

# Your mom

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The old view (historians in the 1950's) was that NAZI Germany was a "totalitarian" state. Hitler was the all-powerful dictator. Orders flowed downwards from Hitler. The system of government was like an efficient, well-oiled machine. Recent research by historians (1970's/80's) now disputes this view. It is now accepted that Nazi Germany was NOT a "well-oiled machine". It was more like a medieval court - with a king (Hitler) surrounded by powerful barons (his leading subordinates). The barons constantly battled with each other.

The king stayed above this conflict, occasionally backing one side or the other. The best way to get a decision was to get to Hitler personally. His orders, when he bothered to issue them, were all that counted in the last resort. This was a chaotic way to run a modern country. It was certainly NOT "totalitarian"! Historians are currently disputing these issues: 1) Some historians argue that despite the above "chaos", Hitler's will still counted above all else. Hitler was such a CHARISMATIC leader that he did not need to issue clear orders, but everyone knew, or could guess, what he wanted.

In practice everyone in government tried to carry this out. This is the "intentionalist" viewpoint. Things happened inside Nazi Germany because Hitler told them to. 2) Other historians say many decisions were taken inside Germany without Hitler's will. People in government had to get on with the job. Often Hitler just had to accept what they had decided to do. This is the "weak dictator" interpretation. It is also sometimes called the argument: that the structures of government, not Hitler's intentions, decided many issues. 3) Other historians argue that Hitler governed Germany in the way he did

They argue it was a good way to "divide and rule." While the "barons" were busy scrapping with each other, Hitler's power would never be challenged by any of them. 4) A different point of view is that Hitler really WAS a "weak" dictator. He was indecisive so he tried to put off making decisions. The details of government work bored him. He preferred foreign affairs. So he left the boring day-to-day business of governing Germany to others. He only got involved when he had to, for example to settle disputes between his "barons."