The Nazi Party Essay, Research Paper

The Nazi Party had a series of ideas which it incorporated into the regime. These ideas were all working together to help achieve Hitler s plans of conquest. Though it is argued that a lot of these ideas were more of a hindrance, than a help. One of the principle ideas of a fascist state is total control. Hitler used this principle to make the task of achieving all his other goals much easier. “The Reichstag has passed the following law the government is also able to pass laws.” In Article two:- ” The laws issued by the government shall be issued by the chancellor and published in the official gazette” Later on, another law was passed:- “The sole political party existing in Germany is the National Socialist German Workers Party.” By Passing these laws, Hitler stood alone, as the sole dictator of Germany. By doing this, Hitler gained a lot of support, as well as a lot of criticism. But Hitler was able to use this total control to stop most the criticism turning into outright opposition. A lot of this power was filtered throughout society, and numerous changes took place. This Generally translated into the reduction of civil rights the people held. This meant things like unions were outlawed, political opinion was outlawed, freedom of speech was outlawed, freedom of press was outlawed, Hitler needed to gain 50% of the Reichstag to gain power. This meant that he had to appeal to many different groups if he was to gain power. He did this by offering something to almost everyone. The graph below shows the amount of the Reichstag the Nazi party held in March 1933. This was still not enough to gain power. Hitler was forced to form a coalition government. He soon, however, pushed the other players in his coalition to the side, and with the untimely death of President Hindenberg, gained power. “We want work and bread, Vote Hitler!” The Nazi party gained a lot of success right across the country. But, the party had a different appeal to different groups. To the workers, it was plain and simple, work and bread, as stated above. To the resentful veterans of the War to End Wars, it was the abolition of the Versailles treaty and a new more powerful Germany. To the Business people, there was a promise they would be protected from the fouls of communism. So basically Hitler was able to dangle a carrot in front of everyone s nose. By doing this Hitler was able to gain support from many people “In the near future, when we have gained power, we shall have the further duty of taking theses creators of ruin, these clouts, these traitors to their state, and hanging them to the gallows to which the belong. Let no-one think that in them has come a change of heart” Hitler gained a whole load of support from the soldiers of world war one. His ideas of destroying the treaty of Versailles and making Germany great once again appealed to the people. Speeches such as the one illustrated above, appealed to the nationalists. Many of these ex soldiers made up Hitler s SS and SA, and became instrumental in the regime. The fact that these men were fighting for Germany once more, but from the inside. This resulted in a much improved national pride, and escalated nationalism. “What one could do with this peace treaty of Versailles! How this instrument of boundless blackmail and the most humiliating degradation could become the means in the hands of a willing government for the whipping up of national passions to boiling point! How with brilliant propagandistic exploitation of theses sadistic cruelties the indifference of a nation could be raised to indignation to the brightest fury!” This document, written by Adolf Hitler was typical of the feelings many ex-soldiers felt after the Versailles Treaty. They felt they had laid their lives on the line for nothing. Hitler s policy on the Versailles treaty was therefore extremely attractive to these ex-soldiers The business people supported Hitler because he offered them protection against communism. If a communist government came to power, they would lose all their hard earned money to the state, and this caused great insecurity in the business sector. Offered them a security blanket in that he said he would support them by letting them trade freely. This was not infact the case, but it was a lot better than it would have been under any communist government. Hitler also made many deals with the great Industrialists, like Krupp Steel. HE promised them protection from communism, and cheap slave labour in return for money to finance the party. He later used them to churn out war machines. The evidence of the deals (especially the salve labour was discovered in the Nuremberg trials. “It was the first in a long series of trial which involved generals like Manstein charged with mass murder in Russia, and industrialists like Alfried Krupp von Bohlm+charged with employing slave labour.” Hitler did not gain as much support as previously thought in the Labouring sector. This may have been because of the communist party. The ideas of the communist party involved the workers being the main tools of the state. Every one was equal, they had the same pay, no matter what they did. Everyone had employment. Though many were impressed with Hitler s simple offer or bread and work. With Germany at one stage having six million people unemployed, and his promises of full employment, he did gain some support from the unemployed. Despite this huge amount of support, Hitler did not have the 50% majority, he required in the Reichstag to gain power. There are not many references to Anti-Nazi activity in The late 1930 s. There are a number of reason for this. One of them is that the Nazi s had very little opposition anyway. That is, they had little active