity within the State

The concept of race in 19th and 20th Century Germany is complicated as it at times extended beyond skin color or religion, but instead focused on how “German” a person was. Location of birth and the lineage of an individual’s family was viewed as central to being considered a proper German deserving of citizenship. The laws codifying what was classified as a proper German deserving of citizenship had been established in the preceding state to the German Empire, the North German Confederacy, in which the premises were based on “descent, legitimation, marriage, admission, for a North German, and naturalization for foreigners” which later was directly applied to the German Empire’s laws on nationality and citizenship.⁹ While this establishes the premise that any person(s) could apply for citizenship, the law was focused prominently on European immigrants and citizens of other nationalities who existed within the empire due to the German Empire being a multi-ethnic empire consisting of a large number of Slavic peoples in the eastern regions and people of Western European stock, such as the approximately 1.3 million Alsatian-French absorbed into the empire after the annexation of

⁸ Annas, George J, and Michael A Grodin. 1992. *The Nazi Doctors And The Nuremberg Code*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁹germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org. 2020. *Law On Nationality And Citizenship (June 1, 1870)*. [online] Available at: <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1830> [Accessed 23 November 2020].

Alsace-Lorraine, in the west.¹⁰ But in regards to people viewed as non-German, such as African people who were native to German colonies, the prevailing idea was that since they were not considered civilized, they could not become citizens. Dr. Freidrich Fabri, an academic from the Rhine region of Germany, emphasizes the prevailing view on the natives of Germany's colonies in his book, *Does Germany need Colonies* (1879), stating that “[since] the centre of gravity of these sub-tropical colonies rests entirely upon the white immigrants, they necessarily oust the generally scanty residue of coloured natives” showing that birth without the proper heritage negates the ability to claim citizenship; instead, those with what was considered the natural right as members of the “Germanic race” should remove non-Germanic people from land that could be suited to benefit the German state.¹¹ When coupled with the ideology of Haeckel, it is understandable that to the adherents of Social Darwinism that since the native peoples were not civilized, in comparison to how Europeans viewed civilized as similar to their own societies, that they were inferior.

While not codified officially, many leading members of German high society like academics, politicians, industrialists, and much of the aristocracy accepted that natives of colonial regions were to coexist in their native lands with the German people who emigrated there, but were not to rise to equality status with them. Dr. Fabri (1879) stands as a shining example of this because of his views that the native African people of the region are expendable if the German immigrants to the colonies required the land. Fabri did not stand alone in using race as a reason to remove natives from their land if necessary. Stretching to explorers and

¹⁰ Alsace-Lorraine existed as a highly contested region between the French and Germans from the 17th Century until the Treaty of Versailles established it officially as a French region of Alsace and Moselles. Occupied by the Germans in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), Alsace and Lorraine had a large percentage of French citizens who were then incorporated into the German Empire.

¹¹ Fabri, F., n.d. *Does Germany Need Colonies? (1879)*. [online] Germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org. Available at: <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/618_Fabri_Germany%20Colonies_198.pdf> [Accessed 23 November 2020].

industrialists in German states, many groups the elite classes of society viewed Africa and Asia as unrequited gems for which they could exploit for profit. Particularly, the *Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Gesellschaft* (German East Africa Company), a mining company who commissioned the expeditions to explore what would become German East Africa, coupled with various cotton and other business ventures, utilized the concepts of inferior race groups in their colonization.¹² These organizations were founded by those who believed Germany should expand its empire to include colonial possessions, frequently at the expense of local populations of natives which already inhabited regions of Africa and Asia.

Explorers and believers in a great German colonial empire supported the usage of race as a reason to claim territory in the name of the empire. Carl Peters, the adventurer who claimed German East Africa for the empire in 1885, wrote in a piece criticizing the rise of socialism that “[colonial] policy wants only to increase the strength and enrich the life of the stronger, better race at the expense of the weaker, lesser one, and to exploit the uselessly stored riches of the latter for the benefit of the cultural progress of the former” which states his belief that the African tribes of German East Africa are subhuman compared to the German race.¹³ Peters and his acquisition of the territory of German East Africa was viewed by the natives as horrible due to their subjugation by the Germans to the point where the tribes in the region revolted, prompting Chancellor Otto von Bismarck to send troops in to put them down in 1889.

August Bebel, an acquaintance of Alfred Ploetz and the minority voice of the Social Democrat party in the Imperial Reichstag in his time, spoke out against general German subjugation of African people by stating that European entrepreneurs exploit Africans because

¹² "Städtische Museen: German East Africa". 2020. *Freiburg.De*. <https://www.freiburg.de/pb/,Len/1335945.html>.

¹³ Peters, C., 2020. *Carl Peters On Socialist Opposition To Colonial Policy (February 9 And 16, 1886)*. [online] Germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org. Available at: <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/625_Carl%20Peters_Col%20Policy_205_JNR.pdf> [Accessed 24 November 2020].

they view them as “the races at a lower level of development, the ones regarded as inferior and against whom a certain contempt and great hatred arises instinctively” in European society.¹⁴ Bebel points out that the reason Germans feel that they can put down the Africans is because they are viewed as lower races of people, that Germans naturally feel inclined to rank themselves above due to them being considered primitive and savage, which provides justification for Germans to put down revolts violently and claiming the land of natives with force. This mentality existed to work in tandem with the rise of industrialization in Germany so that it could utilize the land, the people, and the resources as means of production to benefit the mother country during imperialism.

