

How did Hitler and the Nazis create a Terror State?



To understand the Nazi Terror State you must forget what you are used to in your everyday life here in Britain. You must imagine a country that has no freedom of speech or action at all. Imagine a country where someone is watching your every move and action and even trying to get to know what you are thinking! Imagine a country where the police have limitless power and can simply charge a person with something without the need for evidence or even a fair trial, and all this was legal! Imagine a country where any opposition led to imprisonment, beatings and even execution without any need for an explanation! What happens in this kind of atmosphere is very quickly it polices itself – this means that because of the amount of fear that someone is watching you, you watch everyone else and the fear means that you spy and inform on someone else before they do on you! In short, the Nazis created a state (country) where opposition to the Nazis was punished with violence which bred fear and terror.

What is a 'Terror State'?

- The Nazis never had more than 40 per cent of the vote from the German people, so they never really had support from the majority of Germany
- This means that the Nazis hold on power was very weak as most people in Germany (over 60 per cent) did not support them
- The Nazi then always feared the rest of Germany turning against them and removing them from power so they created a 'Terror State'
- This was designed to make sure the Nazis had no opposition at all as no-one could vote against them, speak out or act against them
- It also meant that there was to be no other political parties or discussions of different methods to those used by the Nazis
- A 'Terror State' is a state (or country) which is ruled by fear, violence and terror! The people in it are not free to do, or think as they please as they are constantly reminded that if they speak out against the government (Hitler) they will be punished with violence or terror

How did the Nazis create this 'Terror State'?

- The Nazis used a number of means to make sure their 'Terror State' worked, it was not just one part it was a mixture that was combined to make sure no-one spoke out against the Nazis
- The Nazis used and created the:

The SS
The Gestapo (Secret Police)
The police and law courts
Concentration camps



The 'Terror State'

How did the SS create terror?

- The SS formed in 1925 and were loyal to Hitler acting as his personal bodyguard
- They destroyed the SA in the Night of the Long Knives in 1934 so people knew how ruthless they were
- It was led by Heinrich Himmler
- The main function of the SS was to destroy all opposition to Hitler and Nazism and would search out and mercilessly remove anyone or thing which opposed Hitler and their beliefs

- The SS also had two other groups within it
- The Death's Head units were responsible for the Concentration camps and extermination of the Jew
- The Waffen-SS were special armored regiments of soldiers which fought along side the regular German army
- These were the troops that went into villages and searched out and destroyed everyone who disagreed with the Nazis
- The SS acted as Hitler's own private army large enough and powerful enough to remove any opposition to Hitler and the Nazis
- Every German knew of the SS and their power and strength and how ruthless they were in preventing any opposition challenging Hitler and the Nazis

How did the Gestapo create terror?

- The Gestapo were the secret police in Nazi Germany
- The Gestapo was the force which was feared the most by German people
- The Gestapo were all around Germany acting as spies and were a constant reminder that Hitler found out about all opposition no matter how small
- If anyone was found or even suspected of opposing the Nazis the Gestapo had powers above the law and could arrest and imprison without trial
- Once taken by the Gestapo it was not often that the person would be seen again – the message went out that to oppose the Nazis meant death!
- Some were released from concentration camps to go back to their family and friends to tell them just how harsh the Gestapo were – again to spread the news that opposition to the Nazis is not tolerated at all
- Most Germans were so scared of the Gestapo that they simply informed of someone that was opposing the Nazis because they were scared that they would become a target if they did not
- Each block of flats or housing estate in Germany had an informant so everyone ended up informing on each other or simply not criticizing or speaking out about the Nazis
- The Gestapo were the eyes and ears of the Nazis 'Terror State' and made sure non-one knew who to trust as the person you were talking to could be a Gestapo spy or just someone that would inform to the Gestapo about you

How did the police and law courts create terror?

- It would be easy to imagine a world that the police and law courts decided on what was right or wrong in a country – but this was not the case in Nazi Germany
- In Nazi Germany the police and law courts were used to simply 'back-up' what the SS and Gestapo did – they simply made it all appear legal and right!
- The police and law courts created by as they were controlled by the Nazis and if a person went into a court charged with opposing the Nazis then it was guaranteed that they were found guilty
- All the top jobs in the police and law courts were given to Nazis and they reported to Heinrich Himmler
- The police were also encouraged to spy and snoop on ordinary Germans and inform the Gestapo of any opposition
- But importantly, the police and law courts were given strict instructions not to convict any Nazis that were 'keeping the peace' or were 'restricting' opposition to them such as communists or Social Democrats
- All the law courts were controlled by the Nazis and so it was difficult to get a fair trial so many people simply avoided getting into trouble at all as they knew they would be treated unfairly and violently and there was nothing anyone could do about it!

How did the Concentration camps create terror?

- Concentration camps acted as the ultimate weapon against opposition. This was because they were a very harsh form of prisons where discipline and conditions were very hard
- Hitler and the Nazis started to build these as soon as he was in power in 1933
- They were often in isolated places and rural areas so they were away from the general population
- They were run by the SS Death's Head units who showed no mercy to the people sent there
- Prisoners suffered little food, random beatings and random executions
- In the early days of the concentration camps many were sent home following 're-education' to tell their family and friends about the conditions
- By the late 1930s very few people came back from the camps once they had been sent
- Anyone brave enough to oppose the Nazis, such as, churchmen, trade unionists, Jews and communists were sent there
- Concentration camps worked as they were cheap and effective and the punishment that they served was harsh and word soon got around that any opposition to the Nazis and you would wind up in a camp

How did the Terror State Work?