opposition. All terrorist, and other groups, seem to have been quite easily quashed during this time, mainly due to Hitler s SS and the Gestapo. They were quite ruthless in destroying all Anti-Nazi movements. The ruthlessness of the Gestapo is evident in the figures that were recorded below Death sentences for political oppression , 1930-2: 8 sentences 1934-9: 534 sentences Anti-Nazi movements seem to have been over-looked by historians as-well. This may be because of the myth that all Germans supported Hitler, and it has only been proven in the last few years that this was not the case. Another reason why few people actively opposed Hitler is that the opposition of and reprisal of basic rights was on going and gradual, where as instant and radical changes would have definitely have been met with opposition. This is clearly shown against the Jews. Hitler didn t just start killing them, he slowly made life more and more difficult for them , which then led to acts of violence and ultimately murder. It seems apparent that the people of Germany did not consider actions against their leader, until after the war had begun. It has been observed that life for Germans was similar to what it had been before the war, though it gradually degraded as the war wore on. It is then, perhaps, possible to conclude that the deprivation of rights, and finally war against their fellow man, was the final straw for some in Germany. This may be another reason as to why there are few records of opposition before the war The ITF (International Transport Workers’ Federation) played one of the major roles in opposition against the Nazis. The ITF is an international organisation consisting of various unions from various countries. The ITF conducted anti-Hitler operations because of the laws Hitler and other fascist leaders bought against Trade unions. They were responsible for dropping leaflets from planes over cities, and sabotage against Hitler. An example of a leaflet is shown below:- “dr.jpf” There was little the Jews could do about Hitler during the 1930 s. But as time went on and conditions for the Jews became worse, resistance did pick up. There were two kinds of resistance. Theses were passive and active resistance. Active resistance was physical violence, mainly street fighting which was easily crushed by the Gestapo and the SA. The passive resistance, was slightly more successful, but did nothing to stop the persecution. This involved the forging of identification papers, illegal trading. The Jews relied heavily on the sympathy of other groups that were not being targeted. This came from groups like the Jehovah s witnesses, and to a small extent, the Catholic church. One of the reasons why there may have been little resistance from the Jewish community, is because many feared that the bad treatment of Jews would mean that Germany would be targeted, and nations would refuse to trade. “The anti-Jewish violence that followed Hitler s appointment as chancellor+outraged foreign opinion, and in Western Democracies led to reprisals and not an inconsiderable amount of voluntary boycotting of German goods.” This clearly shows some of the opposition offered by some groups, both inside and outside of Germany toward the Nazi actions against Jewry. This seems to have been one of the only (and to a limited amount) one of the only effective sources of opposition. As a result, it may be said that Hitler s anti-Semitic plans may have been slowed. One of the effects of this may have been that a sudden change would have created much more hype and opposition than a gradual deterioration in Jewish rights. So in theory, these weak trade sanctions, may have in effect have been a hindrance, than a help, because it caused Hitler to slow the deterioration of Jewish rights. The Olympic games, that were held in 1936 also had an effect on how Hitler directed his policies against the Jews, as the following extract indicates. “New interventions by Schacht and wariness about the possibility of overt anti-sematism reducing the number of participants and visitors for the 1936 Olympics in Berlin induced the government (German) to bring the disorders under control.” Here, it seems apparent that the Nazis were infact aware that opposition toward the regime on the behalf of Jews would be damaging. This is apparent because otherwise the Nazis wouldn t have warranted the suspension of the anti-Jewish activities as started in the above caption. There were a few people who believed in freedom of speech that had been taken away from them with the enabling act. It seems as though all of this opposition was widely scattered and poorly organised. There is little information around about this opposition because of the fact that the Nazi s were so ruthless in the destruction of all opposition. Most people who opposed Hitler s ideas found themselves in concentration camps until they were regarded as sane again. Students have traditionally been at the forefront of civil rights arguments. The White Rose was an organisation that was started up after the war had been started. It was made up from a group of university students that had the courage to oppose the nazi regime. It is interesting to note that the White Rose was aware of some 300 other resistance groups during the war. The organisation was founded by two students, Hans and Sophie Scholl, who gathered together a group of close friends, professors and theologians who decided to oppose the state by spreading leaflets. These leaflets contained anti Nazi propaganda written by a man called Theodore Haecker. The below is an example of the material The White Rose produced. These leaflets had wide reaching effects. One of these effects is that the leaflets gave hope to those who opposed