

Y10 History

Week beginning **15/06/20**

How and why was opposition to the Nazis ineffective?

Please spend ONE HOUR on each lesson this week.

Lesson One:

1. Look at the image below. Spot the protester, read his story and answer the question.
2. Read the two different historians interpretations of opposition to Nazi rule. Then use your knowledge of the Nazis from previous lessons to explain why they disagree.
3. Read about the role of communist opposition and answer the questions, 1-5.
4. Read about the four key protests, label each as a success or failure and complete the table.



Spot the man not doing the Nazi salute.

The man refusing to salute is August Landmesser. The photo was taken in June 1936 at Hamburg shipyard, where August worked. In pursuit of work, August had joined the Nazi Party in 1931, but his engagement to Irma Eckler, a Jewish woman, broke the Nazis' Nuremberg Laws about racial purity and he was expelled from the party in 1935. His quiet, defiant and peaceful protest against mass Nazi support brought him to the attention of the Gestapo. August lost his job and in 1937, along with Irma and their young daughter, he attempted to flee Germany. The family was arrested and tried for 'dishonouring the race'. After being acquitted (let off), they were arrested again in 1938. Both were sent to separate concentration camps, where Irma died. It is believed that she was killed as part of Aktion T4 after she developed severe depression, although the records have been lost. August was used as slave labour and later was drafted into a prisoners' battalion and forced to fight in the Second World War. He died in combat and his body was never recovered. Irma and August's children were orphaned.

The original photograph was not published until 1991. These were the consequences for a former Nazi that simply refused to salute; opposition to the Nazi regime was almost impossible and punishable by death in the case of successful protest.

What does August Landmesser's story tell you about the consequences of protesting against the Nazis?

Task 2

Approximately 77,000 German citizens were killed for one or another form of resistance/protest by military courts, the 'People's Courts' for political crimes and the criminal justice system. Many of these Germans had served in government, the military, or in government positions, which enabled them to plot against the government. In addition, the Canadian historian **Peter Hoffman** counts unspecified "tens of thousands" in Nazi concentration camps who were either suspected of, or actually engaged in, opposition and protest.

By contrast, the German historian **Hans Mommsen** wrote that resistance in Germany was "resistance without the people" and that the number of those Germans engaged in resistance to the Nazi regime was very small.

Why do you think that some historians would consider those who were sent to concentration camps as opponents to the regime, whilst some would say there was actually little direct opposition?

Think about why the Nazis used concentration camps and repressive government, and how this would have made people behave.

Communist Opposition – ‘The Red Orchestras’

The Communist Party of Germany (KPD) formed two separate groups, usually wrongly lumped together under the name Rote Kapelle ("Red Orchestra"), a codename given to these groups by the Gestapo.

The first "Red Orchestra" was an espionage (spying) network based in Berlin and coordinated by Leopold Trepper, a Russian agent sent into Germany in October 1941. This group made reports to the Soviet Union (Russia) on German troop movements, air attacks on Germany, German aircraft production, and German fuel shipments. Trepper was eventually arrested and the group broken up by 1943.

The second and more important "Red Orchestra" group was entirely separate and was a genuine German resistance group, not controlled by the Soviet Union. This group was led by Harro Schulze-Boysen, an intelligence officer at the Reich Air Ministry, and Arvid Harnack, an official in the Ministry of Economics. They were both self-identified communists but were not Communist Party members, which meant that they escaped being targeted by the Nazis after the Reichstag Fire. The group contained people of various beliefs and affiliations, including theatre producer Adam Kuckhoff, author Günther Weisenborn, journalist John Graudenz and pianist Helmut Roloff. It matched the general pattern of German resistance groups: most active opponents to the Nazis were drawn from elite groups (professionals and the upper classes).

The main activity of the group was collecting information about Nazi atrocities and distributing leaflets against Hitler. They passed what they had learned to foreign countries. The group was revealed to the Gestapo in August 1942 by a tortured member of the Trepper group who also knew of the Schulze-Boysen group. Schulze-Boysen, Harnack and other members of the group were arrested and secretly executed.

Meanwhile, another Communist resistance group was operating in Berlin, led by a Jewish electrician, Herbert Baum, and involving up to a hundred people. In May 1942, the group staged an arson attack on an anti-Soviet propaganda display in central Berlin. The attack was poorly organised and most of the Baum group was arrested. Twenty were sentenced to death, while Baum himself "died in custody". This fiasco ended most public Communist resistance activities.

Task 2

Read about each protest and opposition group. Highlight or underline the methods each group used. Label each group as successful or unsuccessful. Finally, complete the table.

Kreisau Circle

The Kreisau Circle was a group of opponents of the Nazi Regime who met and discussed their opposition towards Hitler and the Third Reich. Led by Helmut von Moltke, many of these conversations were held at his estate, in Kreisau. Members of the Kreisau Circle came from a variety of backgrounds, though the leading figures are examples of Aristocrats opposing the regime.



