

3 WHY DID HITLER HATE THE JEWS?

CHECK OUT THE LINK

How did the Nazis treat German Jews before the war? (Chapter 4)

Adolf Hitler, ruler of Germany from 1933–45, and his Nazi Party murdered more than half of Europe's 11 million Jews in the Holocaust. The vast majority of these murders took place in just four years from 1941 to 1945. Hitler was able to do this because his feelings of hatred towards the Jews (known as anti-Semitism) were shared by many other Germans and peoples in Europe. Anti-Semitism was not invented by Hitler or the Germans. It existed everywhere in Europe and had been around for hundreds of years.

MEDIEVAL ANTI-SEMITISM

The origins of anti-Semitism go back to the early Christian period. Early Christians hated the Jews because they mistakenly blamed them for killing Jesus Christ. In the twelfth century, Christian hatred was made worse by what is called the 'blood libel'. This is the untrue story that Jews sacrificed Christian children as part of their religious beliefs. Jews across all of Europe were sometimes murdered when Christian children disappeared or were found dead.

There are further examples of anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages. Jews were sometimes made to wear a yellow badge and were forced to live in separate parts of towns and cities called ghettos. Eventually, the rulers of England, France, Germany, Portugal and Spain ordered all the Jews to leave their countries. Many moved to Poland and Russia but persecution here led millions to move to the USA at the end of the nineteenth century.

MODERN ANTI-SEMITISM

By the early years of the twentieth century, anti-Semitism had become a race issue as well as a religious one. **Anti-Semites** now argued that Jews came from a lower race. This was a serious matter for Jews. While in medieval times, Jews who converted to Christianity and gave up Judaism were welcomed by Christians such as Luther (see **Source A**), to modern anti-Semites, converting to Christianity made no difference. Hitler shared this view and the Nazis treated Christian Jews with the same hatred as other Jews.

NEW WORDS

ANTI-SEMITE: a person who hates and persecutes Jews.

SYNAGOGUE: the Jewish place of worship.

SOURCE A

Martin Luther was a German monk. His views on Jews, shown here, written in 1543, were shared by many Christians:

The Jews are nothing but thieves and robbers and everything which they eat or wear has been stolen from us. Thus they live from day to day, together with wife and child, by theft and robbery. We let them get rich on our sweat and blood, while we remain poor and they suck the marrow from our bones. What shall we Christians do with this rejected and condemned people, the Jews?

First, set fire to their **synagogues** or schools and bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn. Second, I advise that their houses also be destroyed.

▲ *From Luther's Works, Volume 47: The Christian in Society IV.*

SOURCE B

Like leeches, the Jews slowly suck the blood from the pores of the people ... The Jew is a parasite, a sponger who, like an evil virus, spreads over wider and wider areas ... The effect is also like that of a vampire ... wherever he lives the people who welcome him are bound to be bled to death sooner or later.

A From *Mein Kampf* ('My Struggle') by Adolf Hitler, written in 1924.

A cartoon from a Nazi ► textbook for schoolchildren. It shows Jews being forced to leave the school they share with German Aryan children. The Jews are shown on the bottom left of the picture.

HITLER'S ANTI-SEMITISM

In the 1920s and 1930s Hitler blamed the Jews for Germany's defeat in the First World War and the humiliating Treaty of Versailles which followed it. Hitler had begun to hate the Jews during his years in Vienna before the First World War. He noticed how some Jews dressed differently, spoke their own language and had their own religion. To Hitler, they were just *different* and couldn't be 'proper' Germans. The Germans, according to Hitler, were a pure northern European race called Aryans. For Hitler, Germany could only become a great nation again if it remained racially pure. To do this, all traces of the Jews must be removed from German life. Hitler had similar views about Slav peoples (e.g. Russians and Poles) and blacks (see Chapter 8).

SOURCE C



- Q**
1. Why did some Christians hate the Jews?
 2. What examples of anti-Semitism can you find in Source A?
 3. In what ways are the attitudes towards the Jews in Sources A and B similar?
 4. Look at Source C. How has the artist drawn the Jews compared with the Aryan children?
 5. Why do you think Hitler's ideas about the Jews were so easily accepted by so

many Germans? Think about:

- The views of Christians about Jesus and the 'blood libel'.
- How many Germans felt after their defeat in the First World War.
- Hitler's promise to make Germany a great nation again.

Check out the link:

Look at Chapter 4. How did Hitler's views affect how Jews were treated once he came to power?