

Name: _____

Hitler's Rise to Power DBQ – Outside Information

Directions: highlight or underline information related to the DBQ packet you just completed.

Discharged from the hospital amid the social chaos that followed Germany's defeat, Hitler took up political work in Munich in May–June 1919. As an army political agent, he joined the small German Workers' Party in Munich (September 1919). In 1920 he was put in charge of the party's propaganda and left the army to devote himself to improving his position within the party, which in that year was renamed the National-sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (Nazi). Conditions were ripe for the development of such a party. Resentment at the loss of the war and the severity of the peace terms added to the economic woes and brought widespread discontent. This was especially sharp in Bavaria, due to its traditional separatism and the region's popular dislike of the republican government in Berlin. In March 1920 a coup d'état by a few army officers attempted in vain to establish a right-wing government.

Munich was a gathering place for dissatisfied former servicemen and members of the Freikorps, which had been organized in 1918–19 from units of the German army that were unwilling to return to civilian life, and for political plotters against the republic. Many of these joined the Nazi Party. Foremost among them was Ernst Röhm, a staff member of the district army command, who had joined the German Workers' Party before Hitler and who was of great help in furthering Hitler's rise within the party. It was he who recruited the "strong arm" squads used by Hitler to protect party meetings, to attack socialists and communists, and to exploit violence for the impression of strength it gave. In 1921 these squads were formally organized under Röhm into a private party army, the SA (Sturmabteilung). Röhm was also able to secure protection from the Bavarian government, which depended on the local army command for the maintenance of order and which tacitly accepted some of his terrorist tactics.

Conditions were favourable for the growth of the small party, and Hitler was sufficiently astute to take full advantage of them. When he joined the party, he found it ineffective, committed to a program of nationalist and socialist ideas but uncertain of its aims and divided in its leadership. He accepted its program but regarded it as a means to an end. His propaganda and his personal ambition caused friction with the other leaders of the party. Hitler countered their attempts to curb him by threatening resignation, and because the future of the party depended on his power to organize publicity and to acquire funds, his opponents relented. In July 1921 he became their leader with almost unlimited powers. From the first he set out to create a mass movement, whose mystique and power would be sufficient to bind its members in loyalty to him. He engaged in unrelenting propaganda through the party newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter* ("Popular Observer," acquired in 1920), and through meetings whose audiences soon grew from a handful to thousands. With his charismatic personality and

dynamic leadership, he attracted a devoted cadre of Nazi leaders, men whose names today live in infamy—Johann Dietrich Eckart (who acted as a mentor for Hitler), Alfred Rosenberg, Rudolf Hess, Hermann Göring, and Julius Streicher.

The climax of this rapid growth of the Nazi Party in Bavaria came in an attempt to seize power in the Munich (Beer Hall) Putsch of November 1923, when Hitler and General Erich Ludendorff tried to take advantage of the prevailing confusion and opposition to the Weimar Republic to force the leaders of the Bavarian government and the local army commander to proclaim a national revolution. In the melee that resulted, the police and the army fired at the advancing marchers, killing a few of them. Hitler was injured, and four policemen were killed. Placed on trial for treason, he characteristically took advantage of the immense publicity afforded to him. He also drew a vital lesson from the Putsch—that the movement must achieve power by legal means. He was sentenced to prison for five years but served only nine months, and those in relative comfort at Landsberg castle. Hitler used the time to dictate the first volume of *Mein Kampf*, his political autobiography as well as a compendium of his multitudinous ideas.

Hitler's ideas included inequality among races, nations, and individuals as part of an unchangeable natural order that exalted the "Aryan race" as the creative element of mankind. According to Hitler, the natural unit of mankind was the Volk ("the people"), of which the German people was the greatest. Moreover, he believed that the state existed to serve the Volk—a mission that to him the Weimar German Republic betrayed. All morality and truth were judged by this criterion: whether it was in accordance with the interest and preservation of the Volk. Parliamentary democratic government stood doubly condemned. It assumed the equality of individuals that for Hitler did not exist and supposed that what was in the interests of the Volk could be decided by parliamentary procedures. Instead, Hitler argued that the unity of the Volk would find its incarnation in the Führer, endowed with perfect authority. Below the Führer the party was drawn from the Volk and was in turn its safeguard.

The greatest enemy of Nazism was not, in Hitler's view, liberal democracy in Germany, which was already on the verge of collapse. It was the rival *Weltanschauung*, Marxism (which for him embraced social democracy as well as communism), with its insistence on internationalism and economic conflict. Beyond Marxism he believed the greatest enemy of all to be the Jew, who was for Hitler the incarnation of evil. There is debate among historians as to when anti-Semitism became Hitler's deepest and strongest conviction. As early as 1919 he wrote, "Rational anti-Semitism must lead to systematic legal opposition. Its final objective must be the removal of the Jews altogether." In *Mein Kampf*, he described the Jew as the "destroyer of culture," "a parasite within the nation," and "a menace."

During Hitler's absence in prison, the Nazi Party languished as the result of internal dissension. After his release, Hitler faced difficulties that had not existed before 1923.

Economic stability had been achieved by a currency reform and the Dawes Plan had scaled back Germany's World War I reparations. The republic seemed to have become more respectable. Hitler was forbidden to make speeches, first in Bavaria, then in many other German states (these prohibitions remained in force until 1927–28). Nevertheless, the party grew slowly in numbers, and in 1926 Hitler successfully established his position within it against Gregor Strasser, whose followers were primarily in northern Germany.

The advent of the Depression in 1929, however, led to a new period of political instability. In 1930 Hitler made an alliance with the Nationalist Alfred Hugenberg in a campaign against the Young Plan, a second renegotiation of Germany's war reparation payments. With the help of Hugenberg's newspapers, Hitler was able for the first time to reach a nationwide audience. The alliance also enabled him to seek support from many of the magnates of business and industry who controlled political funds and were anxious to use them to establish a strong right-wing, antisocialist government. The subsidies Hitler received from the industrialists placed his party on a secure financial footing and enabled him to make effective his emotional appeal to the lower middle class and the unemployed, based on the proclamation of his faith that Germany would awaken from its sufferings to reassert its natural greatness. Hitler's dealings with Hugenberg and the industrialists exemplify his skill in using those who sought to use him. But his most important achievement was the establishment of a truly national party (with its voters and followers drawn from different classes and religious groups), unique in Germany at the time.

Unremitting propaganda, set against the failure of the government to improve conditions during the Depression, produced a steadily mounting electoral strength for the Nazis. The party became the second largest in the country, rising from 2.6 percent of the vote in the national election of 1928 to more than 18 percent in September 1930. In 1932 Hitler opposed Hindenburg in the presidential election, capturing 36.8 percent of the votes on the second ballot. Finding himself in a strong position by virtue of his unprecedented mass following, he entered into a series of intrigues with conservatives such as Franz von Papen, Otto Meissner, and President Hindenburg's son, Oskar. The fear of communism and the rejection of the Social Democrats bound them together. In spite of a decline in the Nazi Party's votes in November 1932, Hitler insisted that the chancellorship was the only office he would accept. On January 30, 1933, Hindenburg offered him the chancellorship of Germany. His cabinet included few Nazis at that point.

"Adolf Hitler." , Encyclopædia Britannica, 15 Dec. 2017.
academic.oup.com/levels/collegiate/article/Adolf-Hitler/106283. Accessed 27 Apr. 2018.