

German Attitudes and Reactions to National Socialist Persecution of Jews

After the war, many Germans felt they could clear themselves of guilt by attributing the responsibility for the crimes committed to the SS and pointing out that opposition was not tolerated under Hitler's dictatorship. This study day aims to reconsider this view by a number of different approaches. As well as examining the thinking and actions of known perpetrators, the central question of how to describe and explain the behaviour of those who were not personally involved in the murdering is addressed. An impression of the range of reactions to Nazi terror is gained by considering individual case studies. Different propaganda and intimidation methods are investigated and the scope German people had for helping the persecuted is considered. Finally, one work group looks at the reaction of the Church, the only large social organization which was able to maintain a degree of autonomy.

Points

- Thinking and actions of National Socialist perpetrators
- Participation in the 'Aryanization' of Jewish property
- Reactions to the labelling of Jews
- Manipulation by propaganda
- Intimidation by terror
- Help for the persecuted
- The Churches and the National Socialist persecution of the Jews

Methods

- Guided tour of the permanent exhibit with special attention paid to seminar-relevant points
- Creation of a collage of typical statements by perpetrators
- Role play on descendants' attitude to 'Aryanized' property
- Feature writing
- Analysis of propaganda images
- Fictional letter writing using historical documents
- Designing a commemorative plaque for rescuers

This study day can be adapted to suit the interests and abilities of younger pupils (15+) or older students (17+).
