

Rebirth of the Reich land

Level 3 | Advanced

1 Key vocabulary

Use these words from the text to fill the gaps in the sentences below:

comeback mourn disillusionment underestimate
stunt resonance stronghold resemble

1. If you _____ when someone dies, you feel very sad that they have died and you express this in public.
2. A _____ is a silly or unusual action performed to attract public attention.
3. If something _____ something else, it looks almost the same.
4. A _____ is a period when someone or something becomes popular again.
5. If you _____ something, you do not take it seriously enough.
6. _____ is the disappointed feeling you have when you discover something is not as good as you had believed.
7. _____ is an emotional effect produced by something that reminds you of something else.
8. In political terms, a _____ is a place where you enjoy strong support.

2 What do you know?

1. Where does the German government sit?
2. In what year did Adolf Hitler come to power in Germany?
3. In what year did the bombing of Dresden take place?
4. How many people died in the bombing of Dresden?
5. What is the name of the neo-Nazi party in modern Germany?
6. In what year did the Third Reich end?

Now look in the text and check your answers.

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Luke Harding

It is one of Germany's most picturesque regions. Germans call it Saxon Switzerland. 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 is back in business.

It has staged a remarkable comeback here in Saxon Switzerland. In federal elections in Saxony 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 staged a series of parliamentary stunts -- for example, walking out last month during a one-minute silence for Holocaust victims. Last weekend the party and its supporters carried out a "funeral march" to mourn the 35,000 Germans killed during the raid 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.

The NPD's rise has caught most German politicians by surprise. But it comes against a background of mass unemployment, with more than 5 million Germans out of work and disillusionment with the main parties increasing. 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

confident 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 differing explanations for the NPD's rise. They include the fact that the communists ran the area until 1989; the unemployment rate of 18%; and disillusionment with Germany's red-green government in Berlin. But while German politicians have argued endlessly about economic reforms, the NPD has quietly built up its local base. Since the late 90s it has fielded well-known candidates for key elections. And it has carefully gathered support among its core 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 underestimated him. "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 interview Apfel. Still, the NPD's views find

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a resonance among some German voters – and above all its argument that it is time Germans stopped feeling guilty about being, well, German. “Young people are fed up with being told: ‘Guilt, guilt, guilt.’ Why should I feel any less proud of being German?” says Peter Marx of the NPD.

Haase and other Koenigstein citizens are doing their best to counteract the town's reputation as a neo-Nazi stronghold. Last November someone broke the windows of the shop belonging to Koenigstein's Vietnamese grocer, Herr Minh. Although the NPD blames many of Germany's problems on “foreigners”, 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. A short walk away is the Crime Store, a clothing shop popular with the far-right. Outside someone has sprayed an anti-Nazi slogan. “The Nazi phenomenon is not going to happen again,” Haase predicts. “In 1933 Germany was broken, the war had been lost, and along came a big, powerful man -- Adolf Hitler. Things are different now.”

The Guardian Weekly 18-02-2005, page 20

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3 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer:

1. According to the author, what was the main reason for the rise of Adolf Hitler?
 - a. Guilt.
 - b. Economic factors.
 - c. Mass unemployment.

2. What has been the NPD's most successful tactic?
 - a. The unemployment rate in former East Germany.
 - b. The fact that it has built up local support.
 - c. The fact that it blames most of Germany's problems on "foreigners".

3. What is the NPD's view of the bombing of Dresden?
 - a. It was part of the Holocaust.
 - b. It was a war crime.
 - c. It was an act of disillusionment.

4. Which of these statements is correct, according to the text?
 - a. Most people in Saxon Switzerland support the NPD.
 - b. Many German politicians have been surprised by the support for the NPD.
 - c. The NPD enjoys national support in Germany.

5. How does the NPD gather support amongst the young?
 - a. It offers barbecues and discos.
 - b. It recalls the bombing of Dresden.
 - c. It blames Germany's problems on "foreigners".

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4 Vocabulary - Find the word

Find the word in the text that means:

1. A young, shaven-headed man, often a football hooligan or a far-right supporter.
2. The collective word for the murder of Jews in the Second World War.
3. 'Attractive'.
4. Unusual in a way that surprises or impresses you.
5. A place where construction workers work.
6. A person who stands in an election.
7. A short phrase used by a political party.
8. A surprising event or situation that can be seen to happen or exist.

5 Vocabulary - Adjectives + Prepositions

Add a suitable preposition.

1. famous _____
2. proud _____
3. popular _____
4. fed up _____

Nouns + Prepositions

5. explanation _____
6. disillusionment _____
7. attack _____
8. candidate _____

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6 Grammar focus

Look at this example from the text:

It is time Germans stopped feeling guilty.

The expression “It’s time...” is followed, unusually, by the past simple. Use these prompts to make sentences beginning “It’s time...”

1. time/we/have/a new government
2. time/people/forget/the past
3. time/we/face/facts
4. time/people/wake up/to the danger
5. time/people/take/the far right seriously
6. time/we/go/home

7 Discussion

Should neo-Nazi parties have freedom of speech?

Should people be allowed to make racist statements in public?