

Key issue 3: The collapse of democracy, 1928-33

KEY WORDS

- Propaganda:** The systematic spreading of ideas and information in order to influence the peoples' thinking and actions, often through the use of media such as posters, film, radio and newspaper.
- Tactics:** An action or strategy carefully planned to achieve a specific end.
- Extremists:** A person or group who hold extreme political or religious views, especially one who advocates illegal, violent, or other extreme action.
- LIMP PAPER:** Long- Term Bitterness, Ineffective Constitution, Money, Propaganda, Personal Qualities of Hitler, Programme, Economic Depression, Recruited by Hindenburg (The reasons why Hitler gained power).
- Programme:** A set of aims, measures or activities with a particular long-term aim.
- Economic:** The state of a country or region in terms of the production and consumption of goods and services and the supply of money.
- Ineffective:** Not working as required.
- Recruited:** Employ or enroll someone to help do a job.
- Coalition:** A government where two or more political parties combine to rule.
- Mass rally:** A huge meeting of people, united for a common cause or occasion.
- Cabinet:** The group or committee of senior politicians responsible for controlling government policy.
- Dictator:** A ruler with total control over how a country is governed.
- Concentration Camp:** A camp in which people are held under harsh conditions and without the freedoms of the rest of society.
- Trade Unions:** An association of workers formed to protect their interests.
- Der Fuhrer:** The supreme leader of a country, the title adopted by Adolf Hitler.
- Police State:** A country controlled by a political police force; the government has strict controls over the peoples' lives especially by means of a secret police force.
- Gleichschaltung:** In English means co-ordination, making sure that the whole country is run the same economically, socially and politically.
- Consolidation:** The action or process of making something stronger or more solid. Getting and keeping something.

Source Question

If Your Excellency! We believe it is necessary to create a government independent of the parliamentary parties. The outcome of the Reichstag elections of 6 November has demonstrated that the present cabinet has failed to find sufficient support among the German people. We declare ourselves to be free from any specific party-political interests. But we recognise in the nationalist movement, which is sweeping through our people, the beginning of an era of rebirth for the German economy, which can only be achieved by overcoming class conflict. The transfer of responsibility for leading a Presidential cabinet to the leader of the largest nationalist group would sweep millions of people, who at present still stand on the sidelines, into active participation.

Adapted from a letter sent by industrialists to President Hindenburg in November 1932, signed by Bosch, Schacht, Thyssen, Krupp and twenty others.

With reference to this source and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of this source in explaining why Hitler was appointed Chancellor in January 1933?

KEY INDIVIDUALS

- Nazi Party (National Socialist German Workers Party):** A right-wing political party, originally known as the German Workers Party up until 1919. Adolf Hitler became the leader of the party and led the Munich Putsch.
- Adolf Hitler:** Leader of the Nazi Party, eventually Chancellor of Germany in 1933 and then Der Fuhrer in 1934.
- Paul Von Hindenburg:** Was the German general and statesman who commanded the Imperial German army during WW1 and later became the President of Germany 1925-1933.
- Heinrich Brüning:** Was a German Central Party politician and academic. Chancellor of Germany, 1930-1932.
- Social Democratic Party (SPD):** One of the largest political parties in Germany. A left wing party that grew under the rule of Kaiser Wilhelm II. It was a party that supported more rights for workers and looking after communities.
- The Centre Party (Zentrum):** A Catholic political party in Germany, originally influential during the Kaiserreich and the Weimar Republic. They were among the parties who voted for the Enabling Act that granted power to Hitler's government.
- Franz Von Papen:** Was a conservative politician, Chancellor of Germany in 1932 and vice chancellor under Hitler in 1933-1934.
- Kurt Von Schleicher:** Was a German general and the last Chancellor of Germany during the Weimar Republic. A rival for power to Hitler and was murdered by the SS during the Night of the Long Knives in 1934.
- Marinus Van Der Lubbe:** Was the young communist who was tried, convicted and executed for the Reichstag fire on the 27th February 1933.
- Gestapo:** Were part of the SS and Nazi Germany's secret police force, created by Herman Goering in 1933 and controlled by Heinrich Himmler.
- Joseph Goebbels:** A Nazi Party politician who was the Minister for Propaganda. He coordinated Kristallnacht.
- Ernst Röhm:** He was a German military officer and an early member of the Nazi Party. Also head of the SA.
- Heinrich Himmler:** He was a leading member of the Nazi Party and commander of the SS. He oversaw all the extermination and concentration camps as well as the Einsatzgruppen.
- Herman Goering:** He was a leading member of the Nazi Party, was a WW1 veteran and the original leader of the Gestapo before Himmler. He was made the economics minister in 1939 and was a part of Germany's 4 year plan.
- Storm troopers (SA):** Hitler's brown shirted supporters who were employed to beat up opponents and guard meetings.
- Schutzstaffel (SS):** originally formed as a squad of elite bodyguards for Hitler, they later ran the concentration and death camps.
- Reichsbanner:** An organization formed by members of the Social Democratic Party, the German Centre party, and German Democratic Party in 1924; its goal was to defend parliamentary democracy. They were prepared to use violence and often clashed with Nazi Stormtroopers and members of the Communist Party.

