To What Extent Was Germany A Totalitarian State During The Third Reich Essay, Research Paper

To what extent was Germany a totalitarian state during the

Third Reich ??????????? In order to

answer this question it is important to first define the key phrase

?totalitarian state?.? According to

Fredrick, a totalitarian state must: attempt to control every part of people?s

lives, be a dictatorship with one party and one leader, have the country?s

media, economy and education system firmly under state control, and try to

control the social lives of its people. A totalitarian state may also tend to

be both militaristic and nationalistic. An alternative definition given by the Encyclopaedia

Britannica says: ?In the broadest sense,

totalitarianism is characterized by strong central rule that attempts to

control and direct all aspects of individual life through coercion and

repression. The state achieves popularity through a strong, charismatic

leader.? In order to answer the question,

each of the above points must be addressed and compared with the example of

Nazi Germany on order to decide to what extent Nazi Germany was a totalitarian

state. The Nazi Regime was unusual, and

far from being the well organised, disciplined regime it is often perceived to

be, Hitler ran Germany in a similar fashion to a medieval monarch.? Hitler was an all-powerful dictator but he

was lazy and ran the country from his mansion in Bavaria in a similar fashion

to a medieval court.? In order to get a

proposal passed as law, the party member would have to come to Bavaria, flatter

Hitler and then present his proposal.?

He despised paper work and often slept until midday, he thought of

himself as the visionary leader and he was quite content to be the visionary

figurehead and allow those under him to take care of the administration.? He never made appointments as he believed in

the principle of survival of the fittest and allowed a permanent battle to rage

beneath him.? He believed that if those

under him were allowed to fight for his approval then eventually the successful

group with a gifted leader would emerge victorious.? This group would, in Hitler?s opinion be the most talented as

they would have outwitted all their opponents.?

For this reason Hitler had four offices that claimed to represent him,

all of which fought for his attention and approval. This unusual system of

administration led to an unusual structure of individual power blocks, all

fighting for superiority.? This system

led to a limitation to the party?s control.?

The individual power blocks did not cooperate or communicate with each

other, and although the SS and the Gestapo were effective units of repression,

they were not as dominant in Germany as is often thought.? It was the reports given by the people of

Germany that allowed the Gestapo to make arrests and maintain effective

repression.? Through encouraging the

unsubstantiated gossip that spreads in any community and taking this as

concrete evidence, the Nazi party and more particularly the Gestapo were able

to maintain a degree of control over people?s everyday lives.? However, I would argue that the system was

only partially efficient as the reliance on unsubstantiated gossip and a lack

of real facts must inevitably lead to the conclusion that there were things

that the gossip missed within any community.?

The degree of control of people?s lives, therefore, was extremely limited.? However, the state certainly did set out to

control every aspect of people?s lives. The control the Nazis exercised

in other areas was also limited.? The

education system introduced by the Nazis was unusual.? The emphasis upon physical excellence and militarist drill was

resented by many, along with the blatant attempt by the party to indoctrinate

Germany?s youth through emphasising nationalist principles and showing the

party in a wholly positive light.? The

Hitler youth was often seen as positive, but in fact it has been shown that

education standards fell in Germany due to the increased emphasis on the

physical aspect.? Although in many ways

there was a strict control of the education system by the Nazis, the ability of

the system introduced to indoctrinate the youth of Germany was limited, and in

many cases succeeded only in isolating the new generation, the control here was

limited.? The economic ideas held by

Hitler, in general, lacked direction and purpose. He had no clear economic aims

and ambitions.? He concerned himself

little with economic matters; he was more concerned by ensuring that the

country was ready for war.? However,

initially he did have the insight not to attempt to run the economy himself and

left it up to the president of the Reichsbank, Schacht to fulfil this

role.? It is ironic that the area in

which the Nazi party itself had little or no input into was the area in which

they had the greatest success.? It was

Schacht who engineered the economic recovery of 1933-36, his policy of

encouraging public investment whilst lowering interest rates and taxes laid the

foundations for economic recovery.? His

later ?New Plan? solved the problem of increasing debts due to greater imports

than exports.? It was his insight and

expertise that allowed the economic recovery to take place; Hitler?s later

policies were not as successful. Schacht made the economic improvements

possible, however, the recovery in Germany was aided by a recovery worldwide

after the Wall Street crash of 1929.? At

this stage, the economy was controlled by the Nazis, but through non-Nazi

management. However, although the better economical management aided the Nazis

in their objectives, they were not essential to success.? Hitler essentially was willing to ignore

economical matters during the war as he felt that if he could gain enough

territory, Germany?s economic difficulties would cease to be a problem as he

would be able to drain capital from the territories that he intended to gain.

