

## Knowledge Organiser: Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918-39

### Key Topic 3: Nazi control and dictatorship, 1933-1939

#### Possible areas for differences in interpretations:

Was Hitler's growing power in 1933-34 gained by legal or illegal means?

Was fear the main way that the Nazis controlled opposition in Germany?

Did people conform to the Nazi regime because of fear or consent?

Were young people who did not conform opposing or resisting the Nazis?

#### Key words

**Security forces** - this usually means the government organisations that collect 'intelligence' (information) about threats to the people or government from inside or outside the country. In the UK, it includes MI5, MI6 and GCHQ. Although their role overlaps with that of the army and the police, it is separate.

**Censorship** - this involves banning information or ideas. It sometimes involves banning the vehicles for delivering ideas, such as newspapers, pictures, radio or film. Censorship therefore controls attitudes by *forbidding* certain information or opinions.

**Propaganda** - this is another way of controlling attitudes, but propaganda doesn't ban opinions, it *creates* them. Propaganda uses vehicles for information and ideas, such as newspapers, posters, radio and film, to put ideas into people's minds and therefore shape attitudes.

**Nazification** - making every aspect of life reflect and promote Nazi ideas

**Police state** - when the government used the police to control what people do and say

**Concordat** - an agreement with the pope

#### Key words

**Chancellor** - the head of the German government (the same role as the British Prime Minister); this a legal role with legally defined and limited powers.

**Dictator** - a ruler with total power over a country, often a ruler who has taken power by force.

#### The creation of a dictatorship, 1933-34

Jan 1933	Hitler becomes Chancellor
Feb	The Reichstag Fire The Decree for the Protection of People and state
Mar	Reichstag elections The Enabling Act
May	Trade unions banned SPD and KPD attacked
July	Political parties banned
Jan 1934	Lander parliaments abolished
June	The Night of the Long Knives
Aug	Hindenburg dies; Hitler becomes Führer The army swears an oath of loyalty to Hitler

#### The creation of a dictatorship

Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1933.

However, he did not yet have absolute power:

<u>Limitations on Hitler's power</u>	<u>Hitler's solution</u>
Hitler couldn't change the constitution without a two-thirds majority in the Reichstag and other parties, especially the SPD and the KPD, were still popular and might win a lot of seats in the Reichstag	The Decree for the Protection of People and State - this gave Hitler the power to imprison political opponents without trial and ban communist newspapers; he used these powers to get a two-thirds majority
Hitler could not pass laws without the agreement of either the Reichstag or the President	The Enabling Act - this law gave Hitler the power to pass laws without the consent of the Reichstag; it ended Weimar democracy
There were groups that could organize resistance to the Nazis, including by calling the workers out on strike	Trade Unions and political parties banned
Local governments still had a lot of control over their states and the Nazis were the majority in some of them	Lander parliaments abolished and replaced Nazi regional governors appointed by Hitler
The SA seemed more loyal to Ernst Rohm than to Hitler and was alienating businessmen and the army. The army had the capability to remove Hitler from power by force.	The Night of the Long Knives - Röhm and other senior officers of the SA were killed by the SS; other political rivals, including von Papen, were also murdered.
President Hindenburg was the head of the armed forces	Hindenburg dies; Hitler becomes Führer The army swears an oath of loyalty to Hitler

### **The Police State**

Hitler did not trust the ordinary German police to support him so he set up his own **security forces**, run by the Nazi Party rather than the government, to control the German people:

- **The SS**: led by Heinrich Himmler; black uniforms; controlled all police and security forces; acted outside of the law; had to marry 'racial pure' wives; ran the concentration camps; oversaw the SD and the Gestapo.
- **The SD**: led by Reynhard Heydrich; wore uniforms; spied on all opponents of the Nazi party, both at home and abroad.
- **The Gestapo** (secret police): led by Reynhard Heydrich; wore plain clothes, not uniforms; spied on people; prosecuted people for speaking out against the Nazis; sent people to concentration camps and used torture; received reports from ordinary people.

Hitler controlled the **legal system**, which made it very difficult for anyone to oppose him. He did this by controlling the **judges** and the **laws courts**:

- All judges had to belong to the National Socialist League for the Maintenance of the Law; any judge who did not join was sacked; judges known to have anti-Nazi views were not allowed to join.
- Trial by jury was abolished; judges decided whether someone was innocent or guilty.
- A People's Court was set up to hear all treason cases; trials were held in secret by hand-picked judges.

New prisons were set up, called **concentration camps**:

- the first concentration camp was built in Dachau in 1933
- built in isolated areas
- held political prisoners and others classed as 'undesirable' by the Nazis, such as homosexuals and Jews.
- prisoners were treated very badly and forced to do hard labour.

### **Opposition, resistance and conformity**

There were very high levels of conformity in Nazi Germany and very little active resistance. Because of propaganda, censorship and the police state it is unclear how many people conformed to Nazi policies because they consented (agreed with them) and how many conformed out of fear.

