

Hitler's Rise to Power

Hitler's rise to power cannot be attributed to one event, but a mixture of factors including events happening outside Germany, the strengths of the Nazi party, and the weaknesses of other parties within Germany. Hitler used these factors to his advantage and in 1933 he legitimately gained power to become chancellor.

Wall Street Crash

In 1929, the American Stock Exchange collapsed, and caused an economic depression. America called in all its foreign loans, which destroyed Weimar Germany. Unemployment in Germany rose to 6 million.

The government did not know what to do. In July 1930 Chancellor Brüning cut government expenditure, wages and unemployment pay - the worst thing to do during a depression. He could not get the Reichstag to agree to his actions, so President Hindenburg used Article 48 to pass the measures by decree.

The Nazis gain support

Anger and bitterness helped the Nazis to gain more support.

Many workers turned to communism, but this frightened wealthy businessmen, so they financed Hitler's campaigns.

Many middle-class people, alarmed by the obvious failure of democracy, decided that the country needed a strong government. Nationalists and racists blamed the Treaty of Versailles and reparations.

By July 1932, the Nazis held 230 seats

In 1928, the Nazis had only 12 seats in the Reichstag; by July 1932 they had 230 seats and were the largest party.

The government was in chaos. President Hindenburg dismissed Brüning in 1932. His replacement - Papen - lasted six months, and the next chancellor - Schleicher - only lasted two months. Hindenburg had to use Article 48 to pass almost every law.

Hitler handed power on a plate

In January 1933, Hindenburg and Papen came up with a plan to get the Nazis on their side by offering to make Hitler vice chancellor. He refused and demanded to be made chancellor. They agreed, thinking they could control him.

In January 1933, Hitler became chancellor, and immediately set about making himself absolute ruler of Germany using Article 48.

Reasons why Hitler rose to power

1. Hitler was a great speaker, with the power to make people support him.
2. The moderate political parties would not work together, although together they had more support than the Nazis.
3. The depression of 1929 created poverty and unemployment, which made people angry with the Weimar government. People lost confidence in the democratic system and turned towards the extremist political parties such as the Communists and Nazis during the depression.
4. The Nazi storm troopers attacked Hitler's opponents.
5. Goebbels' propaganda campaign was very effective and it won support for the Nazis. The Nazis targeted specific groups of society with different slogans and policies to win their support.
6. Hitler was given power in a seedy political deal by Hindenburg and Papen who foolishly thought they could control him.
7. German people were still angry about the Treaty of Versailles and supported Hitler because he promised to overturn it.
8. Industrialists gave Hitler money and support.

The previous eight suggestions about why Hitler rose to power fall into three categories:

1. outside events
2. strengths of Hitler and the Nazi party
3. weaknesses of other political parties

Think about the arguments and facts you would use to explain:

1. How Hitler came to power in 1933.
2. Why Hitler came to power in 1933.
3. How important Hitler was in the Nazis' rise to power.
4. Why the Weimar Republic collapsed