

The early development of the Nazi party

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In 1919, Anton Drexler founded the German Workers Party (Deutsche Arbeiter Partei, DAP) in Munich, Bavaria. It was a right-wing, nationalistic party which stressed the ideal of a pure German people. Adolf Hitler joined in September 1919. In 1920, he was put in charge of the party's propaganda machine. In February 1920, Hitler and Drexler wrote the party's 'Twenty-Five Point Programme', which became its political manifesto. In July 1921, Hitler replaced Drexler as leader and he changed the name of the party to National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP). He adopted the title Führer (leader), developed a party symbol, the swastika, and introduced the raised arm salute. Party membership increased from 1,100 members in June 1920 to 55,000 in November 1923.

In 1921, Hitler set up the Sturmabteilung (SA) which was led by Ernst Röhm. Often referred to as the 'Brownshirts' because of the colour of their uniform or the 'Stormtroopers', this armed group of mostly ex-military men were charged with protecting Nazi speakers from attacks by rival political groups.

The Munich Putsch

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The political atmosphere in the early years of Weimar was one of chaos and disruption. In this atmosphere, Hitler thought the time was right for the Nazi Party to seize power, first in the Bavarian state capital in Munich, followed by a march on Berlin. This became known as the Munich Putsch.

The Putsch failed and its leaders were arrested, The Nazi Party was banned. Hitler's trial started in February 1924 and lasted one month. It gave him national publicity. He criticised the '**November Criminals**', the Treaty of Versailles and the '**Jewish Bolsheviks**' who had betrayed Germany. While Ludendorff was let off, Hitler was found guilty of treason and sentenced to five years in Landsberg prison. He served only nine months.

November Criminals

Those politicians who had agreed to the signing of the Armistice in November 1918.

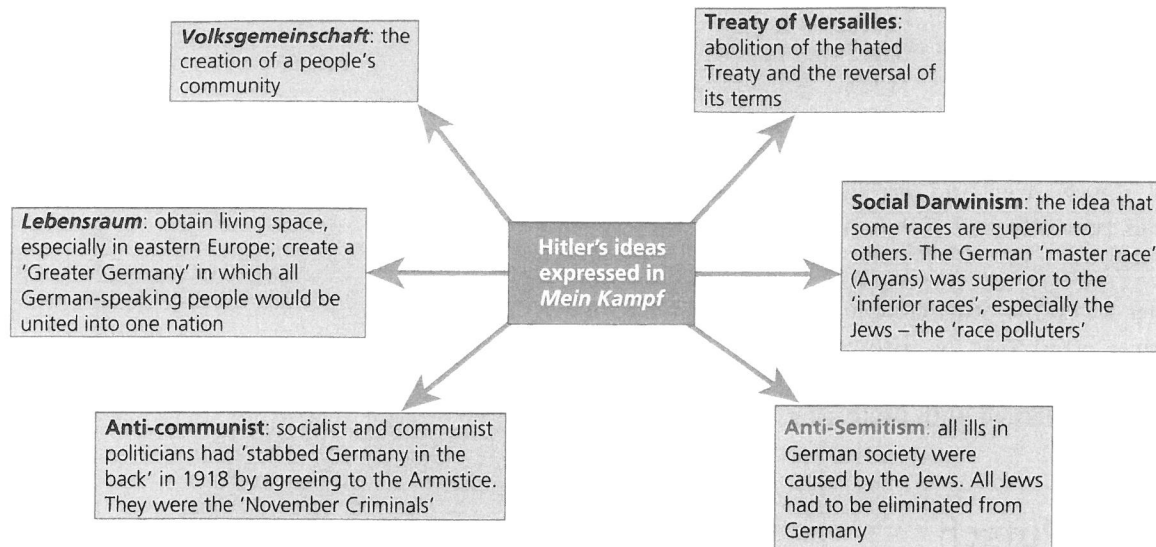
Bolshevists or Bolsheviks

Followers of Lenin who carried out a Communist Revolution in Russia in February 1917.