#### **Opposition from the churches**

**Protestants**: 1933, set up the Pastors' Emergency League (PEL) which opposed Nazi interference in the Protestant church; the PEL set up the Confessing Church in opposition to the Nazi-controlled Reich Church; 6000 pastors joined the Confessing Church, 2000 joined the Reich Church; 800 Protestant pastors were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

**Pastor Martin Niemöller**: a Protestant pastor; started off as an anti-Weimar, Nazi-voting, antisemitic nationalist; 1933, objected to Nazi interference in the Protestant church; set up the Confessional Church; repeatedly arrested; concentration camp 1938-45.

**Catholics**: 400 priest arrested and imprisoned in the Priests' Block at Dachau concentration camp.

\*The Christian opposition to the Nazis was based on objections to Nazi interference in the churches **NOT** because of opposition to Nazi antisemitism.

It can be argued that the continued high attendance at church services was a form of resistance against the Nazis.

#### **Opposition from the young**

Most young people conformed to the Nazi regime and joined Nazi youth groups, however some formed alternative groups.

**The Edelweiss Pirates**: working class; formed in the late 1930s; hiking and camping to get away from Nazi restrictions; copied American style of clothing; sometimes attacked Hitler Youth members; listened to banned music and read banned books; anti-Nazi graffiti; by 1939, 2000 members in separate groups across the country.

**The Swing Youth**: middle-class/wealthy; American clothes, music and films; organised illegal dances

## The Churches

The Nazis wanted total loyalty to Hitler and his beliefs; he saw the churches as a potential threat to his power. Christian teachings about peace, equality in the eyes of God and caring for the weak were the opposite of Nazi beliefs. Christianity was very important to many Germans, so Hitler avoided attacking it directly straight away.

<b>The Catholic Church</b>	<b>The Protestant churches</b>
Hitler saw Catholics as a threat because they were loyal to the pope and had separate schools and youth organisations. July 1933, Hitler agreed a Concordat with the Pope: Catholics free to worship and run their own schools in return for staying out of politics. Hitler broke this agreement by closing Catholic schools and youth groups and sending some priests to concentration camps. 1937, the pope made a statement called 'With Burning Anxiety' which criticised Nazi policies towards the Church.	1933, 2000 Protestant churches joined together and formed the Reich Church. It supported the Nazis and some members wore Nazi uniforms, called themselves German Christians and displayed Nazi symbols in churches. 1934, in response 6000 churches formed the Confessional Church, led by Martin Niemöller. They opposed the Nazis' interference in their religion. They were persecuted by the Nazis.

### Key words

**Opposition** - actively working against something in order to resist it

**Resistance** - refusing to support something or speaking against it

**Conformity** - going along with something whether or not you agree with it

**Consent** - going along with something because you agree with it

## Propaganda and censorship

Controlled by Joseph Goebbels, the Minister for People's Enlightenment and Propaganda. Oversaw the Reich Chamber of Culture which made sure that all cultural activity was consistent with Nazi views.

**Newspapers:** told what they could not publish; given instructions on what to write; 1600 newspapers closed down in 1935 alone.

**Radio:** all radio stations put under Nazi control; cheap radios so that by 1939 70% of homes had radios; frequent Nazi broadcasts, including speeches from Hitler; no listening to foreign radio stations allowed.

**Rallies:** mass rallies held at Nuremberg every year; gave the impression of unity, discipline and strength.

**Sport:** Nazified by displaying Nazi symbols in stadiums and insisting that all competitors gave the Nazi salute; Berlin Olympics in 1936 was used as propaganda and to show Nazi Germany in a good light to the world; largest stadium in the world, could hold 110 000.

**Art:** art had to promote Nazi ideas; only Nazi-approved artists who were members of the Reich Chamber of Visual Arts were allowed to teach, produce or sell art; 12 000 paintings and sculptures removed from art galleries in 1936.

**Architecture:** the Nazis wanted buildings that made them seem powerful: huge, with classical features such as domes and pillars, massive Nazi flags. Hitler's key architect was Albert Speer; he designed the parade ground for Nazi rallies in Nuremberg.

**Music:** used to promote Nazi racial ideas; jazz music (seen as the music of black people) and music by Jewish composers was banned; the music of Wagner and traditional German folk music were promoted.

**Literature (books):** no new books published without approval from The Chamber of Culture; 2500 writers officially banned because of Jewish heritage or views that the Nazis did not like; huge public book burnings eg a bonfire of 20 000 books in Berlin, 1933.

**Film:** very large audiences made film ideal for propaganda; all films in cinemas were preceded by a 45-minute official newsreel, publicising Germany's achievements; Goebbels had to personally approve the plots of all new films; Nazis made 1300 films, some were obvious propaganda, but most were entertainment films with an underlying Nazi message eg *Hitlerjunge Quex*.