The introduction of 4 year plan showed that it was the war rather than the

economy that was the Nazis first priority.?

Essentially, Schacht had glossed over the real economic problems through

a series of financial tricks, in order to address the real problems the

government needing to raise taxes and more importantly, cut expenditure, and

with a growing military deemed vital to the survival of the Third Reich, the

good of the economy was of secondary importance. The result was that the

economy after temporary recovery was managed in a fairly shambolic manner after

the resignation of Schacht in 1937. The one area in which the Nazis

were in complete control was in the area of the media.? Goebbles was instrumental in the rise of the

Nazis and in the manipulation of public opinion whilst they were in power.? His censorship of the media and the

propaganda pumped out by his organisation was essential in the manipulation of

public opinion to be favourable towards the Nazi party.? His total control of the media was vital in

the total control of Germany.? In short,

his ability to organise and distribute propaganda was an essential factor in

the maintenance of Nazi control. It is interesting to note that

under these criteria, Nazi Germany can certainly be considered to be a

totalitarian sate to a certain extent.?

The State, under Nazi rule, attempted to control every element of the

lives of its people through brutal repression of certain types of people.? The allegations had very little substantial

evidence in support of them, however, through encouraging idle gossip and

treating it as factual evidence, the Gestapo were able to arrest many people

that may have resisted Nazi policy.?

Furthermore, the Nazis encouraged the Arian race to interbreed to make a

superior race whilst discriminating against homosexuals and Jews.? This again shows an attempt at control.? The Nazis, despite measures such as these,

were not wholly successful in their control of people?s lives and there remained

resistance to Nazi rule among the people of Germany.? If this resistance was limited, it was due to the fact that the

Nazis appeared to be bringing prosperity back to Germany when it was needed

most whilst inspiring the German patriotism that had been lost in the wake of

Versailles.? It was from this that

Hitler?s popularity stemmed.? However,

on the whole, people supported Hitler out of free choice rather than through

oppression and fear. Furthermore, in education and the economy, the Nazis

attempted complete control, but in many ways, despite their best efforts,

complete control was never obtained due to difficult circumstances.? In the case of education, the indoctrination

became increasing obvious and people rather than submitting to it, became

actively opposed to it.? In the case of

the economy, despite Schacht?s best efforts to hide the problems, increased

expenditure meant that the Nazis lost control.?

The media, however, remained firmly under the control of Goebbles. In

addition to these factors, Nazi Germany was violently Nationalist, very

militarist and concerned with patriotism.?

Nazi Germany was led by one party in the Nazi party, all opposition

having being abolished, and one strong leader in Adolf Hitler. Under the

criteria set out by Fredrick then, it is clear that one can conclude that the

Nazi party set out to achieve a totalitarian state, and although they were

largely successful, there were elements of Nazi rule that were far from

totalitarian due to a lack of unity and purpose within the party, the desire of

the party to stage a European war at all costs and the people?s resistance to

the totalitarian system due to a lack of control over peoples lives. However, it is difficult to

define a totalitarian state.? The phrase

came into being during the cold war, when sweeping statements defined Hitler?s

Germany, Stalin?s Russia and Mao?s China as ?totalitarian? states.? The meaning of the word is ambiguous and at

the beginning of this essay, two examples were given of slightly differing

definitions.? Under the second

definition, the Nazi party could not be described as ?strong central rule? as

their was limited unity of purpose, but in so far as there was one leader who

controlled the policies, the rule was centralised and to a certain extent

strong.? The Nazi party certainly

attempted to use coercion and repression to control people?s everyday lives and

Hitler was an extremely charismatic leader who gained much popularity within

Germany. Therefore, under this definition, the Nazi state can be considered

totalitarian to a greater extent. If one takes the definitions as

correct, Fredrick?s being the better definition, then the Nazi rule was

partially totalitarian and certainly set out to be so.? However, the phrase a ?totalitarian state?

is too general and too vague to be a satisfactory definition of Nazi

Germany.? It would perhaps be better to

look at Nazi Germany as a regime and analyse it in that respect rather than

attempting to force it into a mould for a certain type of state.? In this way Nazi Germany was different from

anything that had been before and different again from anything that has come

since, and therefore deserves to be analysed as a state in its own right rather

than being but in the ?box? of ?totalitarian states?. ? ?