

Resistance to nazism



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ During the period 1939-45 opponents within the army posed a greater threat to Hitler and the Nazi regime than any other opposition group. ” How far do you agree with this statement? The Nazi’s arguably faced a lot of opposition between the years 1939-45 and not only from the army; who had the power of keeping up the morale of the citizens due to their military strengths and integrating part of the Nazi regime. However Hitler and the Nazi’s also faced other oppositions, such as the church which again was a source of opposition based on morale.

The threats from the left and the right continued, as an on-going conflict of extremist behaviour. The youth of the country also posed a threat to Hitler and the Nazi’s due to boycotting and attacking the Hitler youth regimes. Firstly, the army was a major threat between the period 1935-49, due to the attempt of preventing war by several serving military officers, including Head of the General Staff, Franz Halder. Hitler and the Nazi’s are argued to have wanted as a means of showing Hitler’s power as a dictator, showing the significance of this threat to his regime.

At the start of the period 1939, Hitler achieved a victory at Blitzkrieg, which was followed by his momentous victory in Europe a year later, both of which led to the portrayal of Hitler as a military genius. However despite this title he had embarked, there were at least 6 assassination attempts of Hitler during the period 1943-44, including the two major attempts; Operation Flash and Operation Valkyrie, all of which failed for several different reasons.

Operation Flash was an attempt to assassinate Hitler in March 1943, in which the bomb planted on his plane to Rastenburg failed to explode. There are several arguments explaining the failure of this attempt including the fact that

the plane was too hot and the timed device therefore did not go off. Operation Valkyrie was another significant attempt on Hitler's life, known as The Stauffenberg bomb plot. This was argued to as the last realistic attempt and also the closest attempt at that, due to several minor movements of the suitcase planted by Beck.

These assassination attempts increased the suspicion of the Gestapo against future army plots, and therefore Hitler's protection was also increased. In terms of Hitler's life protection the threat from the military was seen as a serious nationwide opposition in 1943, and therefore the fact that it was a nationwide opposition highlights the fact that it was the most significant opposition that Hitler faced between 1939 and 1945. The army did not only hold power over the assassination attempts but also held power over the morale of the public.

The involvement of the USA in the war in 1941, along with military failures including the defeat at Stalingrad in 1942 and also the failure to defeat Russia made it evident that Germany were losing. These failures in wartime not only meant that Germany were seen as the losing party in the war, but it also meant that people were beginning to see flaws in Hitler's strategic leadership. Similarly it was not only the army which posed threat to Hitler and the Nazi's regime, the church was another opposition which they faced.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer opposed Hitler and the Nazi's and although the dictatorship meant that free speech had been abolished, he vocally fought against the Nazi's. Such a brave decision meant that he did in fact stand alone, but it didn't mean that others did not agree with his view that " what

Germans have done to the Jews, they've also done to God's people". This was significant as it made him a role model for Christians and he regarded the Jews and Christians all as one.

It was due to the African-American situation that he has witnessed in America which encouraged Bonhoeffer to stand up and protest against the Nazi's, as in hindsight he saw it as the same thing. This was not regarded as a major threat though as on July 20th 1944 Bonhoeffer was imprisoned in Gestapo prisons prior to being sent to a concentration camp. Bonhoeffer was hanged 3 weeks before Hitler's suicide, which in itself is argued as emphasising that Hitler did not know how to handle the opposition, as his way of stopping it ultimately ended in the sacrifice of his own life.

Although Bavarian Catholics were successful in pursuing Wagner's ban on crucifixes in schools, the Catholic Church failed to condemn systematic extermination of Jews in Public (as early as 1942). The banning of crucifixes in Bavarian schools highlighting that the church was seen as some sort of threat to Hitler's regime and also highlights the use of religion in society. This caused some uproar and in August 1941 the Nazi's had a policy which was part of the Aktion T4 programme, the killing of asylum patients.

However Bishop Von Galen was motivated by the attempt to maintain independence and integrity and led to an outspoken attack from the pulpit. This was regarded as a notable exception from the Nazi's as Von Galen's speech led to the "stepping down" of the programme. These exceptions from the Nazi's and more so the acts of the religious people involved highlighted the importance of religion and also showed a devotion to

Catholicism and not to the Nazi's, therefore emphasising that the church cannot be seen as a real threat to Hitler and the Nazi's.

