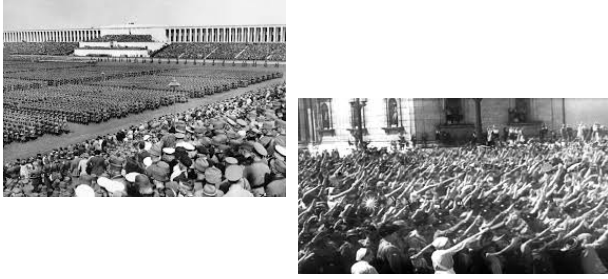


Ordinary Germans, Consent, & Resistance

L. M. Stallbaumer-Beishline
© 2023



1

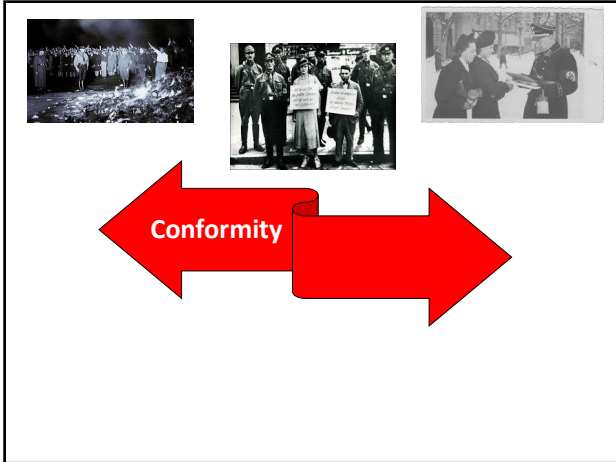
Public Opinion in a Dictatorship?

2

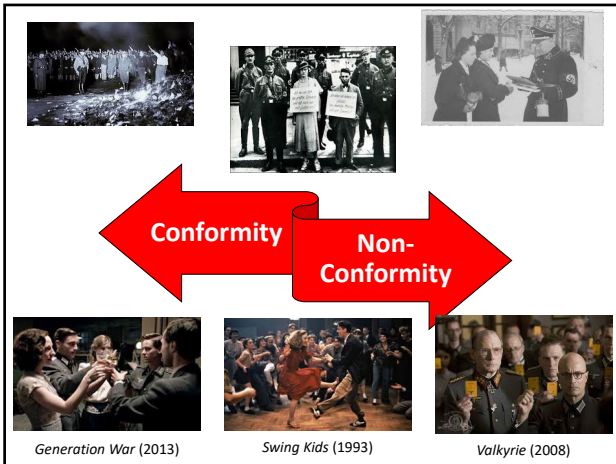


Conformity or Consent?

3



4



5

Hitler and “Ordinary Germans”

“As a vast project for social, political, and racial renewal, National Socialism offered the German people a range of ways in which to participate. Germans approached Nazi policies out of fear, opportunism, and careerism, as well as varying degrees of ideological conviction. The list can be extended: citizens were also lazy, indifferent, and ignorant. These various motivations need to stay in view. However, National Socialism exerted strong pressure on citizens to convert, to see the credibility of the people’s community, and to recognize one another as ‘racial comrades.’ The Nazis designed institutional settings, especially in community camps through which millions of Germans passed, to produce this conversion. What this meant was that individuals debated for themselves the whole question of *becoming* – of becoming a national Socialist, a comrade, a race-minded German, of remaining true to the old or joining the new. They grappled with questions about the importance of fitting in, the convenience of going along, and the responsibilities the individual owed to the collective.”
 ~Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich*, 2008, 8.

6

Hitler and “Ordinary Germans”

“As a vast project for social, political, and racial renewal, National Socialism offered the German people a range of ways in which to participate. Germans approached Nazi policies out of fear, opportunism, and careerism, as well as varying degrees of ideological conviction. The list can be extended: citizens were also lazy, indifferent, and ignorant. These various motivations need to stay in view. However, National Socialism exerted strong pressure on citizens to convert, to see the credibility of the people’s community, and to recognize one another as ‘racial comrades.’ The Nazis designed institutional settings, especially in community camps through which millions of Germans passed, to produce this conversion. What this meant was that individuals debated for themselves the whole question of *becoming* – of becoming a national Socialist, a comrade, a race-minded German, of remaining true to the old or joining the new. They grappled with questions about the importance of fitting in, the convenience of going along, and the responsibilities the individual owed to the collective.”
~Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich*, 2008, 8.

7

Types of Non-Conformity

1. Non-Conformity to Nazi norms
2. Disseminate information
3. Encourage opposition and non-conformity (pamphlets, postcards)
4. Gather intelligence and mood reports (SOPADE)
5. Sabotage
6. Armed
7. Assassination plots & attempts

8

Resistance?

