

# The role ordinary citizens played in the rise of nazi power

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Once the Nazis were in power, ordinary citizens were unable to protest the policies and practices of their totalitarian government without lethal consequences. Without an effective protest, Nazi actions grew increasingly bolder and ultimately the German people's civil rights were restricted and eliminated. The NSDAP used anti-Semitic and nationalistic propaganda along with brutality as a strategy to manipulate ordinary citizens to get them to either accept or acquiesce to their government's ongoing actions. Before the Nazi rise to power, Germans suffered from a loss of national pride from a humiliating defeat in World War I.

Germans also were amidst an economic crisis, being forced to pay reparations from World War I. Consequently, the public was eager to regain their pride and sought out political parties that made bold promises to return them to their former glory. In particular, Germans found a confident and strong political leader in Hitler, whose oratory promised a new and powerful Germany ("Chaos and Consent"). NSDAP, a fascist, right-wing political party, used propaganda to identify and isolate those that caused all of Germany's problems ("Targeting the Jews" 22). Most notably, they accused the Jews as the group most responsible for the economic crisis.

They did this to create a popular scapegoat and to assume ownership of business and property to the government or other German citizens. With this propaganda foundation, they were able to justify their increasingly violent police state actions and eventually, the establishment of extermination camps. During this time, ordinary and even influential citizens accepted that their government was acting in their best interests. When faced with the new Nazi policies that banned Jews from entering university premises, a <https://assignbuster.com/the-role-ordinary-citizens-played-in-the-rise-of-nazi-power/>

university professor, Martin Heidegger, supported the Nazi position and argued that freedom of inquiry and free expression were negative and selfish ideas (“ Taking Over the Universities” 26). As similar changes occurred gradually throughout Germany, it was clear to some that their rights were being restricted. Helene Jacobs experienced the restriction of her rights when she dared to oppose the Nazi regime by refusing to fill out a mandatory questionnaire.

This one act of rebellion resulted in her being unable to take the exams necessary for her to get a decent job (“ A Refusal to Compromise” 37). Like many others, Helene Jacobs shared the thought that the third Reich would not last long, needing only to be waited out in order for all troubles to dissolve so she could resume her studying (“ A Refusal to Compromise” 37). Helene’s failure to protect her rights was an example of how ineffective a single voice could be. Opposing the government was not an easy thing to do, nor did ordinary German citizens see a grander nefarious plan of an emerging totalitarian state. Each new legislation and act was only a little worse than the last (“ No Time to Think” 35). It became increasingly difficult for citizens to take a step against the NSDAP as in between all the major regulations come hundreds of little steps, some imperceptible, each of them preparing the citizens not to be shocked by the NSDAP’s next act (“ No Time to Think” 36).

The German citizens feared facing the lethal consequences of resisting Nazi practices and standing alone if they did. People convinced themselves that each law being passed was not so bad, if at all, worse than the previous one.

After so many laws and chances to oppose the NSDAP passed right under the German citizens' noses, the idea of suddenly rebelling against a law that was not that horrible or life changing became irrational in their minds. The waiting and holding back so many Germans assumed by allowing themselves to swim with the tide and be carried on a wave of hope because of the security they were felt was, in every respect, what allowed the Nazi regime to persist ("Chaos and Consent"). The succession of NSDAP events flowed to a new level, carrying the German people with it, without any effort on their part ("No Time to Think" 37).

Changes in principles as well as the new Germany conceived by the government were unnoticeable. The progress the Nazis were able to make was due to the significant inaction of the German citizens. They allowed NSDAP legislations to transpire because they were too afraid to challenge Hitler, which in turn furthered the institution of Nazi practices. Without consequential opposition, the Nazis continued to make laws that restricted people's democratic civil rights. The non-Jewish German citizens supported NSDAP because the removal of Jews provided more jobs and opportunities for the other German citizens.

Many non-Jews agreed with Hitler and did not approve of the success that the Jews had achieved in their German homeland. Citizens of Aryan descent did not oppose the notion of removing the Jews as the legislation passed regarding the Jews' unfair treatment proved beneficial to the rest of society. Once Germans that cared about democracy and freedom realized they had no voice, they acquiesced, and could only hope that the Third Reich would

eventually collapse. That acceptance was precisely what the Nazis wanted to keep the population obedient. Once the NSDAP was in power, ordinary citizens were never able to advance or challenge the party policies because the party became too strong.

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