The importance of the Munich Putsch

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While in prison Hitler had time to reflect. He realised that in order to win power the Nazi Party would have to change its strategy. Instead of an armed rising, the party would have to build upon recent publicity and work towards achieving a majority in the polls and be elected into office through the ballot box. He also used the time to complete his autobiography, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), which contained his political views.



Further development of the Nazi Party

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Upon his release from prison, Hitler managed to have the ban on the Nazi Party lifted and he quickly set about reorganising and re-establishing his leadership.

- He created his own bodyguard, the **Schutzstaffel (SS)**.
- He introduced the **Hitler Jugend (Hitler Youth)** to attract younger members.
- He used every opportunity to attack the weaknesses of Weimar, and the Nazi Party began to attract support from all classes.
- In 1925 the Party had 27,000 members and by 1928 this had increased to over 100,000.

Despite these changes, the Nazis won only 12 seats in the Reichstag in the 1928 general election, having held 32 in 1924. The lack of success was largely due to the economic recovery brought about between 1924 and 1929 by the Chancellor and later Foreign Minister, **Gustav Stresemann**, whose policies dissuaded people from voting for the extreme parties.

Anti-Semitism Hatred and persecution of the Jews.

Schutzstaffel The SS, which originally started as Hitler's private bodyguard but which grew into a powerful organisation with wide powers; they wore black uniforms.

Hitler Jugend The Hitler Youth organisation set up in 1925 to convert young Germans to Nazi ideas.

Revision task

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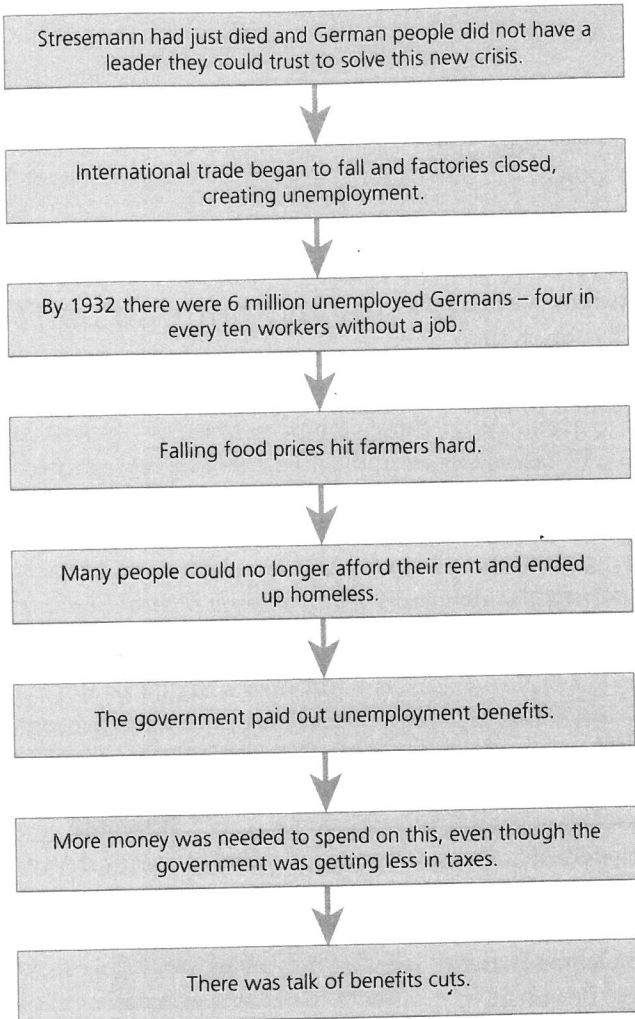
- 1 Construct a timeline to show the key events in the history of the Nazi Party between January 1919 and November 1923.
- 2 Identify three ways in which the Nazi Party developed into a more powerful political force between 1924 and 1929.