This natural inclination that Bebel speaks of above can be shown to provide insight into the mentality of race itself within Germany itself. Germany had existed as primarily homogenous nation, with very little diversity in regard to skin color, with religion usually being the main point of contention within the nation for many years prior. Looking at data presented by the German Federal Center for Civic Information, the overwhelming majority of people who immigrated to Germany were caucasian people of other European nations who were displaced by wars, revolutions, or religious or political persecution. This is shown in the aftermath of the Soviet seizure of power in 1918 in Russia where a mass influx of Russians escaped to Weimar Germany to avoid arrest by the Bolsheviks, and Eastern Jews who were fleeing the religious persecution that accompanied the rise of the Bolsheviks.¹⁵ Rarely did people of African or Asian descent immigrate to Germany, which resulted in a limited experience with non-Caucasian races from

¹⁴ Bebel, A., 2020. *August Bebel's Reichstag Speech Against Colonial Policy In German East Africa (January 26, 1889)*. [online] Germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org. Available at: <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/624_August%20Bebel_Col%20Policy_204_JNR.pdf> [Accessed 26 November 2020].

¹⁵ Oltmer, J. and Hanewinkel, V., 2020. *Historical And Current Development Of Migration To And From Germany | Bpb*. [online] bpb.de. Available at: <<https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/laenderprofile/262758/historical-and-current-development-of-migration-to-and-from-germany>> [Accessed 26 November 2020].

many Germans. Particularly, the limited exposure to other races was worsened because many of the industrialists and politicians who had vested interests in economic development viewed Africa and Asia as sources of raw material that could be exploited. One example of this is the expansive cotton trade that occurred in German East Africa, where companies like the Leipzig Spinnery acquired land and utilized the local native populations as uncompensated labor.¹⁶ Due to living in a majority homogenous society, it was easier to exploit native people who did not follow the European standard of civilized because to German individuals who stood to make large economic gains they were subhuman.

The conclusion of the First World War exposed many ordinary Germans to Africans for the first time, but in negative contexts, which led to the further deepening of the belief that the Germans were superior to people of African troops. In the early days of the existence of the Weimar Republic, the German population was angered over significant territorial losses, reparations, and the occupation of regions by Allied troops that had been set out in the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Particularly, the occupation of the Rhineland served as a first point of exposure to African people for many Germans because of the French stationing approximately 25,000 North African, Senegalese, and other African colonial troops in the region. The Weimar government and right-wing political organizations took up a propaganda campaign called the “black horror on the Rhine” to make the German people of the occupied regions appear as the victim to people of African origin committing atrocities, like rape and murder, against German citizens.¹⁷ In reality, very little African on German crime occurred, but the purpose that the government-oriented campaign served was to garner sympathy from abroad while also uniting

¹⁶ Sunseri, Thaddeus. "The Baumwollfrage: Cotton Colonialism in German East Africa." *Central European History* 34, no. 1 (2001): 31-51. Accessed December 7, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4547032>.

¹⁷ Julia Roos, Nationalism, Racism and Propaganda in Early Weimar Germany: Contradictions in the Campaign against the ‘Black Horror on the Rhine’, *German History*, Volume 30, Issue 1, March 2012, Pages 45–74, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gerhis/ghr124>

the German public against the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. However, the independent measures taken up by the right-wing parties and paramilitaries turned extreme very quickly and foreign governments became skeptical of German claims, so the Weimar government had to pull back from their campaign by 1922 because of negative foreign appearances, even though it had relative success by uniting some elements of the German right-wing with the government.

While skin color served as an indicator of status in the racial idea of Germans, due to its obvious physical presentation, the definition of race changed dramatically during the rise of the National Socialists to power in 1933. The question of race, and racial purity, came from German lineage before this point and people of all different backgrounds could be considered a German, regardless of political affiliation, religion, or ethnicity so long as a person had a familial root in German. Under the National Socialists, race was redefined to mean something very different. The concept of *Volksgemeinschaft*, the People's Community, became central to National Socialist German racial theory as it stated that all people of German blood in the world were united, regardless of class or location, so long as a person fulfilled certain criteria.¹⁸ Excluding factors included being Jewish, communist, anti-NSDAP, homosexual, or of an "inferior race" which meant non-white. The goal of the People's Community was to show that as long as a person was German, they would be looked upon as an equal in German-controlled lands. This policy also had an economic side to it, as well, because instead of propping up the old German families of the aristocracy as the highest class in society, it shifted focus so that labor was rewarded and viewed as the new version of nobility. Adolf Hitler, the leader of the National Socialists throughout most of its existence, stated even that he " [acknowledged] one nobility- that of labour" in an edition of the NSDAP sponsored newspaper, *Völkischer Beobachter*, which shows

¹⁸ Welch, David. "Nazi Propaganda and the Volksgemeinschaft: Constructing a People's Community." *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 2 (2004): 213-38. Accessed December 4, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3180722>.

that the government was attempting to switch the focus from the old conservative elite onto the German working class.¹⁹ It served as a complex intermingling of race and economics because race ceased to be family and heritage, but also what one was as a citizen. If they were a good citizen who contributed to society in the NSDAP-ascribed ways, then they were considered a racially pure German; however, if the person was not a contributing member, they risked expulsion from the People's Community which would mark them as subhuman, or racially impure.

Membership in the People's Community was conditional for a large number of Germany's citizens under the National Socialists; however, there were codified laws put into place that barred communities of people from joining it, while simultaneously revoking citizenship and even stripping them of their status as racially "German." The 1935 implementation of the Nuremberg Laws defined Jewish ancestry, and the freedoms that they lost or retained, based on ancestry and blood according to how the National Socialists defined it. Utilizing the concepts of Fritz Lenz and racial hygiene, along with the National Socialist ideological perspective on race, the Nuremberg Laws were based in eugenicist oversight to determine Jewishness in a person. Additionally, it is known that Ploetz and Lenz served as just two of many racial hygienists who contributed to the creation of the Nuremberg Laws.²⁰ Many racial hygienists were frequently contacted or actively sought to work with the government because of their strict beliefs in their fields of eugenic sciences. An excerpt from the Nuremberg Laws shows the stipulations that determined a person's blood quality to determine if they were a Jew was that:

¹⁹ Grunberger, Richard, *The 12-year Reich: A Social History of Nazi Germany 1933–1945*, New York: NY, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971, p. 47. *Völkischer Beobachter*, Nov. 21, 1936

²⁰ *Ibid.* Kurbegovic, E. 2020. "Lenz, Fritz". *The Eugenics Archives*

(1) A Jew is anyone who descended from at least three grandparents who were fully Jewish by race. § 2, par. 2, second sentence will apply.

