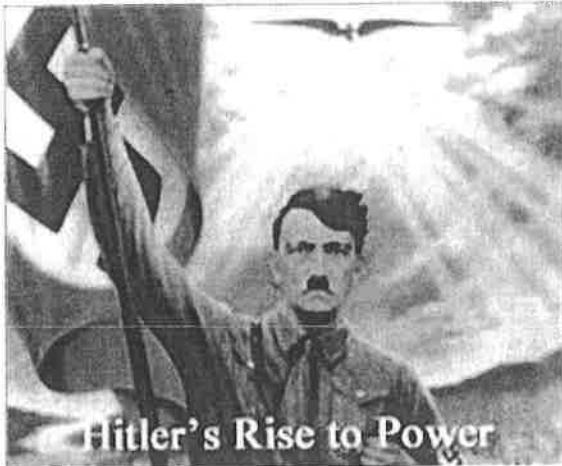


- Who was Hitler blaming for Germany's poor economic condition?
- What is another name for the National Socialist German Workers' Party?
- Why did Hindenburg offer Hitler the Chancellorship?
- What happened after Hindenburg's death?
- Who were Hitler's allies?



To Germans burdened by reparations payments to the victors of World War I, and threatened by political chaos, and a possible Communist takeover, Hitler, frenzied yet magnetic, offered scapegoats and solutions. To the economically depressed he promised to despoil "Jew financiers," to workers he promised security. He gained the financial support of bankers and industrialists with his virulent anti-Communism and promises to control trade unionism.

Hitler joined the party the year it was founded and became its leader in 1921. Under the leadership of Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the National Socialist German Workers' Party, or Nazi Party, grew into a mass movement and ruled Germany through totalitarian means from 1933 to 1945.

Hitler had a keen and sinister insight into mass psychology, and he was a master of intrigue and maneuver. After acquiring German citizenship through the state of Brunswick, he ran in the presidential elections of 1932, losing to the popular war hero Paul von Hindenburg but strengthening his position by falsely promising to support Chancellor Franz von Papen, who lifted the ban on the storm troops (June, 1932).

When the Nazis were elected the largest party in the Reichstag (July, 1932), Hindenburg offered Hitler a subordinate position in the cabinet. Hitler held out for the chief post and for sweeping powers. The chancellorship went instead to Kurt von Schleicher, who resigned on Jan. 28, 1933. Amid collapsing parliamentary government and pitched battles between Nazis and Communists, Hindenburg, on the urging of von Papen, called Hitler to be chancellor of a coalition cabinet, refusing him extraordinary powers. Supported by Alfred Hugenberg, Hitler took office on Jan. 30.

Germany's new ruler was a master of politics. Hitler feared plots, and firmly believed in his mission to achieve the supremacy of the so-called Aryan race, which he termed the "master race." Having legally come to power, he used brutality and subversion to carry out a "creeping coup" to transform the state into his dictatorship. He blamed the Communists for a fire in the Reichstag on Feb. 27, and by fanning anti-Communist hysteria the Nazis and Nationalists won a bare majority of Reichstag seats in the elections of Mar. 5. After the Communists had been barred, and amid a display of storm trooper strength, the Reichstag voted to give Hitler dictatorial powers.

From the first days of Hitler's "Third Reich" political opponents such as von Schleicher and Gregor Strasser (who had resigned from the Nazis) were murdered or incarcerated, and some Nazis, among them Ernst Roehm, were themselves purged. Jews, Socialists, Communists, and others were hounded, arrested, or assassinated. Government, law, and education became appendages of National Socialism. After Hindenburg's death in 1934 the chancellorship and presidency were united in the person of the Führer [leader]. *Heil Hitler!* became the obligatory form of greeting, and a cult of Führer worship was propagated.

In 1938, amid carefully nurtured scandal, Hitler dismissed top army commanders and divided their power between himself and faithful subordinates such as Wilhelm Keitel. As Hitler prepared for war he replaced professional diplomats with Nazis such as Joachim von Ribbentrop. Many former doubters had been converted by Hitler's bold diplomatic coups, beginning with German rearmament. Hitler bullied smaller nations into making territorial concessions and played on the desire for peace and the fear of Communism among the larger European states to achieve his expansionist goals. To forestall retaliation he claimed to be merely rectifying the onerous Treaty of Versailles.

Benito Mussolini became his ally and Italy gradually became Germany's satellite. Hitler helped Franco to establish a dictatorship in Spain. On Hitler's order the Austrian chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss was assassinated, and the Anschluss amalgamated Austria with the Reich. Hitler used the issue of "persecuted" Germans in Czechoslovakia to push through the Munich Pact, in which England, France, and Italy agreed to German annexation of the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia (1938).