Members of the Kreisau Circle often had an interest in arts, literature, religion and were united in their dismay at the state of the Third Reich. Meetings of members of the circle discussed ways in which Germany could be bettered. As they came from a range of political and social backgrounds, they often disagreed on what they wanted Germany to be like. They did though, agree that change was needed.

Areas that the group were in agreement on were that Hitler was leading Germany towards destruction. They wanted the state to be based on Christian values. Unlike many opposition groups, the Kreisau Circle looked largely to the East and the Soviet Union for external support – though this view was not held by all associated with the Kreisau Circle.

The Kreisau Circle began constructing its own vision of a post Hitler state. In 1943 they created their “Basic Principles for the New Order.” This was their idea for what Germany ought to be like.

By this time the Kreisau Circle were clear that action had to be taken to rid Germany of Hitler. They had drawn up their principles and discussed their ideas with members of the armed forces, Industrialists, the Church etc. They also communicated with foreign governments, but lacked a clear plan for overthrowing Hitler. This was partly because the members of the circle disagreed on what a post-Nazi Germany should look like, but also because communications between members of the group were increasingly difficult as the war progressed.

The Kreisau Circle was brought to an end in 1944. First, Helmut von Moltke was arrested, in January 1944. Secondly, some of its members were implicated in the July Bomb Plot and Stauffenberg Conspiracy, and were subsequently arrested.

The White Rose

In the early summer of 1942, a group of young people formed a non-violent resistance group in Nazi Germany. The group became known for an anonymous leaflet campaign, lasting from June 1942 until February 1943 that called for active opposition to the Nazi regime. Calling themselves the White Rose, they instructed Germans to passively resist the Nazis.

They had been horrified by the behaviour of the Germans on the Eastern Front where they had witnessed a group of naked Jews being shot in a pit.



The core of the White Rose consisted of five students — Sophie Scholl, her brother Hans Scholl, Alex Schmorell, Willi Graf, and Christoph Probst, all in their early twenties. Other

members were Hans and Sophie's sister, Inge Scholl, and a professor of philosophy, Kurt Huber.

Between June 1942 and February 1943, they prepared and distributed six different leaflets, in which they called for the active opposition of the German people to Nazi oppression and tyranny. Huber drafted the final two leaflets. A draft of a seventh leaflet, written by Christoph Probst, was found in the possession of Hans Scholl at the time of his arrest by the Gestapo, who destroyed it.

Sophie and Hans were questioned for four days in Munich, and their trial was set for February twenty second. They, along with Christoph, were arrested. Within days, all three were brought before the People's Court in Berlin. On February 22, 1943. The trial was run by Roland Freisler, head judge of the court, and lasted only a few hours, they were convicted of treason and sentenced to death. Only hours later, the court carried out that sentence by guillotine. All three faced their deaths bravely.



Edelweiss Pirates

During the war, 'swing' groups were formed. These were young people who rejected Nazi values, drank alcohol and danced to jazz. More violent groups were called the Edelweiss Pirates. They daubed anti-Nazi slogans, sheltered deserters and beat up Nazi officials. In 1944, the Cologne Pirates (the Edelweiss Pirates based in Cologne) killed the Gestapo chief, so the Nazis publicly hanged 12 of them.

These young people rebelled against the Hitler Youth by dressing differently, listening to banned music (like jazz and Jewish composers) and refusing to attend Hitler Youth meetings. Individual groups of Edelweiss Pirates got together in cafes, parks, or street corners in the evenings or weekends, took hikes, rode bicycles into the country for camping trips, or traveled into neighboring towns to visit fellow Pirates. It must not be forgotten that such pastimes, when taken out of context, seem exceptionally harmless. Outside of the Hitler Youth, however, they were considered criminal activities and often resulted in serious punishments.

The Stauffenberg Conspiracy

On 20 July 1944, an attempt was made to assassinate Adolf Hitler, led by Claus von Stauffenberg and other conspirators, inside his Wolf's Lair field headquarters in East Prussia. The name **Operation Valkyrie**, originally referring to part of the conspiracy, has become associated with the entire event. The apparent purpose of the assassination attempt was to seize political control of Germany and its armed forces from the Nazi Party (including the SS) and to make peace with the western Allies as soon as possible. The underlying desire of many of the involved high ranking Wehrmacht officers was apparently to show to the world that not all Germans were like Hitler and the Nazi Party.



The plot was the culmination of the efforts by several groups in the German Resistance to overthrow the Nazi German government. The failure of the assassination and the military *coup d'état* which was planned to follow, led to the arrest of at least 7,000 people by the Gestapo, 4,980 of these were executed.

Complete the table on the different opposition groups.

OPPONENTS TO THE NAZIS	<i>What type of people were they?</i>	<i>How did they oppose Nazi rule?</i>	<i>What happened to them?</i>
The Kreisau Circle			
The White Rose			
The Edelweiss Pirates			
The Stauffenberg Conspiracy			