

What was life like for the Nazis?

- The SS elite force wore a unique black uniform. By 1934 there were 50,000 members who were to be fine examples of the Aryan race. They demanded complete and instantaneous obedience from their members. They had to marry racially pure wives, who were so vetted by the SD, and their physical standards were very strict – a filling could lead to rejection, By 1939 250,000 members.
- The SD, was set up in 1931 as the Intelligence body of the SS.. They were employed by the Nazi Party, who paid their salaries, and the job attracted professional types like lawyers, economists and professors. It was run by Heydrich, who Hitler called the ‘man with the iron heart.’
- Nazi judges who refused to do the Nazi’s bidding were ‘removed’ and the remainder became members of the National Socialists League for the Maintenance of Law (NSRB). Judges had to wear the Swastika and Nazi Eagle on their robes from 1936. Lawyers also became part of the German Lawyers Front, which had 10,000 members by 1936.
- They had to swear that they would ‘striveto follow the course of our Fuhrer.’ People’s Courts with Judges loyal to the Nazis were created for quick Treason trials. The Minister of Justice would check the sentences weren’t too lenient and if they were Hitler would alter the sentences. There was no escaping Nazi ‘justice.’

What was life like in the Concentration Camps?

- Originally temporary detention centres in disused factories or warehouses for political, ideological and racial opponents and undesirables, by 1939 they had constructed massive camps housing 150,000 people, using their prisoners for slave labour, extracting materials and making weapons.
- Later they would become houses of mass Genocide. The earliest Concentration Camp was Dachau but others followed in places like Sacshenhausen, Buchenhausen and Mauthausen. Most of the detainees were left wing Communists, Socialists, Trade Unionists and those with liberal views. They were given different triangles to wear: pink for homosexuals, red for political prisoners and black for vagrants, purple for religious groups, yellow for Jews and foreigners wore blue. They were subject to re-education though forced hard labour, torture and questioning. If someone died then their family got a letter saying they had died from a disease such as pneumonia.

The German Faith Movement

- Christian and Nazi beliefs were incompatible, but 2/3 of the population were Protestant, mostly in the North, and roughly 1/3 were Catholic in the South. Hitler couldn’t afford to have this.
- Therefore he set up the German Faith Movement to replace Christian values and ceremonies in German society with pagan (non-Christian) Nazi values. Only 5% joined the movement.

Who opposed Hitler?

- The Catholics - Their allegiance was first to the Pope and parents preferred to send their children to Catholic Youth groups not Hitler Youth groups and supported the Centre Party. However, Hitler used the joint fear of Communism to broker a deal with the Pope Pius XI, called the Concordat. The Catholic Church would not criticise Hitler and would stay out of politics and Hitler agreed to allow them to keep worshipping and running Catholic schools and Youth organisations. This didn’t work....
- Catholic Schools had to remove the crucifixes, schools were taken away from Catholic control and Catholic Youth Groups were officially banned in 1937 and monasteries shut. Priests were harassed and arrested. 400 ended up in the Special Block in Dachau Concentration Camp. Pope Pius XI showed his opposition to Hitler with his famous ‘With burning anxiety’ speech which rallied the Catholics. The priests in Concentration camps were seen as martyrs and Catholic churches continued to be packed with worshippers. Even 3m Catholic Nazi Party members still paid Church taxes and Cardinal Galen continued to admonish the Nazis. Locally, priests like Josef Fath stood up to Hitler Youth leaders.
- The Protestants - Headed by Martin Niemoller, the ‘Confessional Church’ and the Pastors’ Emergency League was set up for those who wanted to oppose Hitler was supported by 7,000 pastors by 1934. However, Niemoller, Bonhoeffer, Schneider and other pastors ended up in Concentration Camps.
- Agnes Von Grone also resisted with the Protestant Women’s Bureau but it was shut down in 1936
- In the years 1933-39, about 1.3 million people were sent to Concentration camps but 300,000 fled..
- The Army - There were some in the Army who resented Hitler’s removal of 16 top Generals who criticised him, including Blomberg, Fritsch and Von Brauchitsch. There was a plan in 1938 to overthrow Hitler but after his successful takeover of Czechoslovakia this plan was set aside.
- Young People – In the 30’s youth gangs appeared on street corners. They grew their hair long, boys and girls hung out together in public listening to their own music and on occasion fighting the Hitler Youth. One of the most important ones were the Edelweiss Pirates. They listened to swing music, covered walls in anti-Nazi graffiti, and wore badges with the skull and Cross bones or the Edelweiss flower, chequered shirts dark short trousers and white socks. They had 2,000 members between 1934 and 1939 with the Navajos (Cologne), the Kittelback pirates (Dusseldorf) and in Essen the Roving Dudes.
- The Middle Class version of youth rebellion were called the Swing Youth. They loved swing music which the Nazis viewed as black, Jewish and communist. They were seen as an oddity as boys had long hair and the girls wore make-up, finger polish and bright colours.
- There were several assassination attempts on Hitler. Jewish students plotted an assassination in 1935. Swiss student, Maurice Bavaud, tried to shoot Hitler in Munich in 1938 but failed to get a clear shot and thus pulled out so as not to injure someone else. In 1939, George Elser planted a bomb in, where Hitler was speaking. but Hitler left early so was not among the 7 dead.

Life without Opposition 1933-39

Support for Hitler

- However, many benefited from Hitler’s successes after 1933 and he was readily able to maintain support from a majority of the country due to recovering Germany from the Depression and its international reputation by rebuilding its armies and taking back the Saar, the Rhineland, Austria and the Sudetenland and ending Communism and the SA in Germany.
- The Protestants - The Protestant Church was more supportive of the Nazis and in 1933 they created the ‘Reich Church.’ under Ludwig Muller, the first Reich Bishop. Some of their followers called themselves ‘German Christians,’ wore Nazi uniforms and gave the Nazi salute. Their motto was ‘The swastika on our chests and the Cross in our hearts.’