

Opposition and resistance

It was very dangerous to show any opposition to Nazi control, which makes it difficult to know how far ordinary German people supported the Nazi state. The Nazis became popular because they reduced unemployment and had electoral success, but it appears that many ordinary Germans probably 'went along' with the regime rather than fanatically supporting it.

There were groups of Germans who organised opposition to the Nazi regime. The most serious opposition happened during the war and it was repressed harshly by the Gestapo.

Opposition by young people

The Edelweiss Pirates

Edelweiss Pirates were mainly from industrial cities. They hated the strict military control of the Hitler Youth and dressed in ways to express freedom, such as wearing American-style clothes and longer hair for boys.

Before the war the Pirates sang songs mocking the Hitler Youth, painted anti-Nazi graffiti and occasionally fought Hitler Youth groups. During the war, Edelweiss Pirates help spread Allied anti-Nazi propaganda and looked after deserters from the German army.

In 1944, 13 young people, including Edelweiss Pirates, were hanged on Himmler's orders.

The Swing Youth

These were young people from wealthier backgrounds who listened to American 'swing' music (the Nazis hated this 'degenerate' music) and dressed in American fashions.

Over time, the Swing Youth started to organise illegal large-scale dances, involving thousands of young people.

The White Rose group

This was a group of students and a university teacher who organised anti-Nazi leaflets and graffiti in Munich during 1942 and 1943. These leaflets included criticism of Jewish persecution.

The Gestapo arrested group members in 1943 and many were executed.

Opposition from within the Army: July 1944

The July 1944 bomb plot

This was a failed attempt to assassinate Hitler with a bomb placed under a meeting table. Some of those involved opposed Jewish persecution. However, the main reason for the plot was that members of the German army no longer trusted Hitler: Germany was facing defeat and Hitler was behaving more and more strangely.

CHECK IT!



- 1 Identify two methods the Nazi state used to reduce unemployment.
- 2 Explain one benefit and one drawback of Nazi employment policies.
- 3 What did newly-wed women have to do to get the Nazi's 100-mark loan?
- 4 What was the name (in English) of the Nazi youth organisation for girls?
- 5 German Jews lost their citizenship as a result of which laws in 1935?
- 6 Name one group opposed to the Nazis.