

Reading 6A

Question:

Choose two beliefs of the Nazi Party. Why might these beliefs have appealed to some Germans?

THE BELIEFS OF THE NAZI PARTY

The National Socialist German Workers Party (known as the Nazi Party) was the most nationalistic of the many German political parties of the Weimar Republic. The handbook of the party began with the fundamental rule of the *Fuehrer* or Leader Principle. This stated that all power was “in the leader (*Fuehrer*)” who had to be obeyed at all costs.

The core of the Nazi Party ideology, its collection of ideas and beliefs, was exclusion. According to the Nazis, all those who were not “of pure Aryan blood” were excluded from the party and even from German citizenship. This policy was based on the racist philosophy known as Aryanism. The word “Aryan” or “Nordic” was applied to those who were white-skinned, light-haired and light-eyed. Nazi scientists established other criteria for Aryan status: skull size, height, ancestral religion, energy and strength. These people were said to be “pure” descendants of the ancient Greeks and Romans. “Pure” meant that they had not bred outside their own race.

The Aryans’ most important characteristic was a shared “race-soul.” Quiet, strong, innocent and good, their mission was to defeat evil. In this fantasy, the bearers of evil in the world had been and continued to be the Jews, referred to as a “race.” Jews epitomized mixing of races and, therefore, weakening of the “blood.” As a “weak race,” they were the bearers of disease and would ultimately destroy the healthy and innocent Aryan race-soul.

Aryanism insisted that all racial characteristics were determined internally, by the soul and the “blood,” and not by environment or culture. Therefore, Jews would remain Jews no matter how long they had lived with Germans and no matter what religion they or their ancestors had adopted. Aryans, as long as they avoided marrying Jews, would remain Aryans no matter what.

In a pure Aryan state, Jews would be treated as foreigners and would not have the right to vote. All their civil rights under German law would also be removed from them. Thus, Jews would not be able to count on police protection. They would not be able to appeal to the law courts for any injustice done to them. They would not have the right to attend schools or participate as equals in any part of society.

The Nazis insisted that the Versailles Treaty must be rejected and all reparations ended. They believed that Germany must once again take a position as a strong and forceful power in the world. One of Germany’s main missions would be to fight Communism.

According to the Nazi views, Germans must learn again what it meant to be a “good” German: obedience to authority and unquestioning devotion to traditional German values.

All Germans should be reeducated: women should be in the home raising children; men should cultivate the “manly virtues” as soldiers or workers for the Fatherland. Nazi leaders claimed the modern world was too permissive. It was filled with corrupt politics, pornography, sensual art and literature and sexual promiscuity. Such modern things were to be combated.

Hitler offered the Nazi ideology to mass audiences. He skillfully combined notions of German nationalism with fears of foreign, communist or “racial” corruption. He presented the myth of the “Aryan race,” and he defined its members as Uebermenschen or “overmen” or “supermen.” The super-race, according to Hitler, was destined to dominate the world because of its purity and strength. He believed the world was governed by a kind of jungle law. In such a world, the strongest and purest would naturally triumph.

According to Hitler, the danger to the “Aryan race” came from its opposite, the “Jewish race.” He believed that by mixing and polluting the blood of the “Aryans,” Jews had “infiltrated” German culture, politics and thinking. The Jews, he said, had been the underlying cause of the German defeat in World War I. They were responsible for Germany’s loss of territory or *Lebensraum* or “living space.”

It followed from his racial theories of life that in order to save the “Aryan race” and ultimately the world, “inferior races” like the Jews had to be first isolated and the eliminated. The beliefs of the Nazi Party became the policies of the Nazi state.