(2) A Jew is also anyone who descended from two fully Jewish grandparents, if:

(a) he belonged to the Jewish religious community at the time this law was issued or joined the community later;

(b) according to Section 1, and will be born out of wedlock after July 31, 1936.²¹

This used the same principle of understanding being a member of the German race based off of lineage, but instead used that same idea to determine the amount of Jewish that they were. In 1936, the National Socialists expanded this law to include people of African, Roma, and Sinti origin so that they would also be classified as subhuman and subject to limitations by German law. However, to avoid issues on the international stage, the laws did not come into affect regarding those groups until after the September 1936 Munich Olympics.

The idea of race impacted the Germans in their prosecution of the Second World War, particularly in the East, with racial thought being intertwined with political beliefs. Established in the early National Socialist Work, *Mein Kampf*, written by Adolf Hitler while imprisoned in the mid-1920s, the book espoused the idea that Bolshevism was being controlled by Jews to bring down the western world.²² However, with the fall of Leon Trotsky to Joseph Stalin, high-ranking National Socialist officials changed their belief to think bolshevism existed in

²¹ Stuckart, W. and Lösener, B., 2020. *The Reich Citizenship Law (September 15, 1935) And The First Regulation To The Reich Citizenship Law (November 14, 1935)*. [online] Germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org. Available at: <<http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/English32.pdf>> [Accessed 28 November 2020].

²² Hitler, Adolf. 2010. *Mein Kampf*. [S.l.]: Elite Minds.

opposition to Judaism; however, the idea of a “Pan-Slavic anarchist” led movement appeared just as dangerous to Hitler and his Party.²³ The idea of the Jewish link to communism was further supplanted in the minds of the people because of the volume of Jews who were ranking Communist party leaders in the 1920s and 1930s, which to the German public made it apparent that the National Socialist claim had some bearing, even with the quiet shift in opinion of leadership that occurred privately. Regardless of how the public perceived the National Socialist claim of Judeo-Bolshevist ties between the communist party and the international Jewish community, as how the party laid out its viewpoints in *Mein Kampf* in 1925 or the move to differentiate between Pan-Slavism and Pan-Judaism, both equally fit into National Socialist idea of race because both were equally viewed as subhuman groups who were enemies of the German people by cause of blood. The hybrid racial, economic, and cultural policy of *Lebensraum* that was adopted by the National Socialists was aided by these beliefs, as it called for the expansion of the German nation into lands occupied by the Jewish-dominated former Pale of Settlement²⁴ regions in Poland, and eventually all Slavic lands east of it, from Poland to the entirety of the Soviet Union.²⁵ With the idea of German racial superiority over Slavs, Jews, and other ethnic groups it made active participation in genocidal events by German killing squads comprised of intellectuals, criminals, and many types of ordinary Germans all throughout conquered territories brought under German control after 1939 easy to support because of the concept of race that the National Socialists had purported for 10 years prior.

²³ Michaelis, M. 1971. "‘Jewish Bolshevism’ And Russo-German Relations In 1933: A Documentary Note". *Taylor & Francis*. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13501677108577102>.

²⁴ The Pale of Settlement refers to where the overwhelming majority of European Jews were forcibly settled under Catherine the Great’s leadership of Imperial Russia. This region became host to the Jewish population center of Europe because all Jews from the former Imperial Russian territories were required by law to live in that region.

²⁵ Gilbert, Martin. 2017. "The Pale Of Settlement". *Jewishvirtuallibrary.org*. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-pale-of-settlement>.

The culminating point of the question of racial purity of National Socialist came to its apex in January 1942 with the Wannsee Conference on the discussion of codifying policy on groups determined to be subhuman by the National Socialists, with an emphasis on providing a state answer on Jews within German territory. Under the Chief of the *Sicherheitsdienst (SD)*, the intelligence and security branch of the greater National Socialist paramilitary formation, the *Schutzstaffel (SS)*, ministers and members of the upper echelons of SS units in the eastern territories assembled to discuss what to be done about the large population of Jews under their administration. It modified the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, again changing what was defined as a Jew in National Socialist racial theory, particularly in response to marriages between people of German heritage and Jewish heritage, along with the offspring of those unions.²⁶ It also excluded people of German heritage from the state's definition of the German race because of their affiliation and intermingling with Jews. Children of the unions were judged to be percentages of Jewish based on the number of Jewish parents and grandparents they had, with minimal regard to their German ancestry, even if they were the product of a relationship between a German Jew and a German of another religious affiliation. With the Jewish lineage, the German blood that they had was considered tainted and therefore not a member of the German race.

Additionally, the question of finding an accurate number of Jewish people within the Greater German Reich and outside it was discussed at Wannsee, but decided that "the figures for Jews of the various foreign countries are concerned, the numbers given include only Jews by religion (*Glaubensjuden*), since the definition of Jews according to racial principles is in part still lacking there" showing that higher party members acknowledged that their definition of race was different from that of other western nations, particularly the United States and United Kingdom.²⁷

²⁶ Eichmann, Adolf. 2016. "Protocol Of The Wannsee Conference, January 20, 1942 | Wwww.Yadvashem.Org". *Yadvashem.Org*. <https://www.yadvashem.org/docs/wannsee-conference-protocol.html>.

²⁷ Ibid.