- Non-Conformity to Nazi norms
- Disseminate information
- Encourage opposition and non-conformity (pamphlets, postcards)
- Gather intelligence and mood reports (SOPADE)
- Sabotage
- Armed
- Assassination plots & attempts

9

Resistance?

- Non-Conformity to Nazi norms
- Dissent and information
- Encourage opposition and non-conformity (pamphlets, postcards)
- Gather intelligence and mood reports (SOPADE)
- Sabotage
- Armed
- Assassination plots & attempts

Intentional?
Fully articulated opposition?

10

Resistance?

- Non-Conformity to Nazi norms
- Dissent and information
- Encourage opposition and non-conformity (pamphlets, postcards)
- Gather intelligence and mood reports (SOPADE)
- Sabotage
- Armed
- Assassination plots & attempts

Intentional?
Fully articulated opposition?

Group?

11

Resistance?

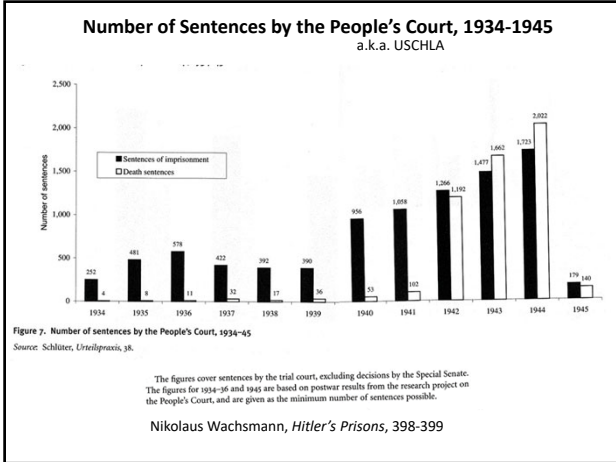
- Non-Conformity to Nazi norms
- Dissent and information
- Encourage opposition and non-conformity (pamphlets, postcards)
- Gather intelligence and mood reports (SOPADE)
- Sabotage
- Armed
- Assassination plots & attempts

Intentional?
Fully articulated opposition?

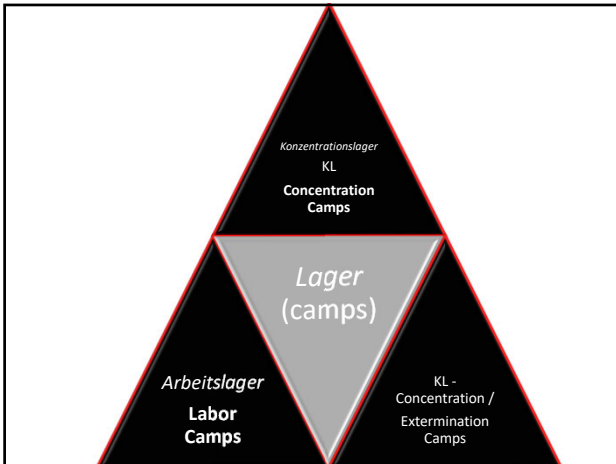
Group?

Successful?

12



19



20

Labor Camps (Arbeitslager)

Labor Camps → housed forced laborers to work in factories or farms in Germany

21

Main KL complex and period of operation	Total number of deaths
Arbeitsdorf (1942)	6
Auschwitz (1940–45)	At least c. 1,100,000 (including at least c. 870,000 Jews murdered on arrival without registration as KL inmates)
Bergen-Belsen (1943–45)	c. 37,000
Bad Sulez (1936–37)	0
Berlin-Columbia (1934–36)	At least 3
Buchenwald (1937–45)	c. 56,000
Dachau (1933–45)	c. 30,000
Drna (1944–45)	c. 15,000 to 20,000
Erzberg (1934–36)	28
Flossenbürg (1938–45)	c. 30,000
Gross-Rosen (1941–45)	At least c. 40,000
Herzogenbusch (1943–44)	c. 750
Kovno (1943–44)	c. 4,000
Lichtenburg (1934–39)	c. 25
Mauthausen (1938–45)	More than 90,000
Majdanek (1941–44)	c. 78,000
Natzweiler (1941–45)	19,000 to 20,000
Neuengamme (1940–45)	At least c. 45,000
Niederhagen (1941–43)	At least 1,225
Platzow (1944–45)	At least c. 2,300
Ravensbrück (1939–45)	c. 30,000 to 40,000
Riga (1943–44)	c. 7,000 to 7,500
Sachsenburg (1934–37)	At least c. 30
Sachsenhausen (1936–45)	c. 35,000 to 40,000
Stutthof (1942–45)	c. 61,500
Valvra (1943–44)	At least c. 4,500
Warsaw (1943–44)	More than 3,400
Total number of KL deaths	Over 1.7 million

Nikolaus, Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (2015), 626–27.

