

## Hitler and Nazi ways

### Acknowledging Hitler

The Nazi salute and the 'Heil Hitler' cry were the protocol for acknowledging the leader of Germany. This was expected from the moment the international competitors arrived for the Olympic Games. It could happen as the formal greeting between people and was talked about by all the teams for the Olympic Opening Ceremony. In February at the winter Olympics in Germany at Garmisch-Partenkirchen it became clear that the official Olympic salute, with the right arm out to the right side, was very similar to the 'Hitlergruss' salute.



#### Focus

The Australian perspective on acknowledging Hitler



#### Activity

Briefly discuss and describe how the Australians dealt with the Nazi Ways. Does this reflect aspects of the Australian character?

Here are a few Australian insights:

The Australians were shown around different Berlin sites by young guides who could speak English but insisted on constantly acknowledging Hitler like the Australians would say 'hello' or 'G'day'

Confronted with earnest, uniformed young guides who began and ended every conversation with salutes and declarations of "Heil Hitler", many of the Australians took to varying their response. Woodhouse remembered: "At first we used to return them a 'Heil Hitler' out of courtesy, but it became a little wearing. Some felt it was appropriate to reply 'Heil Joe Lyons' (the Australian prime minister), with an extended arm salute, and others preferred 'Bugger Hitler' with a salute and a warm smile." The variations Garrard recalled were "Hail Selassie" and "Hail, Mary, full of grace".

Harry Gordon, *Australia and the Olympic Games*, Queensland University Press, 1996 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), p150.

### What to do at the Opening Ceremony?

At the Olympic Opening Ceremony it would be an issue as to how the German leader would be officially acknowledged by teams as they passed his dias.

Harry Alderson had a team meeting on the parade ground outside the main stadium a couple of days before the Games began. Its main purpose was to let the team know the opening ceremony procedure and to try a little marching practice, but he also wanted to discuss the matter of salutes. Dunc Gray, the only gold medallist among them, was allocated the task of carrying

# Australia and the Olympic Games

## The Berlin Olympics 1936

### The Games

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the Australian flag. It was generally agreed that the Australians would not give the Nazi salute as they passed the Fuhrer's box of honour, although some advisers had suggested that it would be appropriate, and a large number of the fifty-two teams which marched actually did so. The Australians decided to offer the courtesy of a dipped flag and a smart eyes-right as they passed Hitler. That settled, they engaged for a While in some highly unsuccessful drill practice, as long—legged runners and rowers tried to keep stride with the small, short-stepping Gray; the whole idea was finally abandoned, and they all went back to their quarters.

Harry Gordon, *Australia and the Olympic Games*, Queensland University Press, 1996 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), p150.

What happened at the actual Olympic Opening Ceremony?