

Rebirth of the Reich land

Level 2 | Intermediate

1 Key vocabulary

Match the words with the definitions:

1. Comeback
 2. Holocaust
 3. Allied
 4. Disillusionment
 5. Resemble
 6. Skinheads
 7. Media
 8. Guilty
-
- a. belonging to the countries that fought against Germany in World War II
 - b. radio, television, newspapers, the internet and so on
 - c. to be similar to something
 - d. a period when someone or something becomes popular again
 - e. ashamed and sorry because you have done something wrong
 - f. the organised killing of millions of Jews and other people during World War II
 - g. the disappointed feeling you have when you discover that something is not as good as you believed it was
 - h. young men whose hair is completely cut off, especially those who are members of violent right-wing groups

2 Find the information

Find the answers to these questions in the article.

1. Where is Saxon Switzerland?
2. What is the NPD?
3. When did Adolf Hitler come to power?
4. How many people died in the bombing of Dresden?
5. How many MPs does the NPD have in the parliament of Saxony?
6. How many Germans are unemployed?

Now look in the text and check your answers.

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Luke Harding

Saxon Switzerland is one of the most picturesque regions in Germany. Until recently this region in former communist East Germany was known as a centre for walking and kayaking. Now it is famous for something else: as Germany's new Nazi-land. Sixty years after the end of the Third Reich and the Second World War, Germany's far right political party is coming back.

In Saxon Switzerland it has made a strong comeback. In federal elections in the Saxony region last September, the neo-Nazi National party of Germany (NPD) won 9.2% of the vote, giving it 12 MPs in the new Saxon parliament in Dresden. Since then the NPD has tried to get publicity -- for example, last month its members walked out of the parliament during a one-minute silence for the victims of the Holocaust in the Second World War. Last weekend the party and its supporters marched in memory of the 35,000 Germans killed during the attack on Dresden 60 years ago by Allied bombers. According to Holger Apfel, the NPD's 33-year-old leader, the allied attack on Dresden during February 13-14, 1945, was a war crime.

Most German politicians have been surprised by the rise of the NPD but this rise has come during a period of mass unemployment, with more than 5 million Germans out of work. Many people no longer trust the main political parties. Edmund Stoiber, the conservative leader of Bavaria's CSU party, recently said that present-day Germany was beginning to resemble 1932, when mass unemployment helped Hitler seize power the following year.

Frieder Haase, the mayor of Koenigstein, a town 30km south of Dresden, said he was sure that German history wasn't repeating itself. "I'm here to try to stop 1933 from happening again. That is why I'm standing here," he said. "If it happened, I would be the first person to leave." Koenigstein, with a population of 3,200, is a small town in the heart of Saxon Switzerland. During last September's elections almost 20% of its population voted for the NPD. Who, then, are the NPD's supporters? "They look like you and me. They are completely normal," says Haase, an independent. "They work on building sites. They are women shop assistants. They don't look like skinheads."

The German media has given several explanations for the NPD's rise. They include the fact that Saxony was communist until 1989; the unemployment rate of 18%; and disillusionment with Germany's red-green government in Berlin. But while German politicians keep arguing about economic reforms, the NPD has quietly built up local support. Its candidates in important elections are well-known people. And it has carefully built up support among its key supporters - the young - with barbecues, discos and canoeing trips.

The NPD's new MPs don't look like skinheads either. They wear suits; they are in their 30s; and they are extremely polite. Speaking at his office in Dresden's parliament building, Holger Apfel says that other parties made a classic mistake: they didn't take him seriously. "We have very good local structures" he says. Other parliamentarians in Dresden have responded to the NPD by trying to ignore them. The Greens turn their backs whenever an NPD member gets up to speak. German television stations refuse to

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interview Apfel. Still, the NPD's views are popular with some German voters – and above all its argument that it is time Germans stopped feeling guilty about being German. “Why should I not feel proud of being German?” says Peter Marx of the NPD.

Haase and other Koenigstein citizens are trying to fight the town's reputation as a neo-Nazi centre. Last November someone broke the windows of the shop belonging to Koenigstein's Vietnamese grocer, Herr Minh. The NPD says that many of Germany's problems are because of

"foreigners" and Minh is one of only two non-Germans in Koenigstein. "Most people round here are very nice," Minh says. Afterwards locals collected €1,000 to buy him a new window. "The Nazi period is not going to happen again," Haase says. "In 1933 Germany was a broken country, the war had been lost, and then a big, powerful man came on the scene - Adolf Hitler. Things are different now."

The Guardian Weekly 18-02-2005, page 20

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3 Comprehension check

Are these statements True or False according to the text?

1. More than one fifth of the people of Koenigstein voted for the NPD.
2. There are a lot of foreigners in Koenigstein.
3. The NPD regards the bombing of Dresden as a war crime.
4. The NPD gets most of its support from elderly people.
5. NPD MPs look like skinheads.
6. Other members of the Saxon parliament try to ignore the NPD.
7. The other parties take the NPD very seriously.
8. The NPD has a majority in the Saxon parliament.

4 Vocabulary - collocations

Match the verbs with the nouns. Check your answers in the text.

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. to make | a. an explanation |
| 2. to seize | b. support |
| 3. to win | c. power |
| 4. to make | d. a suit |
| 5. to turn | e. a vote |
| 6. to give | f. a comeback |
| 7. to wear | g. one's back |
| 8. to build up | h. a mistake |

5 Vocabulary

Complete the table:

	Verb	Noun		Verb	Noun
1.	explain	_____	2.	repeat	_____
3.	employ	_____	4.	surprise	_____
5.	trust	_____	6.	seize	_____
7.	argue	_____	8.	respond	_____

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6 Grammar focus - reported speech

Look at this example from the text:

Edmund Stoiber recently said that present-day Germany was beginning to resemble 1932.

His actual words were; “Present-day Germany is beginning to resemble 1932”.

Report these statements by the mayor of Koenigstein in the same way as the example above, using an appropriate past form. Begin with “He said”

1. “I will be the first to leave”.
2. “They look like you and me”.
3. “They are completely normal”.
4. “I’m here to stop 1933 from happening again”.
5. “Many of them work on building sites or as shop assistants”.
6. “History will not repeat itself”.

7 Discussion

Should neo-Nazi parties be banned or should everyone have the right of free speech?