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The social and political impact of the Depression on the Weimar Republic

Much of the economic recovery in Germany in the late 1920s was heavily reliant upon American loans. Following the **Wall Street Crash** in October 1929, US banks recalled their loans. Depression hit the German economy.

Wall Street Crash The collapse of the American stock market in October 1929 that resulted in a world-wide economic depression.



Weimar politicians appeared to be doing too little too late and in desperation people increasingly began to turn to the extremist parties for solutions. Support for the communists and Nazis rose sharply in the general election of September 1930. Middle-class voters feared a communist uprising if the problems of the Depression could not be solved.

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Increasing support for the Nazis

By 1932, the Nazi Party was the largest party in the Reichstag and had attracted electoral support from all sections of German society. There were many reasons for this electoral success.

Impact of the Depression

The onset of the Depression created the political and economic conditions that caused millions of Germans to switch their voting habits and vote for the extreme parties. The moderate parties which had formed the coalitions appeared unable to tackle the worsening economic conditions. What was needed was radical action and the Nazi Party seemed to offer this.

The appeal of Hitler

Hitler was a gifted public speaker who captivated his audiences. He projected the image of being the messiah, the saviour who would solve the problems facing Germany. Using his private plane he toured the country delivering speeches to mass audiences, offering something to all sections of society. He kept his message simple, blaming scapegoats for Germany's problems, especially the Jews and communists.

The use of propaganda

Dr Josef Goebbels was in charge of the party propaganda machine. Through staging mass rallies, huge poster campaigns, using the radio and cinema, he ensured that the Nazi message was hammered home.

Financial support

The Nazi Party could not have financed its electoral campaigns without large-scale financial backing from big industrialists like Thyssen, Krupp and Bosch. These industrialists feared a communist takeover and were concerned at the growth of trade union power. Hitler promised to deal with both fears.

The use of the SA

The SA played a vital role in protecting Nazi speakers during election meetings and also in disrupting the meetings of their political rivals, especially the communists. These 'bully boy thugs' of the party engaged in street fights with the political opposition.

The end of parliamentary democracy: the coalition of Brüning

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The harsh economic climate created severe problems for the weak coalition governments of Weimar and they soon collapsed, resulting in three general elections between 1930 and 1932. In March 1930, President Hindenburg appointed Heinrich Brüning of the Centre Party as Chancellor. Brüning lacked a majority and had to rely on President Hindenburg and Article 48 to allow him to rule using presidential Decrees. From this point on, the Reichstag was used less frequently and the use of Article 48 marked the end of parliamentary democracy in Germany.

As the Depression deepened, Brüning's government became more and more unpopular. It was forced to cut unemployment benefits and Brüning became known as the 'hunger chancellor'. In May 1932 he resigned and in the general election which followed in July the Nazis polled their highest ever vote, securing 230 seats (37 per cent) making them the largest party in the Reichstag.

Revision task

Write down how these developments explain why support for the Nazis grew between 1929 and 1933:

- the Depression
- the appeal of Hitler
- propaganda
- financial support
- the SA

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Party	Elections to the Reichstag						
	May 1924	Dec 1924	May 1928	Sept 1930	July 1932	Nov 1932	March 1933
Social Democrats	100	131	152	143	133	121	120
Centre Party	65	69	61	68	75	70	73
People's Party	44	51	45	30	7	11	2
Democrats	28	32	25	14	4	2	5
Communists	62	45	54	77	89	100	81
Nationalists	106	103	79	41	40	51	53
Nazis	32	14	12	107	230	196	288

The coalitions of von Papen and von Schleicher

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In March 1932, Hitler stood against Hindenburg in the presidential elections. He polled 13.4 million votes against 19.3 million cast for Hindenburg. Hitler was becoming a well-known figure in German politics and following the Nazi Party success in the July election he should have been appointed Chancellor. Hindenburg, however, despised him and instead appointed the Nationalist leader Franz von Papen as his Chancellor.

