How successful were Nazi policies at reducing unemployment?

Miss Shanks

Why did Hitler want to reduce unemployment?

When **Hitler** became **Chancellor** on the 30th of January 1933, unemployment was extremely high. **5 million** German people, roughly **25%** of the German population who could work, were **unemployed. Hitler** was concerned that if people were suffering **poor living conditions** and he could not help them then they may choose to support his opposition, the **Communist Party (KPD). Hitler** also believed that unemployed workers were **a waste of resources** and **caused problems within society**. Therefore he wanted to increase the number of people employed within Germany. By 1939 unemployment had decreased significantly from **5 million in 1933** to approximately **half a million by 1939. But how did the Nazis do this?**

The Reich Labour Service (RAD)

The Reich Labour Service (RAD) was set up in **1933** and gave paid work for the unemployed. The **RAD** was made **compulsory in July 1935** for **all men aged between 18 and 25**. The **RAD** removed thousands from the national unemployment figures. By 1935 the number of people in the **RAD** had reached **422,000.** The **RAD** provided men to **repair roads** and to complete other projects such as **draining marshes to be used for farmland** and **planting trees.** However, the **RAD** was not particularly popular. Workers **wore uniforms** similar to that of soldiers, they lived in **uncomfortable camps**, did **military drills and parades** as well as work. One visitor to a Labour Service camp in 1938 said the only difference between the **RAD** and the army was that the **RAD** carried spades whereas soldiers carried rifles. People in the **RAD** were also unhappy because of **low wages, long hours** of work, **poor food** and **poor working conditions.** By the mid 1930s there were still **half a million 'unemployed'** people in the **RAD** who did not show on official statistics.

Job-creation schemes

Hitler wanted to create jobs through **government spending** on **construction projects** such as building **autobahns** (motorways), **public buildings** and **sports facilities**. In 1933, **18 billion marks** were spent on these schemes, rising to **37 billion marks** by 1938, which was a massive expense for the government to maintain long term. The Nazis planned to build a **7,000km network** to improve transport around Germany. The **autobahns** which would be built would provide jobs, more than **125,000 men were employed** to build **autobahns** by 1935. Building **autobahns** would also improve the efficiency of German industry by increasing the speed at which goods could cross the country as well as allowing the quick movement of German troops. Public works such as these created many jobs in the construction industry. Better roads and bridges also meant quicker and cheaper transport for German industry (business) and agriculture (farming). This helped to boost the sale of German goods at home and abroad, creating even more jobs throughout Germany. In addition, huge public buildings were constructed, for example the **Olympic stadium in Berlin in 1936.** However, by 1938 only approximately **3,000km** of **autobahns** had been built.

Rearmament

Hitler was determined to build up the armed forces to be prepared for a war; this massively reduced unemployment. The German military had been limited as a result of the terms of the **Treaty of Versailles.** The reintroduction of **conscription** (forcing men to join the army) in **1935** meant that thousands of young men were now employed in military service. **All men aged between 18 and 35** were **conscripted** to complete **two years** of military service. Therefore, the army grew from **100,000 in 1933 to 1.4 million by 1939.**

Billions of marks were spent **building tanks**, **ships** and **aircrafts**. In 1933, **3.5 billion marks** were spent on rearmament which had increased to a huge amount in comparison, **26 billion marks** by 1939. This caused employment to increase within these industries within this period, as men were now needed to **work in factories** to produce these goods. For example, there were only **4,000 people employed in the aircraft construction** industry in 1933, but by 1935 this had **increased to 72,000 people**. However, the men in the armed forces and those in industries linked to preparing Germany for war **would not be needed in peacetime**; therefore, these jobs would no longer exist; at least not at this scale.

Invisible unemployment

It can be argued that the Nazis **did not** actually reduce unemployment. Instead, the Nazis just found a way to reduce the **number of people recorded as unemployed** in the official statistics. This is referred to as **invisible unemployment**: unemployment existed but it just was not seen! There were many reasons to explain how the statistics may not be entirely accurate. **Women,** such as doctors and teachers, **were dismissed from the professions** or encouraged by loans to leave their jobs, like the loan given as part of the **Law for the Encouragement of Marriage in 1933**, which was given on the condition that women would give up their job.

Jews were also **forced out of employment**, especially in professions such as **medicine, teaching and law.** Both women and Jews were not classed as unemployed and therefore **were not included in official government statistics.** Many **opponents** of the Nazis were sent to **concentration camps** and as a result, they did not count on the figures. Finally, in 1935 the Nazis **changed the way they recorded** certain figures to do with unemployment. For example, people who could only find **part-time work were counted as fully employed.**

Method used	Description	Evidence it <u>was</u> a success	Evidence it was <u>not</u> a success
Reich Labour Service (RAD)			
Job-creation schemes *(Autobahns)*			
Rearmament			

Glossary

Autobahn - A German motorway.

Conscription - Compulsory (forced) military service for a particular amount of time.

Invisible unemployment - Unemployed people who did not appear on official unemployment statistics.

Rearmament - Increasing the military and the production of weapons.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did Hitler want to reduce unemployment?
2. Why would building autobahns help to reduce unemployment?
3. How did rearmament help to reduce unemployment?
4. Why do some historians dispute the accuracy of Nazi official statistics for unemployment?
5. **Challenge question:** How far do you agree that methods used by the Nazis to reduce unemployment were a success?

You could use the following sentences to help structure your answer

It could be argued that Nazi methods to reduce unemployment were a success. This is because...

However, it could be argued that the methods used were not a complete success. For example...

Overall, I mostly agree/disagree that...