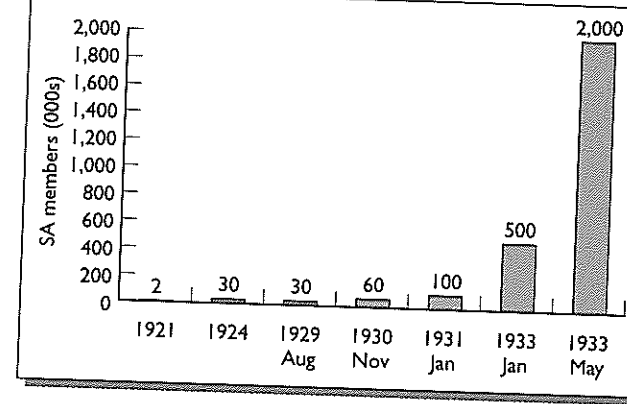
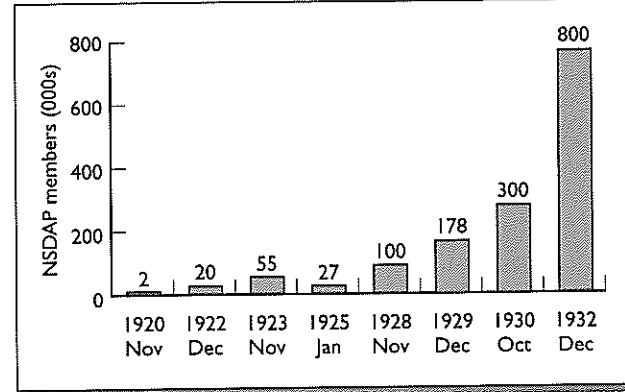
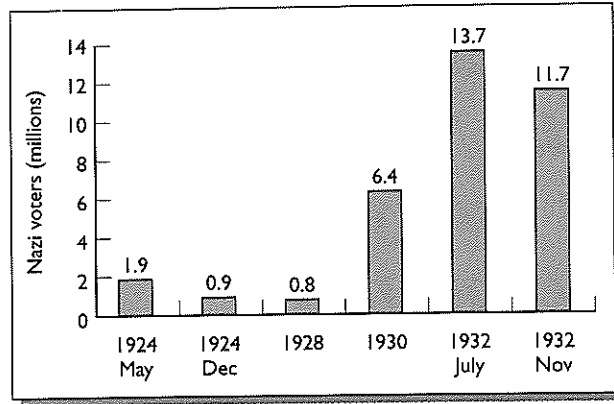


7A The rise of the Nazis

WHY DID THE NAZIS BECOME THE LARGEST PARTY IN WEIMAR GERMANY?



**1919** German Workers Party (DAP) founded by Anton Drexler  
**Sept** Hitler joins as 55th member

**1920 Feb** DAP is renamed NSDAP; Hitler drafts the 25 Point Programme

**1921** Hitler becomes party leader. SA set up. Newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* set up

**1924 Feb-March** Hitler's trial becomes a great propaganda success. Hitler is imprisoned. He writes *Mein Kampf*, vol 1. Many Nazis make small election gains in aftermath of inflationary crisis. Party nearly falls to pieces in Hitler's absence. **Dec** Hitler is released early from prison

**1925** Hitler refounds party

**1925-8** Party organisation improved, so it was in a strong position to exploit discontent when the slump hit Germany

**1926 Feb** At Bamberg meeting Hitler finally gains control and establishes a Führer party: the 'Heil Hitler' salute is adopted

1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926
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**1923 Nov** Munich Putsch fails, but lessons learnt. Party reorganised to prepare for power legally, under all-powerful Führer

**1924 Dec** Nazis lose votes as economic growth continues

**Bamberg meeting 1926** Hitler faced criticism from northern, more socialist wing of party, centred on Strasser brothers. Pressure to change 25 Point Programme in a more socialist direction, and to make the leader bound by it.

**The early development of the Nazi Party**  
 Helped by upper-class contacts, e.g. Ludendorff, publisher Lehmann, piano-manufacturer Bechstein; Röhm's links with army obtains weapons for SA

ECONOMIC

WHY DID THE NAZIS BECOME THE LARGEST PARTY IN WEIMAR GERMANY?