Unable to obtain a working majority, von Papen was forced to call another election in November when the Nazi vote fell and they obtained 196 seats, 34 less than July. As the Nazi Party was still the largest party in the Reichstag, Hitler again demanded the post of Chancellor and again he was denied it. This time Hindenburg turned to General von Schleicher, the Minister of Defence, and appointed him Chancellor. His attempts to form a working majority failed and in January 1933 von Papen managed to persuade Hindenburg to appoint a **Nazi-Nationalist government** with Hitler as Chancellor and von Papen as vice-Chancellor. Von Papen believed he could control Hitler as only three of the eleven cabinet seats would be held by Nazis.

On 30 January 1933, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany – he had attained power by legal and democratic means.

Nazi-Nationalist government Coalition of NSDAP (Nazi Party) and DNVP (German National People's Party) after January 1933.

German chancellors and their governments, 1930–33

Bruning	March 1930 – May 1932
Von Papen	May 1932 – December 1932
Von Schleicher	December 1932 – January 1933
Hitler – Von Papen	January 1933 – March 1933

Revision task

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Construct a timeline showing political developments in Germany between March 1930 and March 1933. Mark on unemployment figures, the presidential election, chancellors and governments.

Exam practice

Study the interpretations below and then answer the question that follows.

Interpretation 1

Perhaps the miracle of Weimar is that the Republic survived as long as it did. The Republic had already been heading for the crossroads before the immediate crisis of 1929–30 occurred. Everything had been pointing towards a possible crash.

The German historian Detlev Peukert, writing in his book *The Weimar Republic*, published in 1987

Interpretation 2

The personality of the Führer became a significant historical factor. He had a combination of good public speaking skills and political instinct ... Luck was also with him, mainly because all other players in the field turned out to be so inadequate and mistaken in their judgements.

The German historian Edgar Feuchtwanger, writing in his book *From Weimar to Hitler: Germany 1918–33*, which was published in 1993

Do the interpretations support the view that the collapse of the Weimar Republic was inevitable?

[In your answer you should refer to how and why the interpretations differ. Use your own knowledge and understanding of the wider historical debate over this issue to reach a well-supported judgement.]

Exam tip

Look at Interpretation 1 - What is its main message? Does that message support or contradict the main focus of the question? Explain and develop the content of Interpretation 1, bringing in knowledge of this topic. Consider the attribution - who is the author of the interpretation? What is the type of publication? When and why was it produced?

Repeat the above process for Interpretation 2.

Remember to provide a reasoned judgement on how and why the interpretations differ, making reference to the content, authorship and intended audience.

4 Consolidation of power, 1933–34

Key question

How did the Nazis consolidate their power between 1933 and 1934?

Between January 1933 and August 1934, Hitler turned Germany into a one-party **dictatorship**. By August 1934, the posts of Chancellor and president had been merged into a new post – Führer (leader). For the next twelve years Germany was ruled by a **totalitarian** regime known as the **Third Reich**.

Dictatorship A regime in which the leader has total power and does not tolerate any opposition.

Totalitarian A state that has a one-party political system which holds total power.

Third Reich The period of Nazi government, 1933–45.

The importance of the Reichstag fire

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When Hitler became Chancellor there were only two other Nazis in the cabinet – Wilhelm Frick and Hermann Goering. Hitler's position was not strong as the Nazi-Nationalist alliance did not have a majority in the Reichstag. Hitler therefore persuaded Hindenburg to dissolve the Reichstag and call a general election for 5 March in which he hoped to increase the support for the Nazi Party. The Nazi propaganda machine helped deliver the party's message and the SA took to the streets to harass left-wing groups.

Revision task

Make a list of reasons why the Reichstag Fire was important in the Nazi's consolidation of power.

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On 27 February, one week before the election, the Reichstag building was set on fire. A young Dutch communist, Marinus van der Lubbe, was arrested and charged with starting the fire. Hitler used this event to his advantage.