It was with this understanding that the idea of extermination of racial enemies according to National Socialist ideology was to be affected immediately, especially in the case of the Jewish population, because of the large but unknown amount of enemies that existed in the world. Reinhard Heydrich, Chief of the SD, had initiated the building of extermination centers before the conference, but brought them into official recognition and ordered their usage by the Party, government, and military elements in the eastern territories of the conference. By the time of the conference Belzec, Chelmno, Sobibor, and Treblinka death camps had already been constructed with limited use; hereafter, the camps were to be utilized to their fullest potential with the explicit goal of exterminating the Jewish race. Other groups, like Roma and Sinti ethnic minority groups, were also deported in similar manners based off racial grounds but with less urgency than with the Jewish community.²⁸ Extermination camps served as the primary physical weapon of the National Socialists in their arsenal against groups labeled as inferior since shooting was viewed as detrimental to the personnel who carried the killings out, even if the executioners supported the racial theory of the state, because the execution of women and children was viewed as going against the unspoken code of honor of being a soldier that many German military traditionalists abided by.

The remainder of the war would be set along the premises established at Wannsee, with less focus being on the codified law and more on enemies of the state. With the collapse of National Socialist Germany as the war progressed, structured society faltered with SS and SD units killing people based less off the law, but rather instead assumptions made in the field by armed bands. At the very eve of the conclusion of the war in late 1944 and 1945, attempts were made by the SS groups in camps to exterminate as many of the Jewish and Slavic prisoners as

²⁸ "Extermination Camps (Vernichtungslager)". 2020. *Yadvashem.Org*.
https://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%206308.pdf.

possible with the goal of preventing the revival of their communities in the event that the war was lost. At labor and concentration camps, camps that did not exist with the sole purpose of immediate extermination, but instead through “extermination by labor” racial groups were worked to death up to the end of the war. In some cases, before abandoning the camps to advancing Allied military personnel, the SS guard complements would either relocate the camp populations to the interior of Germany to keep its slave labor force, or attempt to murder as many racial and political prisoners as possible so that they would not know freedom.²⁹ With the end of the war, the racial policies of Hitler’s Germany would end with him, and racial laws were eliminated.

IV. Race and Foreign Policy

The effect of racial purity and theory on German foreign policy changed as the existence of the German state changed. Imperial German policies in comparison to that of either the Weimar or National Socialist periods shows a stronger emphasis on colonialism-based influence from racial purity, whereas there exists reverberations of the colonial view on race during the frequently unstable Weimar era; however, in the National Socialist period, as brief as it was, there was a virtual abandonment of colonialist racial thoughts, with instead it being completely redone to focus on new enemies of the NSDAP versus relocation of tribal peoples in Africa or civilizing and Christianizing missions in Asia under the Empire. The National Socialist viewpoints had roots in its ideology of race during the Empire, but more in how they treated the people they viewed as racial inferiors, yet far more evolved in regard to how they executed procedural actions against people who existed outside of their People’s Community idea. Imperial Germany lacked much of the codification and definitive racial status that accompanied

²⁹ "Labor And Concentration Camps". 2020. *Yadvashem.Org*.
<https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/about/camps/labor-concentration-camps.html>.

Hitlerian Germany, since much of their racial questions came from outside their borders, and frequently occurred on different continents.

The German Empire enacted racially based foreign policies as it adopted an imperialistic stance after unification in 1871. The Empire's acquisition of territory throughout Africa was inofitself a racial policy as private ventures, like Carl Peter's notice of Royal Patent of Patronage from Kaiser Wilhelm I declaring that the land he secured from the Usagara, Mguru, Useguba, and Ukami via treaties would from thereafter be considered under the jurisdiction of the German Empire.³⁰ As a civilizing mission, the goal of Peters was to expand influence of Germany by asserting dominance in Africa, which had been dominated predominantly by France, Great Britain, and Belgium for hundreds of years prior. Peters acquisition of German East Africa would be followed by other explorers acquiring the land of Damaraland, Cameroons, and Togoland, followed by receiving similar recognition by Wilhelm I of their land.³¹ These regions would be known also as German West Africa and German Southwest Africa, respectivelyIn these lands, however, race became an issue whenever a tribe or native community would revolt against their German colonial leaders.

The greatest, and most sinister, of the anti-tribal actions undertaken by German against natives would be the pacification of the Nama and Herero peoples in German Southwest Africa. Claimed for Germany in 1884, and becoming fully incorporated by 1891, the region had very little settlement during its first few years of colonization with only approximately 3,700 settlers by 1903.³² In this time, the settlers frequently encountered local struggles with the Nama and Herero, the two main tribes of the region, over land and water access. The first commissioner for

³⁰ Snyder, Louis L. 1975. *Documents Of German History*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press.

³¹ Crowe, Eyre. 2020. "Perceptions Of German Foreign Policy In England (January 1, 1907)". *Germanhistorydocs.Ghi-Dc.Org*. http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=1374.

³² "Germany Declares South West Africa A German Protectorate". 2020. *Sahistory.Org.Za*. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/germany-declares-south-west-africa-german-protectorate>.

the region, Heinrich Ernst Goering, was appointed by Chancellor von Bismarck to oversee the colony after its incorporation into the Empire.³³ He allowed for the acquisition of tribal lands by German settlers because of the colonial view that the land was considered empty if it was occupied only by natives and not colonists, which caused issues in the colony as white settlers frequently occupied lands that tribes occupied. This led to the armed uprisings by the Nama and Herero against the German colonists and colonial forces.