Other Sections of the German society posed threats to the Nazi's, particularly the youth. Organised attempts to actively oppose the regime were set up. The Edelweiss Pirates were the most organised, these attacked the Hitler Youth and also went against social expectations of the youth in Germany. There was a lot of delinquency, drinking, smoking and even promiscuity among the young people, who deliberately went against Hitler and the Nazi's regime. In December 1942 over 700 members were arrested and later executed in public on behalf of their actions, as a means of threatening and even more so a warning to others.

These along with the ' White Rose Group' led by Sophie and Hans Scholl distributed anti-Nazi leaflets and graffiti, demonstrated through a march set up by University students through Munich. However the fact that Hans and Sophie Scholl were beheaded as a result of their protest demonstrates that the Nazi's and Hitler were not allowing any form of anti-Nazi behaviour and showed publicly the limits that the Nazi's were willing to go to in order to stop any opposition. Other groups were set up in 1941 including the ' Kreisau Circle' and the ' Goerdeler Group', both of which were seen as an opposition to the Nazi's and Hitler.

Both groups consisted of upper-class people who detested the Nazi barbarism and the fact that Hitler was leading Germany into disaster. Von Moltke and Von Wartenburg made contact with the Goerdeler Group but they did not both share the same views on what they wanted out of Germany, just knew that they did not like Hitler's leadership. The involvement of some

members from both groups in the bomb plots meant that they were easily founded by the Gestapo in 1944; resulting in many members from both groups arrested and executed.

This threat from the conservatives links into the threat of the army, however it is seen that the threat from the conservatives alone was not a massive threat to Hitler and the Nazi's regime, and the deaths and arrests of several members shows that the threat was not great due to the fact that the Nazi's were able to stop any threats present from the conservatives before they got too serious. The Nazi's also faced great opposition from the left, which is argued as the most obvious opposition they faced, due to the left's political position; thus being the complete opposite end of the political scale and therefore all of their iews were in direct contrast to the Nazi's. The left faced many weaknesses and arguably their main fundamental weakness was due to the fact that their opinions in politics meant that they were seen as an opposition to the Nazi's from the beginning of 1939, resulting in their vulnerability to the Gestapo. In Berlin alone 89 communist cells were set up in 1941, and a year later the communist resistance was united under the leadership of Wilhelm Knochel.

Splinter groups were set up by ex-SPD members, such as the Socialist Front and also the Red Patrol. Splinter groups had a more assertive policy and even attempted to co-operate with other opposition groups. However despite this co-operation the left had little impact on Hitler and the Nazi regime. As well as active the active resistance, there was also passive resistance to Hitler and the Nazi's, although it is hard to prove who acted as a means of

passive resistance it is clear that such a thing was still present in Nazi Germany.

These range from merely listening to foreign radio stations to the refusal to the 'Heil Hitler' salute. Despite being hard to prove and not necessarily being the greatest, most significant opposition that Hitler faced it shows that there were other ways in which people could subtly oppose the Nazi Regime. Another example was telling anti-regime jokes; which resulted in the punishment of death, one can say a little extreme for a punishment however it shows the force and power that Hitler and the Nazi regime have over the citizens of Germany at the time.

It also shows that Hitler was highly against any opposition that he faced, and that he did not think twice about how he would eliminate this opposition. The passive opposition had little impact on the regime as a whole, as it was not a major threat, however it allowed people to subtly oppose Hitler and the Nazi Regime. In conclusion Hitler faced a lot of opposition, some greater than others; the army being an example. The army had a lot of power in Germany during the years 1939 and 1945, both for military purposes and also for the morale of the country.

The army was also the only real threat to Hitler in the sense that they were the only opposition which were close to killing Hitler. The left is seen as one of the most motivated opposition due to their political contrasts with the Nazi's, they were not seen as any real threat though due to their decrease in power by 1939. Amongst the youth there were several resistant groups set up, but again their limitations meant they could not offer any true threat to the regime.

The greatest opposition is arguably that of the Church, this is due to the religious status of the country, and also the fact that the Nazis were unable to close down the churches, despite their attempts with the Bavarian Catholics. Although the church was a key opposition to the regime it was not necessarily a threat to the regime, due to no real attempts. Overall despite the plethora of oppositions that the regime faced the only real threat was the army. The army was the only opposition that attempted to assassinate Hitler, and fortunately for Hitler was not successful despite numerous attempts.