- He argued that the communists were planning a revolution.
- He persuaded Hindenburg to sign the 'Decree for the Protection of the People and State'.
- This gave Hitler the power to restrict free speech, limit the freedom of the press and imprison enemies of the state without trial.
- Communist and socialist newspapers were banned.

The 1933 election and the Enabling Act

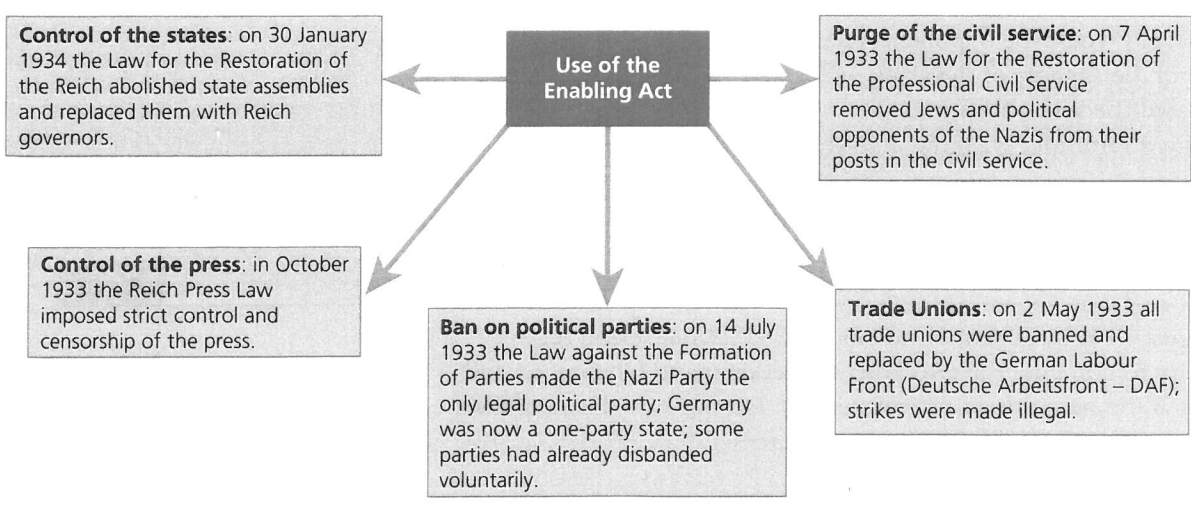
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In the election on 5 March 1933, the Nazis won 288 seats but they still lacked an overall majority. A coalition was formed with the National Party. Hitler was disappointed as he needed two-thirds of the seats to be able to change the constitution, which was necessary to secure the passing of his Enabling bill.

On the day the Enabling bill was discussed in the Kroll Opera House (the temporary home of the Reichstag), Hitler banned the communists from attending and encircled the building with SA men who prevented known opponents from entering. Absentees were counted as present and therefore in favour of the proposed bill. Promises were made by Hitler to the Catholic Centre Party to secure their votes. As a result the bill was passed, by 444 votes in favour to 94 against. Its passing marked the end of the Weimar Constitution. The Enabling Act became the 'foundation stone' of the Third Reich and it was used by Hitler to establish his dictatorship.

Gleichschaltung Nazi policy of forced co-ordination, bringing all social, economic and political activities under state control.

Through the use of the Enabling Act, Hitler was able to establish his dictatorship and impose his policy of **gleichschaltung** (forcing into line).



The removal of Hitler's political opponents

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With the new Enabling Act, Hitler wanted Gleichschaltung – to create a truly National Socialist state by bringing every aspect of life in Germany under Nazi control. To achieve this he got rid of any organisations who could resist this.

