

## Transcript of Wolf Kaiser: The Ordinance against treachery (Heimtückeverordnung)

The “Decree of the President for the Protection of the People and the State” was not the only legal basis for establishing Nazi dictatorship. The official title of the ordinance sounds quite ridiculous when translated into English: “Ordinance of the Reich President for the Defence against Treacherous Attacks on the Government of National Exaltation”. But it had very serious consequences. Using the ordinance and the related law that followed in December 1934, courts could hand down severe sentences for every critical remark about government or party leaders; having served their sentence in prison or jail, convicted critics were often taken to concentration camps. Whoever expressed opposition to the regime risked his or her freedom and physical well being. During the war, the Ordinance against treachery was also applied to Germans who expressed pity when their Jewish neighbours were deported. In May 1943 the Special Court of Würzburg sentenced a woman to six months in prison because she had cried and shown compassion when she observed the deportation of the Jews from the station of her hometown. According to the court, she had undermined the trust of the people in the political leaders.

Such special courts had already been introduced in 1933 together with the Ordinance against Treachery. They were charged with the enforcement of the Reichstag Fire Decree and the Ordinance against Treachery. Appeals against sentences of the special courts were explicitly ruled out in § 16. This was the beginning of the end of an independent judiciary.

Three days after these ordinances had been issued, politically organized opposition was practically eliminated.