**Key**

- Text: Nazi Party advances
- Text: Nazi Party setbacks
- Text: Independent events

**1927**

**1928** elections; slight overall losses, but significant gains in some rural areas

**1929** local election gains; Nazis gain their first ever majority in city of Coburg. Hitler helps lead the Anti-Young Plan referendum campaign

**1929** Anti-Young campaign Nationalist outcry against 1929 Young Plan

**1929** Farmers hit by falling prices

**1929** Oct Wall Street Crash

**1930** Otto Strasser is forced out of the party  
**Sept elections** Nazis make major gains  
 Hitler is able to soothe discontent and appoints radical Röhm as leader. Hitler builds up his disciplined SS as a rival

**1930** Oct Berlin SA mutiny at reactionary tendencies in the NSDAP

**1931** Feb SA is purged of Berlin SA leader Stennes and other dissidents  
 Goebbels is put in charge of more centralised Reich Propaganda Leadership  
**Oct** Harzburg Front. Nazis join with DNVP, STAHLHELM and some of the elite

**1931** Jan Hitler is appointed Chancellor  
 Nazis make gains in Lippe local state elections

**1932** March Hitler gains 37% of the vote in presidential elections  
**July elections.** Nazis gain 37% of the vote

**1932** Aug Hitler meets Hindenburg and demands to be made Chancellor; Hindenburg refuses.  
**Nov** Nazis lose 2 million votes in elections  
**Dec** Nazis face a serious internal crisis. They have growing financial problems; there is radical pressure to seize power. Gregor Strasser resigns

**1932** 27 Jan Hitler enthusiastically received by German industrialists at Düsseldorf Industry Club; promises to guarantee the existing social order and property rights, and to weaken trade unions

RECOVERY

DEPRESSION

## TALKING POINT

Hitler's membership card had the number 555 on it, since membership started at 501. Why do you think the founders of the DAP did this?

## A What role did Hitler play in the rise of the Nazis?

## FOCUS ROUTE

Make notes on:

- Hitler's leadership qualities
- Hitler's skills as a communicator.

**SOURCE 7.1** Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), 1925

*Politics is the art of using men's weaknesses for one's ends.*

*Since the masses have only poor acquaintance with abstract ideas, their reactions lie more in the domain of feelings... And the driving force which has brought about the most tremendous revolutions on this earth has never been a body of scientific teaching which has gained power over the masses, but always a devotion which has inspired them, and often a kind of hysteria which has urged them into action. Whoever wishes to win over the masses must know the key that will open the door to their hearts.*

*The receptive powers of the masses are very restricted, and their understanding is feeble. On the other hand, they quickly forget. Such being the case, all effective propaganda must be confined to a few bare necessities and then must be expressed in a few stereotyped formulas.*

*The art of leadership consists of consolidating the attention of the people against a single adversary [opponent] and taking care that nothing will split that attention... The leader of genius must have the ability to make different opponents appear as if they belonged to the one category.*

**SOURCE 7.2** Otto Strasser, *Hitler and I*, 1940. Otto Strasser and his brother Gregor were early supporters of the Nazi Party and held leading positions in its organisation. Otto became disillusioned and left the party in 1930