Tensions reached a head when the German colonists began pushing for the government to move the Herero off their native lands and onto reservations on barren lands within South West Africa. This prompted the uprising, which began when the Herero tribe attacked a German settlement, killing 150 settlers which set off a brutal three year conflict. While the initial force of colonial troops in Africa was small, the Kaiser sent an additional 14,000 troops under General Lothar von Trotha to put down the Herero and Nama, who aligned together to push the troops off their lands.³⁴ Between the combined forces of Trotha's forces and the colonial troops, the poorly equipped tribes were pushed back into differing parts of the Omaheke Desert where they faced starvation and dehydration due to the harsh conditions of the desert. Trotha, however, issued an extermination order which stated that if any of the people tried to leave the desert, they were to be shot on sight including the women and children, even declaring them no longer German citizens so that they would not be afforded protection of law. As a result, it is estimated that approximately 80% of the Herero people and 50% of the Nama tribe were murdered as a part of this policy.³⁵

³³ Gross, Daniel. 2020. "A Brutal Genocide In Colonial Africa Finally Gets Its Deserved Recognition". *Smithsonian Magazine*.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/brutal-genocide-colonial-africa-finally-gets-its-deserved-recognition-180957073/>.

³⁴ "Herero Tribesmen Captured During The Herero War In German Southwest Africa (1904)". 2020. *Germanhistorydocs.Ghi-Dc.Org*. http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=2180.

³⁵ "Herero And Nama Genocide". 2020. *Ushmm.Org*. <https://www.usmm.org/collections/bibliography/herero-and-nama-genocide>.

Von Trotha's orders for extermination exhibit racial policy because of the fact that since the native Africans were not viewed as people, or even as inhabitants of their own land. Because of this, Trotha was empowered with the ability to order their genocide without consequence as a result of the natives not being viewed as people of equal standing under German law in the colony. This was the first genocide of the 20th Century, and while it was met with public outcry from nations like Great Britain and the German public itself, no one was ever punished for it. Trotha would even go on to serve in the First World War as a commander of troops in the European theater of war. This genocide bore similarities to later National Socialist policies in regard to the people it regarded as racially inferior, such as extermination and imprisonment in forced labor camps after the collapse of the rebellions.³⁶ Racial purity, and how it was defined, deemed the Germans above the native tribes of Africa which endowed them with the mindset that because they viewed the German race as above people of African descent, mass murder was allowable. To the German leadership in Southwest Africa, it is not hard to imagine them viewing the extermination as a positive event because there was no longer any major groups that could halt German colonial expansion in the region.

Imperial German racial views impacted China as well, through its acquisition of colonies and also its approach to the pacification of the Boxers in the Boxer Rebellion. Germany only had one major colony in China, the Jiaozhou Bay and its port Qingdao, which it legally had leased from the Chinese government. However, it was in reality a colony that existed as leased territory on paper only, with a 99-year term limit before expiring.³⁷ As a naval port, the area existed with a large naval and merchant population from Germany, along with a sizeable Chinese population. While there were no laws prohibiting interaction between the two peoples, things like

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Leutner, Mechthild. 2020. "MORE THAN JUST KIAOCHOW BAY: A (NEARLY) FORGOTTEN STORY". <https://www.Goethe.De/Prj/Lat/En/Spu/21750527.Html>. <https://www.goethe.de/prj/lat/en/spu/21750527.html>.

intermarriage were highly frowned upon and could lead to expulsion from German social and business circles, effectively rendering the German in the marriage as ruining their own racial stock. Also, since China technically maintained control over the region, Chinese inhabitants of the region were resistant to German rule, leading to tensions in the region between the German occupiers and Chinese natives. German application of their law to the native Chinese population was viewed very negatively by the natives, and would frequently lead to harsh punishments by the Germans.³⁸ German racial views that made them view the Chinese as lesser people, but natives to a highly lucrative economic region, caused the German authorities to disregard the quality of life of the Chinese so long as they did not negatively interfere with the German mission. Interferences by the Chinese frequently led to harsh reprisals by the Germans. This would contribute to the overall buildup to the Boxer Rebellion in 1899, which pitted Chinese against colonial powers, such as Germans, British, and the US.

The outbreak of the Boxer Rebellion was the culminating point of Western racial views on them being dominant over the Chinese natives. The negative participation of German contribution to the outbreak was racially motivated from the get-go to maintain the economic benefits of the German colony and trade benefits from its ties to both the Chinese governments and other Western powers there. Kaiser Wilhelm II, on the deployment speech to troops being sent to China, is quoted as having said that “may the name German be affirmed by you in such a way in China that no Chinese will ever again dare to look cross-eyed at a German” which shows clearly that the leader of Germany was stating the racial inferiority of the Chinese race in comparison to the Germans.³⁹ Spurred by the assassination of the German ambassador, Baron von

³⁸ Steinmetz, George. 2009. "Qingdao As A Colony: From Apartheid To Civilizational Exchange". *Www-Personal.Umich.Edu*. <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~geostein/docs/Qingdaocolony.pdf>.

³⁹ "Wilhelm II: "Hun Speech" (1900)". 2020. *Germanhistorydocs.Ghi-Dc.Org*. http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=755.

Ketteler, Germany deployed a substantial force to China to help put down the Boxers who sought to remove foreign influence from the country. A German even was appointed to command all of the Western forces in the region, the Field Marshal von Waldersee, who attempted to bring the war to a quick conclusion; however; the collective opinion of foreign troops was that von Waldersee and his orders were far more violent than necessary, such as orders to take no prisoners at certain points.⁴⁰ Many rebelling Boxers and Chinese civilians alike were killed, and the revolt was suppressed, with Germany maintaining its colony in China until the First World War. Of special note, this war occurred four years before the suppression of the Herero in Africa, and Lothar von Trotha served as a high ranking officer on Field Marshal von Waldersee's staff in China before taking command of the African incursion.

Due to the harshness of the von Waldersee's approach to the conduct of the conflict in China, with the overwhelming view of himself and the rest of the Western troops being that they were fighting against a savage force, von Trotha may have applied some of the lessons of conduct in China to the pacification of the Herero. Both were harsh, and both German leaders issued no quarter orders to their troops, which even bore semblance to the speech of Kaiser Wilhelm II's against the native Chinese rising up against the superior German race. This shows the prevailing belief of German racial superiority against non-whites and non-Germans, which emboldened leaders in the field to adopt a similar harsh mentality that existed until the fall of the German Empire. Aggressive stances that dominated the German approach to the suppression of the natives was viewed as particularly harsh by the other members of von Waldersee's military alliance, particularly by the British and the French.

