

Nazi Germany: consolidation of power
<http://goo.gl/Rpi35d>

Totalitarianism

Key ideas/ organizers:

What is it like?

How is it exercised?

Why does it adopt those features and methods?

Understand totalitarianism as the exercise of total control, which

- Results in conformity
- Is linked to the creation of an ideal/ superior society - a utopia (dystopia) which has therefore only one truth, one right way of behaving

Control is obtained/ exercised over government, and then over society:

- In making people conform in their behavior
- In making people believe in the government's goals

How?

- Propaganda
- Persecution
- Party organizations - membership in DAF, etc
- Programs eg. Kraft durch Freude

[4Ps!! :D]

Approach Nazi governance as a mixture of coercion, consent, and persuasion

How do the three methods inter-relate?

Which means do you think were most important?

[Coercion and consent most important → pull and push factors]

Several sources of historical evidence are used to evaluate (see attached document)

- Level of participation in Nazi programs, organizations, etc
- Public opinion reports- by the Gestapo and the Social Democrat exile organization
- Voting (public plebiscites)
- Degree to which instruments of terror affected the German public

Ultimately, continued support/ conformity with the regime came about, broadly speaking, as a result of

- fear
- support: for Hitler - cult of personality; for the sense of national pride/ unity achieved
- self-interest: provision of stability/ security, standard of living

Three keywords in the Nazis' seizure & exercise of power:

Machtergreifung- seizure of power (*Macht*)

Gleichschaltung- loosely translates as 'coordination'; this refers to the absorption of all social associations into Nazi organizations/ structures

Volksgemeinschaft- people's community; the creation of a loyal nation with a common purpose (rather than being just a state/ country) **[Similar to gotong royong effect!]**

Control over government- instruments of power

Reichstag Fire Decree

Enabling Act

Law Against the Formation of New Parties

- Note the legality that Hitler observes in many ways; he does not break the constitution but **undermines it**

- SPD, DNVP, ZP etc all chose to dissolve themselves in response to the implicit threat of death, arrest, etc **[out of fear]**

Night of the Long Knives - destruction of the SA (though note that other political opponents, not just the SA, were purged as well)

Why was it necessary to remove the SA's leadership and power?

- The SA as an alternative power center; SA's loyalty to their leader
- The SA as a source of instability and violence - look at their activities before 1933. After 1933, they become a threat to the stability and security that the consolidation of power requires.

Hitler as Führer: significance?

- Right to rule: Kaiser by birthright/ god- mantle of rule is inherited; Führer draws his legitimacy from the public
- Extent of power: the President is elected to represent and serve the public; the Führer embodies and leads the way for his people - he alone has the vision to achieve their destiny

Simultaneously, the merging of party and state, government and ideology

- A prosperous/ successful economy is a Nazified economy
- The military swears an oath in August 1934 to the newly appointed Führer. This oath confirms Hitler's all-encompassing power: rather than swearing allegiance to the German state/ republic/ democracy, they swear loyalty to Hitler and the force of this oath prevents the military from becoming a potential threat to his power.

Nazi propaganda

David Welch identifies four main ideas that it promoted

- Creation of a Volksgemeinschaft- a people's community
- Racial purity - elimination of the defective (eg the eugenics program), non-Aryan races
- Hatred of enemies - an extension of negative cohesion: support for the Nazis as a defense against the Jews and Bolsheviks
- Führerprinzip - support for Hitler as the embodiment of the common will

Propaganda: when approaching it, consider

- Target audience
- Message - what does it say?
- Purpose - what outcome does it aim to achieve?
- Context of purpose - why is it trying to achieve that outcome?

Reading it critically:

- Is the purpose fulfilled in practice?
- Does it further ideology or buy support?

Re poster in powerpoint:

- Immediate message is that Winter Aid would prevent Germans from going without food or shelter in the winter
- Purpose:
 - To elicit contributions to Winter Aid
 - To increase support for the Nazis as they aided the people
- Context:
 - Great Depression
 - Early period of Nazi power - necessity of making their message known
- Referring back to Welch, it also is grounded in the idea of a Volksgemeinschaft. Winter Aid encouraged Germans to sacrifice for the greater good of the nation and thereby build a sense of solidarity and common purpose

Gleichschaltung

- Refer to your notes for detailed look at all of these things
- Küche, Kirche, Kinder means 'kitchen, church, children'- the Nazis' view of the women's rightful role in society as domestic provider

- Why adopt these policies? Did they stem from Nazi ideology (eg the 25 Points)? Was it designed to increase support for Nazi rule?
- How did these policies **reinforce totalitarian control** or otherwise serve the aims of totalitarianism?

Elimination of enemies/ continued opposition

- Despite the presence of these underground groups/ resistance movements, the reality is that **open opposition** to the regime was **limited**.
- Martin Niemöller was an anti-Nazi Protestant pastor. The poem expresses the idea that while Nazi Germany was a *Volksgemeinschaft*, no other affiliations/ loyalties were possible and **personal relationships** became **secondary to self-preservation and/or loyalty to the state**:
hence, as we've discussed, the **lack of real opposition movements**

in totalitarian regimes