

MODERN HISTORY

Germany's Progression of Change

Hitler's appointment as chancellor in 1933 brought forth a series of dramatic changes upon society, through his process of coordination and systematic use of terror and repression. During 1933-1939, Germany, under the Nazi party resembled and was considered to have effectively transformed into a totalitarian state. Although Germany had many key characteristics and features of a totalitarian state, significant aspects of German society and life contradict this view and undermine its ability to be referred to as a 'totalitarian' state.

One common and recognised aspect of a totalitarian state, as stated by Carl Freidrich, is the presence of a single charismatic dictator. By 1939, Hitler had become this supreme dictator and after he effectively eliminated Ernst Rohm and the SA, gaining the army's loyalty, Hitler's leadership was unquestionable. Not only was Hitler a successful and brilliant politician with great orating skills and persuasion, he appealed to all sectors in society promising hope, unity and restorment. But through a combination of gleichschaltung policies and propaganda, Hitler became an omnipotent and absolute ruler over Germany. Gleichschaltung policies, implemented from 1933 consolidated Hitler's position in society by centralising organisations under Hitler's Nazis, however propaganda, which promoted the Hitler myth, played a significant role in portraying Hitler as a 'god like figure', chosen by fate to restore Germany. Many believed Goebbel's myth and Hitler increased popularity. Hitler's ultimate leadership as a powerful dictator is questionable however through his real nature and functioning of the state. In reality, Hitler was a lazy dictator who usually left day-day decisions to his statesmen. Hitler's disorganised government and state is evident through the duplication and rivalry which existed with the state, causing conflict. Referred to as a polycracy and supported by structionalists, Hitler was a charismatic and powerful leader promoted in the Hitler myth; however the reality of Hitler's personality and his chaotic state questions his leadership and authority, casting doubt on Germany as a totalitarian state.

During Nazi Germany, the Nazi party gained control of many aspects of the economy, supporting the view that Germany perhaps was a totalitarian state. Through gleischaltung the economic state of Germany changed with trade unions abolished and more controls and regulations placed on it. Many organisations became Nazified and businesses were usually satisfied with the Nazis imperialist ambitions and decreased wages of workers. Nazi's control of the economy was also evident during the great depression and the implementation of autarky and the 4 year plan as the taught policies were enforced and trading monitored, allowing Germany to become one of the only countries to completely recover from the Great depression. The numerous Nazi policies and controls over the economy resembled that of a totalitarian state, when compared to democracy, however in an opposing sense. The Nazis essentially worked with capitalists who accepted private businesses and encouraged German economic growth. Hitler himself also had no particular economic views. Hence despite many areas of controls implemented upon the economy, overall evidence suggests that Nazi Germany didn't control the economy entirely and wasn't completely a totalitarian state.

By 1939, not only was Hitler the ultimate Fuhrer but the widespread use of terror and repression on society ensured that opposition was limited. The ruthless programs of terror and repression on the state provides evidence that Germany may have been a totalitarian state as the use of force and terror are common aspects of one. To a large extent the Nazi's use of terror and repression were effective as the ruthless and intolerant nature of the Nazi party was not hidden, creating fear amongst society. The Nazi party controlled the police force and removed the independence of the judiciary, during their consolidation of power. The law for the restoration of civil services required judges to correctly interpret the 'will of the fuehrer'. Meaning that through the pretence of legality, Nazis could imprison or sentence whosoever they wished. Terror and repression through the SS and the Gestapo, were also significant mechanisms of suppressing opposition and forcing

individuals to comply with Nazi policies, under Himmler, the SS were brutal, unforgiving and ruthless. They were responsible for the running of concentration camps and removing any opposition. The SS regarded themselves as elite Germans and carried out extreme Nazi policies. The Gestapo also played a major role in creating fear within society, penetrating personal lives. The Gestapo kept society in order and removed anyone who opposed or dissented the Nazis. Overall the combined effort of the Gestapo and SS were effective in suppressing opposition and resembled that of a totalitarian state. Despite the widespread use of terror and repression, the complete effectiveness of the terror system is questionable as evidence suggests that opposition was existent and the Gestapo's activities were significantly limited.

Apart from 'everyday grumbling and dissent and complaints', Nazi opposition did exist in the form of courageous individuals and the Catholic church who remained obedient however opposed many of the Nazi policies such as the euthanasia program. Opposition also existed specifically in the form of youth. Although the Nazi youth were prevalent many of the youth opposed it undermining the Nazi attempt to indoctrinate society, groups such as the swing movement, Kettelbach and Edelweiss pirates, which presented significant forms of discontent and opposition. Hence although the Nazi's terror and repression campaigns were significantly effective, opposition was still existent suggesting that Germany did possess many totalitarian like qualities however cannot be considered a totalitarian state to its true meaning as terror and repression, key aspects of the regime but weren't fully implemented successfully.

Under Nazi rule, German life changed dramatically with Nazi policies intruding into the private lives of Germans. In a sense, Germany by 1939 strongly resembled a totalitarian state and it is possible to determine the extent to which this was true through the party's intrusion into all aspects of life, the Nazi party, through terror, repression and propaganda, to a large extent were a part of private lives and controlled the expression of public opinion. Through immense censorship, certain 'un-German' or Jewish books and artworks were banned, restricting entertainment to forms that only supported Nazi ideology. Propaganda through rallies, radio, films and newspapers also resembled that of a totalitarian state as Nazi ideology was continuously reinforced and repeated. Nazi policies also permeated the private sector of Germans through policies that restricted women. Women were removed from certain professions and the introduction of 'children, church and kitchen', Hitler medals and family loans aimed to keep women in their traditional roles and increase birth rates., sexual life was controlled as marriages between Jews became restricted. For children their private, social lives were also controlled as from age 6 they were required to attend Hitler youth. The many policies and regulations that intruded private lives and immense propaganda provide evidence that Germany by 1939 may have been a totalitarian state however this is questionable as birth rates weren't increased as much as desired and a significant number of Germans appeared to be obeying Hitler's rules however the majority were non-political and uninvolved, due to fear and didn't comply with Nazi lifestyle. Hence overall despite the enormous amounts of control and intrusion into the private lives of Germans, the success of this is questionable.

Overall, despite the many characteristics of a totalitarian state possessed by Germany under Nazi rule, Germany was not a complete totalitarian state due to significant aspects that undermined Nazi policies and ideologies.