⁴⁰ Kočvar, Jan. 2020. "Germany And The Boxer Uprising In China". *Dspace5.Zcu.Cz*. <https://dspace5.zcu.cz/bitstream/11025/17656/1/Kocvar.pdf>.

The fall of the German Empire in 1918, and rise of the Weimar Republic in 1919, saw a vast change in racial policies in regards to their foreign stance. Weimar's biggest foreign policy issue that dealt with race would be the occupation of the Rhineland by African troops. Because of this, Weimar engaged in a propaganda campaign that made African troops out to be violent against German citizens. But due to the nature of right-wing extremist policies, the Weimar government's campaign against African troops was halted so that it did not appear as radical in the international media.⁴¹ Already viewed as a pariah state by much of the west, the victors of the First World War, the Weimar government did not want to risk alienation from the powers that were major international states any more than Germany already had from four years of war. But due to the precarious existence of the Weimar government, the focus of the Republic's leaders was centered around the clampdown of radical politics and rebuilding the German state after the destruction it dealt from the war. Also, because of the Treaty of Versailles's redistribution of German colonies, Germany no longer had nearly as much exposure to other cultures because it had to focus on internal issues rather than external ones.

The rise of Hitler and the National Socialists refocused the race policies of Germany. With the establishment of the People's Community, National Socialist leaders focused on the expulsion of people it deemed as racial inferiors, or even enemies. It redefined who qualified as a racial enemy, ranging from Jews to Roma and Sinti to Slavic populations. Emigration of Jews and Slavs was highly encouraged in the pre-war era, which led to massive communities of people fleeing to the United States or back to their ancestral homelands. The interwar era saw the growth of anti-Semitic and anti-Slav sentiments amongst the German populace by the propaganda of the National Socialists.

⁴¹ Ibid. Oltmer, J. and Hanewinkel, V., 2020

One of the first race-based foreign policy actions was the occupation of the Sudetenland, and later all of Czechoslovakia. The German ethnic minority in the region had formerly been apart of the German Empire before its dissolution in 1918, and the formation of Czechoslovakia as its own nation, which left a large number of ethnic Germans living in it. Hitler and his foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, sought to reintegrate the region so that the Germans could be apart of the Greater German Reich. When in September 1938, the Munich Agreement allowed for the National Socialists to annex the Sudetenland, the National Socialists pursued a propaganda policy that stated that native Czechs and Slovaks had been oppressing the German populous that resided in the region so that the National Socialists could assert German dominance in the country over the ethnic Slavs.⁴² Doing this, it made it easier for the Germans from Germany proper who migrated to the newly acquired lands to assume control of Slavic-owned businesses and acquire lands easier because of racial policies that placed the Slavic population below that of the ethnic Germans.

Simultaneously, a great push on racial grounds was the expulsion of thousands ethnic Polish Jews from Germany to Poland so that they would be outside of Germany. This was one of the last major racial policies against the Jews that National Socialist Germany enforced because with the outbreak of war in September 1939 emigration was no longer allowed for the Jewish population. This forced emigration was done to coincide with NSDAP racial laws and the People's Community that forced the expulsion of people who did not meet the criteria established by the National Socialists.⁴³ The SS leader, Heinrich Himmler, who also maintained the position of chief of all police forces was able to utilize his role to force out many of the

⁴² "German Foreign Policy, 1933–1945". 2020. *Encyclopedia.Ushmm.Org*.
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/german-foreign-policy-1933-1945>.

⁴³ "Polish Jews Assemble In The Center Of Nuremberg For Evacuation To The Polish Border (October 28, 1938)". 2020. *Germanhistorydocs.Ghi-Dc.Org*. http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=1953.

ethnic Jews and keep them outside of Germany on the Polish-German border area for weeks before Poland could process all the returning Jewish citizens.

After the breakout of the war, the foreign policy of National Socialist Germany became more complex. As more territory became incorporated into the Reich, a larger number of ethnic groups fell under the control of National Socialist law. The extension of the persecution of the Jews became strongest in the eastern territories, but existed heavily in the west as well. Eastern states that fell under control of the German General-Government or Reichskommissariat Ostland, the administrative bodies that oversaw affairs in the newly conquered Eastern territories, like the Baltic states quickly fell into line with NSDAP policies and even contributed to the elimination of their native Jewish populations.⁴⁴ Working in tandem with the SS and its killing squads, the *Einsatzgruppen*, many populations took part in mass genocidal events, like the killing in Riga, Latvia or Babi Yar in Ukraine.⁴⁵ Working with local police groups, the National Socialists were able to enforce their racial policy in conquered territories with little effort by stirring up pre-existing notions that had existed in the regions before their conquest. In the east, many of the programs of killing were undertaken with high levels of success with Latvia being declared Jew-free, and Estonia and Lithuania coming close at the time of the Wannsee Conference in 1942.

In the West, before 1942, most of the Jews that came from occupied and Vichy France, the occupied Low Countries, and Italy were allowed to exist in their nations with limited rights and required to be registered. Many spent times in concentration camps, and large groups were deported to camps in Central and Western Europe, but it was not as easy to implement racial

⁴⁴ "German Administration Of Poland". 2020. *Encyclopedia.Ushmm.Org*.
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/german-administration-of-poland>.

