

Why didn't many Germans oppose the Nazis?

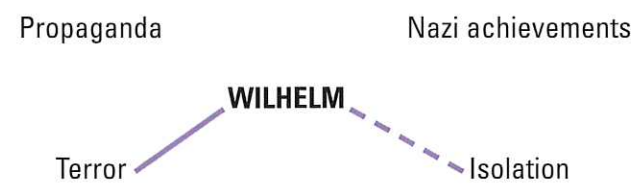
Look back over the four groups of opponents and the danger rating you gave them for the Activity on page 52. Compare your scores with others in the class. Did you give anyone the highest rating? Probably not!

One of the hardest things to explain when you study Nazi Germany is why there was not more opposition. This is what you are going to work on now. Start with these four ordinary Germans and their answers to the question: 'Why don't I oppose the Nazis?'

Activity

You are going to create your own diagram to sum up the reasons why opposition to the Nazis was so weak.

- 1 Write Wilhelm's name in the middle of a piece of paper. Write the words 'Terror', 'Isolation', 'Nazi achievements' and 'Propaganda' around his name.
- 2 Read what Wilhelm says. How important do you think each of these four factors was in explaining Wilhelm's failure to oppose the Nazis? Draw lines between Wilhelm and the factors. Use a thick, bold line for the most important factor, and a thin, faint line for less important factors.



- 3 Look for links between the factors. Draw links between factors, using thick and bold or thin and faint lines depending on how strong you think the links were.
- 4 Now draw three more charts for Hermann, Maria and Kitty.

I don't like the Nazis, but I'm scared to say so to anyone else. I know exactly what happens to those who do: the Gestapo calls on them one night and they disappear.

They get beaten to death in the police station, or on the way there, or in a concentration camp. I daren't say what I think. The local Nazi boss – a dreadful fat lout, used to be a butcher's assistant, no manners at all – knows I don't like them. He's looking for a chance to get me. He even offered one of my servants a thousand marks for any information which could lead to my arrest. My beautiful Germany has been over-run by these pigs! But I've got my estate to manage and my family and servants to think of. I really dare not speak out.

Wilhelm



Sometimes I get worried about what the Nazis are doing, but then when I hear them explain things it all makes sense again.

My older brother is in the Hitler Youth and gets to go to big torchlight rallies: he says it's a wonderful experience, swept along by the huge crowd all working for the same thing. It's on the radio too: my mum and I listen to Goebbels telling us all the great things Hitler and the Nazis have done and how they're going to make Germany even better. Of course, some bad people have been locked up, but Hitler says they deserved it – and I trust Hitler. My dad reads the papers and he says, 'Why should we want to change things when the Nazis are getting everything right? We had all that argument under Weimar and look where it got us.'

Hermann



I like the Nazis. I think Hitler is the best thing that has happened to Germany for years.

Look what the Nazis have achieved. Look how they have built up our army and navy again. Other countries won't be putting us down so much now! And unemployment – those layoffs are being made to work instead of living off the dole. There's order on the streets now – none of the noise and violence we had to put up with under that awful Weimar government. The Nazis are organised and focused and Hitler is the strong man we need. Of course, to set Germany straight again has meant taking a firm line with some people, like those Communists who want a revolution here, as in the USSR. They deserve to be locked up. So do all the other bad elements Hitler has removed.

Maria



I hate the Nazis but what can I do? Since the other political parties have been banned there is nowhere to turn. I feel like I am on my own.

I used to read the Socialist newspaper, but it stopped soon after the Nazis took over. The Socialist rallies and meetings I used to go to don't happen any more. Most of the great speakers, organisers and leaders we used to rely on have gone. Many have died in those awful Nazi camps. There are some old friends I can talk to, of course. We have a grumble and crack a few jokes. But I'm not a heroine: I can't go underground, or sabotage the war factories, much as I'd like to. I wouldn't know how, and I've got my old mother and three children to look after. But we're not going to get rid of Hitler by cracking anti-Nazi jokes. There's no one to lead us any more. We feel so weak, useless and disorganised.

Kitty



WHY DON'T I OPPOSE THE NAZIS?