

LESSON 1

STUDENT READING: THE NAZI STATE

A poster intended to generate excitement about the Berlin Olympics shows Adolf Hitler and Reich Sports Office Director Hans von Tschammer und Osten studying the site of the 1936 Berlin Summer Games. – USHMM, courtesy of John Loaring



In 1931, the [International Olympic Committee](#) chose Germany to host the 1936 Winter and Summer Olympics. The decision symbolized Germany's return to the international community after its defeat in the First World War.

The liberal democracy of the [Weimar Republic](#) collapsed shortly afterwards. By January 1933, National Socialist (Nazi) leader Adolf Hitler had been appointed Chancellor. On March 23, 1933, the Enabling Act was forced through the Reichstag, the German parliament, turning the fragile democracy into a [fascist](#) dictatorship.

According to [Nazi](#) ideology, Germans and those of northern European descent were considered "[Aryans](#)" and members of the "master race." Jews, along with Roma and Sinti ("Gypsies") and Africans, were classified as "inferior" and declared enemies of the German state.

Hitler did not initially want Germany to host the Olympics because he disagreed with the Olympic ideals of international cooperation and peace. However, the Minister of [Propaganda](#), Joseph Goebbels, convinced Hitler that the Olympics were an opportunity to gain international approval for the Nazi government. Hitler became a strong supporter of the Olympic Games, while the Propaganda Ministry set up a special committee to promote the Olympics.

Meanwhile, Hitler's government created laws and policies that excluded Jews from all areas of public life, including sports:

- On April 1, 1933, the Nazis declared a [boycott](#) of Jewish businesses, with guards standing in front of Jewish-owned businesses and stores to prevent customers from entering. This was an attempt to remove Jews from the cultural and commercial life of Germany and cultivate popular acceptance for further anti-Jewish measures.
- On April 7, 1933, the government created the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service to exclude Jews and political opponents from university and governmental positions. More laws were created during the following weeks to remove Jewish lawyers, judges, doctors and teachers from their posts.

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STUDENT READING: THE NAZI STATE (CONTINUED)

- On April 25, 1933, the Nazi Sports Office ordered public sport and gymnastic organizations to implement an “Aryans only” policy. Jewish athletes were excluded from German sports clubs and not permitted to compete against non-Jews.
- In the fall of 1935, the Nazi government implemented the Nuremberg Laws. The laws classified Jews as a race, instead of as a religious group, and stripped them of basic civil rights. Even non-practicing Jews or those who had previously converted to Christianity were defined as Jews by the Nuremberg Laws.

Aryan: Term perverted by the Nazis to mean a so-called master race. The idealized “Aryan” was blond, blue-eyed, tall and muscular. The original term refers to a people speaking an Indo-European dialect.

Boycott: A form of activism involving the act of abstaining from using, buying, or interacting with a person, organization or country as an expression of protest, usually for political reasons.

Fascism: Ideology supporting a form of government based on a one-party dictatorship, militarism, ultra-nationalism, absolute conformity, and intolerance for civil and human rights.

International Olympic Committee (IOC): Founded in 1894, the IOC is an international, non-governmental, non-profit organization that is in charge of the organization of the Summer and Winter Olympic games.

Nazi: A member of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP) founded in 1919 and brought to power in 1933 under Adolf Hitler. It can also be used as an adjective to describe something of or pertaining to the Nazis.

Propaganda: A form of communication designed to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes or behaviour of its audience. Promotes biased information, ideas or practices and is transmitted in speeches, slogans, posters, newspapers, films, etc.

Weimar Republic: The parliamentary democracy that was established in Germany in 1919 (after Germany lost the First World War) and ended in 1933 when Hitler passed the Enabling Act to change the German government into a dictatorship.