the state, and was able to show them that they were not in fact the only person around who disagreed with Hitler and the Nazi Party. Every word that comes from Hitler’s mouth is a lie. When he says peace, he means war, and when he blasphemously uses the name of the Almighty, he means the power of evil, the fallen angel, Satan. His mouth is the foul-smelling maw of Hell, and his might is a bottom accursed. True, we must conduct the struggle against the National Socialist terrorist state with rational means but whoever today still doubts the reality, the existence of demonic powers, has failed by a wide margin to understand the metaphysical background of this war. Behind the concrete, the visible events, behind all objective, logical considerations, we find the irrational element: the struggle against the demon, against the servants of the Antichrist. Everywhere and at all time s demons have been lurking in the dark, waiting for the moment when man is weak…” Much thought was put into the writing of theses leaflets. The idea was to use language that is very similar to that that was used by the Nazi s for propaganda. This is, it was supposed to invoke feelings of anger, dismay, and patriotism. The effect that these leaflets had is unknown, except for the fact that it let people know that there was resistance to the Nazi s in Germany. First they came for the Jews, But I did not speak out, Because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the Communists, And I did not speak out, Because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the trade-unionists, And I did not speak out, Because I was not a trade-unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, And I did not speak out, Because I was not a Catholic. Then they came for me, And there was no one left to speak out for me. – Pastor Niemller (Anti-Nazi Resistance Movement) This basically sums up the general feelings of the people in Germany before the war. No-one took much notice of what was going on, until they were picked on. This may have been because the people did not have the courage to stand up, or maybe because they felt it was none of their business. Either way, it did not help the situation. As one thing led to another, and it was murder of innocent persons instead of persecution, people still took no notice, and as the Allies advanced towards Berlin, the German people were blamed for their ignorance as the allies discovered the concentration camps The churches of the world have argued long and hard about how each one stood with respect to the Nazi regime. It is understood that the Vatican openly supported Hitler. This is evident in some of the speeches Pope Pius XII gave at the Berlin Olympics. A notable professor of the time was quoted as saying the following:- “In the cold facts of German history, the Cross and the swastika came closer together, until the swastika proclaimed the message of victory from the towers of German cathedrals, swastika flags appeared round altars and Catholic and Protestant theologians, pastors, churchmen and statesmen welcomed the alliance with Hitler.” A reason as to why these groups seem to have supported Hitler is that many of the religious society were unsure of which side of the argument to stand. The clergy looked to their superiors for advice. This continue up the scale, until it reached the pope, who it seems supported the Nazi s, and as a result, so did the rest of the Catholic Church. This was similar across the board with the churches, with one exception. Not everyone supported the Nazis though. Another reason is that the Catholic church supported fascism. This is evident, where Vatican accepted Mussolini s government in Italy. Because Italy and Germany had close ties as a result of their fascist governments, it may be true to say that the Catholic church in Italy influenced the Catholic church in Germany to accept it s government as well. Truly, a devil has broken loose from his leash in Germany – ah, and none of us knows how we are to get him back on the chain again. Theodore Haecker was a literature student at a major university in Berlin. He was instrumental in The White Rose organisation and also helped with the religious opposition. He wrote various articles in a Catholic magazine called Hochland (Highland). The Jehovah s witness has been credited as being the only religious group who had the courage to stand up to the Nazis. The reasons why the Jehovah s witnesses stood up tot he Nazi s are that there religion relies heavily on a literal interpretation of the bible. “In obedience to God’s instructions, ‘they have beaten their swords into plowshares.’ (Isaiah 2:4) Yes, in obedience to Christ’s instructions, they love one another. (John 13:35) This means they never go to war and intentionally hurt one another.” This quote outlines the beliefs of the Jehovah s witness. It is because of their beliefs, and because of Hitler s intentions, which were against these beliefs, that the Jehovah s witnesses opposed the Nazis This opposition came in the form of public protests. These protests were largely unsuccessful and resulted in the Jehovah s witnesses being added to Hitler s undesirable list. That is, they ended up being systematically exterminated along with the Jews, communists, gypsies, and homosexuals. In conclusion, resistance was certainly active against the nazis beofre the war. The war seems to have been however, the last straw for many of the German people. Most of the resistance before the war was destroyed by the Gestapo. It seems that the groups that have stood up against Hitler have generally been in a minority. The historians at the time seem to have made the mistake of saying that all Germans supported Hitler, when it was not in fact the case