Main SS Concentration Camps

25

Sources & Challenges for Researchers

1. Mood/Observation Reports
2. SOPADE reports (Social Democrats)
3. Denunciations in Gestapo files

26

Atomization & Depoliticization

“A true assessment of the barometer of popular opinion is faced with difficulties at the present time. Because of denunciations, which are regrettably numerous, and in view of the fanaticism of some subordinate offices, it can be observed that large sections of the population and, in particular, those who are loyal to the State only give vent to their true opinion about public and especially local conditions in their most intimate circle. Otherwise, they simply keep their mouths shut because of completely unjustified fears.”?

~Upper Bavarian government official, 11 November 1935
(source: Noakes and Pridham, 2nd ed., p. 374)

27

Atomization and Depoliticization

"Here all public life seems to have died out. We have no idea what is going on in the world and most of the time not even what is going on in our town or in the neighbouring district. A large section of the population no longer reads a newspaper. Basically, the population are indifferent to what is in the papers. It is not only always the same but, in people's opinion, it is often untrue. The Nazi newspapers are no longer read because in the long run one cannot force people and because one cannot deny the fact that people lack the means to subscribe to a paper. Finally, 80 per cent have no inward connection with the National Socialists. Where one goes one can see that people accept National Socialism as something inevitable. The new State with all its institutions and with its compulsion is there, one cannot get rid of it. The great mass has come to terms with this situation to such an extent that it no longer thinks about how the situation could be changed. ...

"There can be no doubt that the Nazis have succeeded in persuading the masses to leave politics to the men at the top. The Nazi try as they say to turn everybody into committed National Socialists. They will never succeed in that. People tend rather to turn inwardly away from Nazism. ..."

~SOPAED report, Westphalia, June 1936

(Source: Noakes and Pridham, 2nd ed., p. 382)

28

Denunciation of Ilse Totzke as described by Historian Robert Gellately (6:36)

- 1) How did the process of denunciations proceed?
- 2) What role did the Gestapo play?
- 3) Why would Germans denounce their neighbors?

Source: *The Nazis: A Warning From History, Chaos and Consent* (1997)

29



30

Motivations of Non-Conformists

1. Political
2. Religious
3. Philosophical
4. Alienation from Nazism
5. Losses on the warfront/wartime atrocities
6. Horror and shame
7. Compassion for the victims

31

Policing

1. Mood/observation reports
2. Denunciations
3. Surveillance
4. Undercover agents
5. Torture
6. "protective custody"
7. Family Arrest (*Sippenhaft*)
8. Concentration camps

SD – *Sicherheitsdienst*
 Gestapo – *Geheime Staatspolizei*
 SiPo – *Sicherheitspolizei*
 KriPo – *Kriminalpolizei*
 Nazi party at all levels
 Regional government offices
 Judicial authorities

32

White Rose

"The Scholls are the first in Germany to have had the courage to witness for the truth. . . . On their gravestones let these words be carved, and let this entire people, which has lived in deepest degradation these last ten years, blush when it reads them: . . . "He who knows how to die can never be enslaved." We will all of us, someday, have to make a pilgrimage to their graves, and stand before them, ashamed."

~ Friedrich Reck-Malleczewen, Diary, March 1943.



33

Rosenstrasse

"Without warning the guards began setting up machine guns. Then they directed them at the crowd and shouted: "If you don't go now, we'll shoot."

"Automatically the movement surged backward. . . . But then for the first time we really hollered. . . ."

"Then I saw a man in the foreground open his mouth wide—as if to give a command. . . . I couldn't hear it. But then they cleared away. There was silence. Only an occasional swallow could be heard."

~Charlotte Israel, describing 5 March 1943.



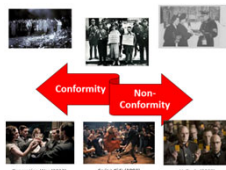
34

Alone in Berlin (2016)



35

Policing

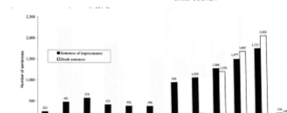


1. Mood/observation reports
 2. Denunciations
 3. Surveillance
 4. Undercover agents
 5. Torture
 6. "protective custody"
 7. Family Arrest (*Sippenhaft*)
 8. Concentration camps
- SD – Sicherheitsdienst
Gestapo – Geheime Staatspolizei
SA – Sicherheitsaussenamt
KPD – Kommunistenpartei
Nazi party at all levels
Regional government offices
Judicial authorities

Death Sentences by judicial courts, Third Reich, 1933-1945



Number of Sentences by the People's Court, 1934-1945
A.K.A. USCHA



Nickolas Wachsmann, Hitler's Prisons, 402-403

Nickolas Wachsmann, Hitler's Prisons, 398-399

36