Essay Question

“The key reason for Hitler becoming Chancellor in 1933 was Brüning's failures in the years 1930 to 1932.” Assess the validity of this view.

Key Events Timeline

KEY:

Social

Political

Economical

The Great Depression takes over Germany (1930)

The Depression had huge impact on Germans because Germany depended on loans from the USA and because it all still owed reparations to the Allies. German business could not pay back the recalled loans so went bankrupt. Millions of Germans lost their jobs. There were 6 million unemployed by late 1932. The mood of optimism in Germany disappeared.

The Nazis were the 8th most popular political party with 800,000 votes (1928)

1930

Brüning resigned as Chancellor (July 1932)

Brüning was an unpopular Chancellor and lost the support of the Reichstag, unfortunately he was the Chancellor when the Great Depression hit Germany. Hindenburg decided to appoint Von Papen as Chancellor even though Hitler now led the largest party in the Reichstag. He felt Hitler would misuse his power. Von Papen also had little support.

Von Papen called an election (November 1932)

The Nazis votes fell 37.3 per cent to 33.1 per cent. But they were still the biggest party. Von Papen did not have a majority in the Reichstag to support him, so resigned in December 1932.

Von Schleicher was appointed Chancellor (December 1932)

Hindenburg still did not want to give Hitler the role of Chancellor so appointed Schleicher. He too had no support in the Reichstag and was unpopular. He offered Hitler a position in the government and said that he could be in charge of defense. Hitler refused. Hindenburg became irritated with Schleicher and asked him to resign.

1932

'Our Last Hope: Hitler' poster was created to appeal to different groups in German society (1932)

The Nazis were the most popular party recording nearly 14 million votes (July 1932)

Different Political Groups fought (1932)

There were dozens of bomb plots, street fights and murders as different political groups fought each other.

Hitler was appointed Chancellor (30th January 1933)

Hindenburg and von Papen met with other leading right wing politicians and army leaders to discuss the political crisis. Von Papen persuaded Hindenburg to appoint Hitler as Chancellor with himself as Vice-Chancellor and a majority of non-Nazis in government. They thought that they could control Hitler this way. Hindenburg had very little choice so did so.

The Reichstag Fire (27th February 1933)

A week before the election the Reichstag caught on fire. It was said that a young Communist called Marinus Van der Lubbe started the fire. He was arrested. The Nazis used the fire to blame the Communists and put people off voting left, however some believe the Nazis started the fire themselves for the propaganda.

Hitler asked Hindenburg to pass the 'Protection Law' (28th February 1933) Hitler claimed that Reichstag Fire was a communist plot and that he needed the power to deal with Germany's problems.

Hitler called another election hoping for a large victory (February 1933)

He now had greater influence over newspapers and radios and thought he could use propaganda to get the majority he wanted in the Reichstag. The election was to be in the March.

New decree, 'Protection of the People and State' (March 1933)

The 'Protection Law' was an emergency decree that gave the police extra powers to arrest people without a trial and to ban meetings. It also banned leading Communist parties from taking part in the election campaign. 4000 Communists were arrested and anti-Communist propaganda was increased.

The Nazis won the election (5th March 1933)

Nazis got their best results ever with 288 seats, it still wasn't the majority.

1933

Gleichschaltung – Co-ordination (7th April 1933)

Hitler used the Enabling act to put the Nazis in charge of local governments councils and police. The Nazis, they rounded up political opponents and put them in concentration camps. As well as this, the Nazis took control of the media such as; newspapers and radio stations, burnt all Jewish and un-German books and encouraged anti-Semitism. Anyone who went against the Nazis would be terrorised.

Removing of the opposition – Trade unions (2nd May 1933)

Hitler banned all trade unions, took away their money and threw their leaders in jail. All workers had to join the new Nazi controlled German Labour Front.

Removing of the opposition – Political Parties (14th July 1933)

The only political party that was allowed was the Nazis. The 'Law Against the Formation of New Parties' stated that anyone that tried to create a party would be imprisoned for 3 years. Germany was now a one party state.

Enabling Act (23rd March 1933)

The Enabling Act gave Hitler the power to pass laws for four years without consulting the Reichstag. This was just like power Article 48 gave the President. The Reichstag approved the Act by a huge majority after Hitler intimidated its members using the SA and the SS.

Hitler became Der Führer, Hindenburg died and the Oath of Loyalty (2nd August 1934)

President Hindenburg died aged 84. Hitler declared himself President in addition to being Chancellor. The army swore an oath of loyalty to Hitler. Hitler was now the Supreme Leader (Der Führer).

1934

Night of the Long Knives (30th June 1934)

The SA had been the basis of the Nazi success since the 1920s, particularly by intimidating opponents. It had grown massively to 2.5 million members. It was now seen as an unruly mob and a threat to Hitler's control. It was also a rival to the army, which had only 100,000 soldiers. In the Night of the Long Knives, SA leaders including Ernst Röhm were killed. The SA continued to exist but were much less important. Many members moved to the army of the SS. The SS came under the direct control of Hitler as his private army.