- Trade unions – on 2 May 1933, all trade unions were banned. The Labour Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront – DAF) was set up to replace them. The DAF decided wages and workers could not get work without their DAF work book. Strikes were made illegal.
- Political parties – the Communist Party (KPD) had been banned after the Reichstag fire in March 1933. The Social Democratic Party had its headquarters, property and newspapers seized in May. The remaining political parties disbanded themselves voluntarily by July. On 14 July 1933 the Law Against the Formation of Parties was passed.
- State government – Germany was made up of eighteen Länder, each with its own parliament. Sometimes they refused to accept decisions made in the Reichstag. Hitler decided that the Länder were to be run by Reich governors and their parliaments were abolished in January 1934.

Revision task

Explain how Hitler got rid of:

- trade unions
- other political parties
- State government.

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The Night of the Long Knives, 30 June 1934

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The SA had played a key part in the growth of the Nazi Party and as a reward their leader, Ernst Röhm, now wanted to incorporate the army into the SA. Röhm also wanted more government interference in the running of the country and he began pushing for a social revolution which would do away with Germany's class structure.

Hitler now saw the SA and its leadership as an increasing threat to his power. He needed the support of the army but the generals would never agree to Röhm's demands for the SA to control them. Hitler had to make a choice between the SA and the army. He decided upon the latter and on the night of 30 June 1934 he used the SS to carry out a purge. Codenamed 'Operation Hummingbird' and known as the 'Night of the Long Knives', over 400 'enemies of the state' were arrested and shot by the SS. They included Röhm, former Chancellor von Schleicher and Bavarian Chief Minister von Kahr.

Revision task

Make a list of reasons why the Night of the Long Knives was important in the Nazis' consolidation of power.

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The importance of the Night of the Long Knives

The Night of the Long Knives is seen as a turning point in establishing Hitler's dictatorship:

- it eradicated would-be opponents to Hitler's rule
- it secured the support of the army
- it relegated the SA to a minor role
- it provided Himmler with the opportunity to expand the SS.

The death of Hindenburg: Hitler becomes Führer

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On 2 August 1934, President Hindenburg died. Hitler seized the opportunity to combine the two posts of president and Chancellor and gave himself the new title of Führer (leader). He was now Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

That same day the officers and men of the German army were made to swear an oath of loyalty to the Führer. In a **referendum** on 19 August more than 90 per cent of votes agreed with his action. Hitler was now absolute dictator of Germany.

Referendum When people are asked to vote on important decisions about their country.

Revision task

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- How did each of the factors below help to increase Hitler's power and control over Germany:
 - Reichstag Fire
 - Night of the Long Knives
 - Decree for Protection of the People and State
 - Death of Hindenburg
 - Enabling Act?
- Which of these events were the most important in making Hitler dictator of Germany? Rank them in order of their importance, giving reasons for your choice.

Exam practice

Study the sources below and then answer the question that follows.

Source A

I was a member of the Communist Party until 1929 ... In Holland, I read that the Nazis had come to power in Germany. In my opinion, something had to be done in protest against this system ... Since the workers would do nothing, I had to do something myself. I thought arson a suitable method. I did not wish to harm ordinary people, but something belonging to the system itself. I decided on the Reichstag. As to the question whether I acted alone, I declare emphatically that this was the case. No one at all helped me.

Part of Marinus van der Lubbe's statement to the police, 3 March 1933

Source B

At a luncheon on the birthday of the Führer in 1942 the conversation turned to the topic of the Reichstag building. I heard with my own ears when Goering interrupted the conversation and shouted: 'The only one who really knows about the building is I, because I set in on fire.'

General Halder, Chief of the German General Staff, speaking at the Nuremberg War Crimes trial in 1945

Which of the sources is more useful to a historian studying who was responsible for the Reichstag Fire in February 1933?

[You should refer to both sources in your answer and use your knowledge and understanding of the historical context.]

Exam tip

In your answer you have to evaluate the usefulness of two sources to the historian studying the key issue named in the question. For each source you must determine usefulness in terms of: content value (what the source tells you about the key issue); authorship (who said it and when); the intended audience (why was the source produced and what was its purpose) and the context (link the source content to the bigger picture of what was happening at that time). Remember to provide a reasoned judgement upon which source is the most useful and why.