

Handout

Notes on the Growth of Nazi Germany, 1933–1939

1. The Nazi ideology of “race and space” inspired their plans for Germany’s expansion throughout Europe, their desire to acquire new “living space” for the so-called Aryan race.
2. In 1938, the Nazis took advantage of inaction from world leaders and annexed Austria and part of Czechoslovakia (known as the Sudetenland), two areas with a large number of people who considered themselves of German descent.
3. In 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a nonaggression pact (an agreement not to attack each other) and divided up Poland and the Baltic countries between them.
4. In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland and quickly defeated the Polish army. This was the beginning of World War II.
5. Hitler issued the order: “Poland is to be depopulated and settled with Germans.” Therefore, the Nazis divided Poland into two parts. One part (the General Government) was designated for Poles, who the Nazis believed were an inferior race to Aryans, and for Jews. The other part (the Warthegau) was adjacent to Germany and designated for “true Germans.”
6. The Germans expelled hundreds of thousands of Poles, Jews, and Sinti and Roma from the Warthegau to the General Government and gave their homes and property to “Aryan” Germans. Jews were confined to ghettos.