⁴⁵ "Einsatzgruppen (Mobile Killing Units)". 2020. *Encyclopedia.Ushmm.Org*.
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/einsatzgruppen>.

policies against the anti-German elements that the Germans targeted. Having assimilated into their native cultures decades or centuries before the invasions by the National Socialists, many Jewish communities were not readily apparent to their occupiers; thusly, the process of identification was much harder for the SS units that oversaw identification and deportation policies.⁴⁶ Many non-Jews of countries that were occupied by Germany viewed the anti-Jew policies as the policies of invaders, and chose to ignore or even collaborate with Jews, so that they would work together to undermine National Socialist attempts to control them. While the success was limited, numerous lives were saved because of this. Yet, in 1942 the SS began rounding up Jews to be deported to killing centers in eastern Europe, like Chelmno or Belzec.

The killing centers existed as one of the key points to National Socialist racial policy. All of them were built in Reichskommissariat Ost and regions of the General Government, in what is today Belarus, Poland, and Lithuania. Using domestic funds from major corporations and state funds, the government was able to build six death camps which existed with the sole purpose of killing as many racial undesirables far away from the borders of Germany proper.⁴⁷ These camps also provided slave labor forces for factories located in the east to support the production of war material. These camps processed hundreds of thousands of Slavs, Jews, homosexuals, and political prisoners for extermination, with Auschwitz alone killing approximately 1.1 million people in the five years it operated.⁴⁸ Prior to liberation, many camp officials burned documentation of the actual number of people murdered, along with further instructions or orders given during the camp's existence to cover up the crimes that had been committed. With that, it

⁴⁶ "Murder Of The Jews Of Western Europe". 2020. *Yadvashem.Org*.

https://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/about/fate-of-jews/western-europe.html#narrative_info.

⁴⁷ Frost, Natasha. 2020. "Horrors Of Auschwitz: The Numbers Behind WWII's Deadliest Concentration Camp". *HISTORY*. <https://www.history.com/news/auschwitz-concentration-camp-numbers>.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* Frost, Natasha, 2020

made determining the full extent of the crimes committed in response to the racial policies of the Reich and its adherents especially in the foreign regions.

V. Race and Domestic Policy

Domestic policies were influenced heavily by German racial purity and theories driven by its ideology, but like with the foreign policy, domestic policies varied depending on the ruling government and the circumstances that existed. Imperial German domestic policies on race were very open so long as one had their roots in German heritage, as the Empire and its predecessor state of the North German Confederation attempted to allow freedom to all men of German lineage. For instance, in comparison to how the National Socialists when they came to power in 1933 launched a campaign against Judaism as a race, the German Empire emancipated the Jews in German society by issuing a proclamation on the freedom of religion for all within the empire. As a predominantly Catholic and Protestant country, the freedom of religion to Jews meant that in the eyes of the law they had equality in the eyes of the government.⁴⁹ Coming before some of its neighbors, Imperial Germany allowed for greater domestic religious freedom for its people as it did not view religious background as a racial category. However, amongst staunchly Christian and conservative groups there existed animosity towards Poles, who made up a significant portion of the eastern part of the nation, and Jews, especially the ones from Poland. Prominent historian and politician Heinrich von Treitschke writes about how Poles and Jews are the plague of Germany as it became more liberal in its approaches to the rights of its citizens.⁵⁰ This reflected how large portions of German society still had apprehension towards non-German

⁴⁹ Legal Emancipation Of The Jews (July 3, 1869)". 2020. *Germanhistorydocs.Ghi-Dc.Org*. http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=1349&language=english.

⁵⁰ v. Treitschke, Heinrich. 2020. "Heinrich Von Treitschke Pronounces, "The Jews Are Our Misfortune" (November 15, 1879)". *Germanhistorydocs.Ghi-Dc.Org*. http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1799.

racial elements. This served as the base for the future growth of anti-Semitism to radical levels in Germany, which would bolster NSDAP principles after the fall of the empire.

With the fall of the Empire in 1918, the Weimar government assumed the momentous task of rebuilding a war-weary nation. Because the population had been decimated by the First World War, many leading politicians and intellectuals turned to eugenics to better the German race while it was weakened by the war. Intellectuals argued that encouraging positive growth of preferred characteristics would rebuild the nation so that it would be stronger than it was before. With the decrease in German population, academics and politicians “[serving] on government committees and conducting research on heredity, experts warned that if the nation did not produce more fit children, it was headed for extinction” causing concern at many different levels of German society.⁵¹ This led to the government encouraging families with desirable German traits, like height, strength, or intelligence, to reproduce so that the German population would be rebuilt stronger than before, while also preserving the German racial purity. However, this also meant that people with non-desirable traits, like those with physical or mental handicaps being recommended for sterilization.⁵² Racial hygiene became important to the government so that only people with traits that were strong and could ensure the preservation of the German race would be continued, whereas those who had German citizenship, but not of German ethnic background, were encouraged to not reproduce. Many in state institutions were sterilized so that they could not reproduce.

Popular support for eugenic policies that supported racial theory worked in tandem with the government to endorse and implement programs that furthered eugenicist ideology in

⁵¹ "Science As Salvation: Weimar Eugenics, 1919–1933". 2020. *Encyclopedia.Ushmm.Org*.
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/science-as-salvation-weimar-eugenics-1919-1933>.

⁵² Hau, Michael. 2020. "Constitutional Therapy And Clinical Racial Hygiene In Weimar And Nazi Germany". *US National Library Of Medicine, National Institute For Health*.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4887605/>.

Weimar Germany. Hans Harmsen, a prominent physician, purported eugenic beliefs, like selective abortion as a social welfare policy because not only would it ease the burden of a mother who was incapable of raising a child, but also relieved the state burden of taking care of a child who was at risk of being handicapped.⁵³ Even people who held religious occupations, like priests and ministers, took stands in support of eugenics, so long that it did not threaten existing life. Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, a theologian and public health expert, argued that eugenic planning by the government to eliminate unwanted traits from society is not negative, but does turn negative when the concept of euthanasia is applied.⁵⁴ Passive support like this allowed for the common person to find a reason to support eugenic policies and racial hygiene, as long as it was on their terms. While the government never turned to euthanasia because of it being immoral, questions on sterilization were frequently present. Coupled with the support given by trusted experts, like Harmsen or von Bodelschwingh, it made the idea of eugenics appealing to common people who were inclined to trust educated people on topics. These ideas were adopted by both right and left wing parties, like the NSDAP, which would be incorporated into the party doctrine for later application when they achieved power.

The National Socialist seizure of power in 1933 brought domestic eugenics and racial thought into the centerfold of the lives of every German. The first targets of the National Socialist race laws were the Jews and the handicapped. Sixth months after their rise to power, Deputy Führer Rudolf Heß issued a proclamation stating that people suffering from “[mental retardation, schizophrenics, epileptics, and chronic alcoholics were subject to forced

⁵³ Harmsen, Hans. 2020. "Hans Harmsen, "Contemporary Questions Of Eugenics" (1931)".

Germanhistorydocs.Ghi-Dc.Org. http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=4498.

⁵⁴ v. Bodelschwingh, Friedrich. 2020. "Friedrich Von Bodelschwingh, Lecture In Lübeck On Questions Relating To Eugenics (1929)". *Germanhistorydocs.Ghi-Dc.Org*.

http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=5588.

sterilization” which were all labeled as hereditary diseases.⁵⁵ It was possible for one to appeal sterilization, however unless someone had a connection to a higher ranking party member it was very unlikely that the appeal would take effect. Additionally, a propaganda campaign began to turn public opinion towards allowing sterilization, and later the euthanasia program that developed. Propaganda pieces would depict those with hereditary diseases as drains on the German state, and concurrently the German people, meaning that any person detrimental to the whole is not entitled to reproducing, or living in some cases.⁵⁶ Aktion T4, the program to exterminate those who were institutionalized in mental wards or state hospitals, came after and eliminated the vast majority of National Socialist Germany’s handicapped while not directly letting their families know. Many were told that their loved one died of injuries or disease at their institution. Policies like this would develop into how the National Socialists would attack Jews and other racially undesirable people within the Reich.

As the National Socialists took power their racially motivated attack on the Jewish community commenced. At first, the Jews were released from positions within schools and the government while their job prospects were limited as the National Socialist reign continued. Pogroms and boycotts of Jewish businesses occurred regularly, with both sanctioned and unsanctioned attacks on synagogues and other holy places. Culminating in the revocation of Jewish citizenship, first in the Law on the Revocation of Naturalisations and the Deprivation of the German Citizenship in 1933 and later in the 25 November 1941 Eleventh Decree to the Law on the Citizenship of the Reich, which removed the citizenship of any person practicing Judaism

⁵⁵ Heß, Rudolf. 2020. "Law For The Prevention Of Offspring With Hereditary Diseases (July 14, 1933)". *Germanhistorydocs.Ghi-Dc.Org*. http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1521.

⁵⁶ "Comparison Of Daily Living Costs For An Individual With A Hereditary Disease And For A Healthy Family (From The Slide Series "Blood And Soil") (C. 1935)". 2020. *Germanhistorydocs.Ghi-Dc.Org*. http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=1948&language=english.

or people who was not residing within the Reich's borders.⁵⁷ Actions like this were undertaken to remove any constraints on forcibly deporting German Jews to concentration or death camps outside Germany's borders without any legal issues dealing with citizenship. In doing this, the Jews effectively became stateless, as did anyone who was viewed as racially impure, such as Slavs residing in German borders who were not citizens by birth. People who were caught within German borders who did not belong to the National Socialist-defined German race, then the SS or the *Geheime Staatspolizei*, the Secret State Police, would arrest that person and anyone accused of helping them. Frequently, the consequence of being caught was either deportation to a camp or death for being in violation of the Reich's laws. Mixed marriages ended in a similar manner as citizenship, with all being legally annulled, with failure to recognize that being considered a violation of law with consequences similar to that of people on non-German blood being captured within German borders.

VI. Synthesis of Thought and Future Research

German racial purity is a highly complex idea in the period of 1871 to 1945, with the definition frequently changing due to who maintains power at that specific time, along with the geopolitical circumstances that Germany was engaged in. While the governments of the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and National Socialist Germany all targeted different groups of people and applied racial theory in different ways, all utilized eugenics in similar methods. The growth and preservation of German blood was the goal of all three, yet by utilizing eugenics and racial hygiene as governmental policies, people who did not meet the criteria of what the ruling government established were at jeopardy for being imprisoned, sterilized, or murdered. Belief in

⁵⁷ Johnson, Stanley. 2020. "Explained: Nazi Laws Which Stripped Jewish Germans Of Citizenship, And The Laws Restoring It". *Passportia*.
<https://passportia.org/blog/5195-explained-nazi-laws-which-stripped-jewish-germans-of-citizenship-and-the-laws-restoring-it.php>.

racial purity also led to mass killings of Jews, Slavs, Africans, and Asiatic peoples because the government supported policies that put them racially below the German race. Even Weimar, which did not act to have any communities killed, still attempted to racially plan the development of the German ethnic community. In doing so, people who were considered inferior were requested by the government to not reproduce and heavily suggested that they should be sterilized.

Moving forward, an in-depth analysis of specific policies to see how they were formed and their specific outcomes could prove insightful. As an example, looking into the Nuremberg Laws, its authors, addendums, and initial reception versus that over time in the National Socialist period alone could prove interesting as a highly focused item of research. Another area could be the ways that other countries responded to actions taken by the German government due to racial policy could have interesting results. Looking at the reaction of other nations to the genocide of the Herero and Nama may provide insight into how others viewed the German actions, such as if they were viewed as intolerable acts or just extreme approaches to colonial pacification of native populations. The perspectives of other non-white communities on German actions against the tribes in its colonies, such as how the Chinese viewed the genocide of the Herero after having the Boxer Rebellion put down, could serve as insight into how colonized people viewed imperialistic actions against other colonized people.

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