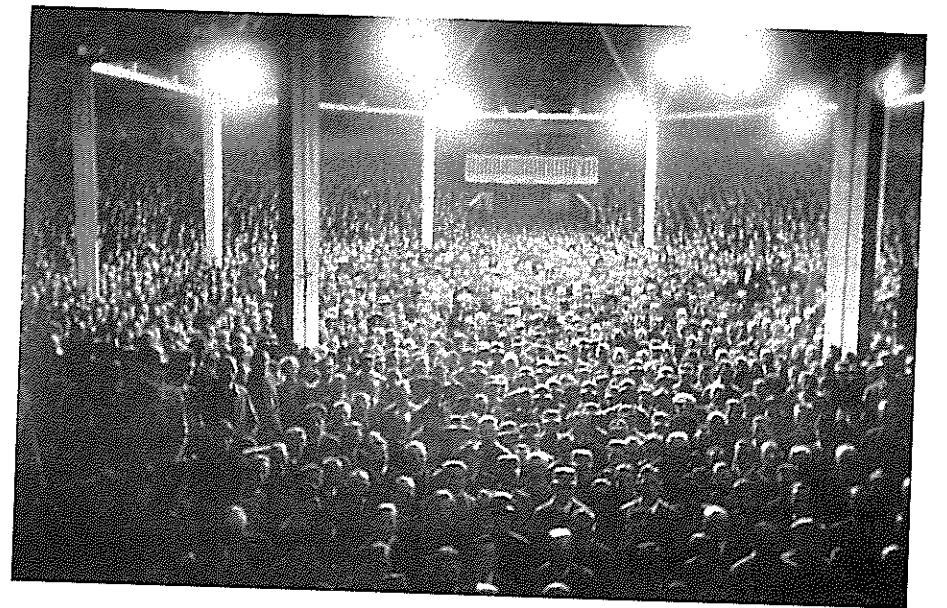
*Adolf Hitler enters a hall. He sniffs the air. For a minute he gropes, feels his way, senses the atmosphere. Suddenly he bursts forth. His words go like an arrow to their target, he touches each private wound on the raw, liberating the mass unconscious, expressing its innermost aspirations, telling it what it most wants to hear... If he tries to bolster up his argument with theories or quotations from books he has only imperfectly understood, he scarcely rises above a very poor mediocrity. But let him throw away his crutches and step out boldly, speaking as the spirit moves him, and he is promptly transformed into one of the greatest speakers of the century.*

**SOURCE 7.3** E. A. Buller, *Darkness over Germany*, 1943. Buller was an anti-Nazi German teacher who left Germany

*At one of the early congresses I was sitting around surrounded by thousands of SA men and as Hitler spoke I was most interested at the shouts and more often the muttered exclamations of the men around me, who were mainly workmen or lower-middle-class types. 'He speaks for me, he speaks for me.' 'Ach Gott [Oh, God], he knows how I feel.' Many of them seemed lost to the world around them and were probably unaware of what they were saying. One man in particular struck me as he lent forward with his head in his hands, and with a sort of convulsive sob said, 'Gott sei Dank [God be thanked], he understands.'*

## ACTIVITY

- List the main points Hitler is making in Source 7.1 about how to win support.
- Which of Sources 7.2 and 7.3 do you think is more reliable as evidence of Hitler's skills?
- What can you learn from Sources 7.2–4 about Hitler's skills in winning support?



**SOURCE 7.4** Audience listening to Hitler speaking at a rally in Munich in 1922

In 1924 Hitler was in gaol, sentenced to five years for treason. His future looked bleak and it was possible that he might even be deported to Austria. However, within one year he had been released and was able to turn his failure at Munich to his advantage. He had gained national publicity from his bold defence at his trial. He had also used the time in prison to reflect on politics and to write *Mein Kampf*.

Furthermore, the chaos into which the Nazi Party fell during his absence showed his indispensability to the movement. He virtually refounded the party in February 1925 and based it round the *Führerprinzip* (see page 55). This gave Hitler supreme power over both policy and strategy. He reorganised the party's strategy, structure and symbols. Only the Twenty-five Point Programme remained fixed, although its interpretation would become flexible. The Nazis would now use Weimar democracy to gain mass support rather than attempting another putsch.

The *Führerprinzip* made the party an obedient tool of Hitler's will. He introduced the brown shirt for his SA storm troopers, adopted the outstretched right arm as a salute and personally designed the Nazi flag with the swastika and striking yet traditional red, black and white colours. At the party congress at Bamberg in 1926 he defeated more socialist-inclined rivals and became the undisputed Führer of the party.

Hitler himself was central to the success of the Nazis. He provided charismatic leadership with his MESSIANIC mission to build a new Germany. He seemed to possess almost demonic willpower, which was both infectious and inspiring to others who accepted that what he said could come true. He was a powerful speaker; his timing, expression and the content of his speeches impressed his listeners. His hypnotic gaze from protuberant [staring] blue eyes helped fix his audience. He was able to identify with their emotions and expectations and gave people faith – an attractive commodity, particularly amidst the despair of economic crisis when other political parties appeared to lack a sense of direction.

Along with Josef Goebbels, Hitler realised the importance of propaganda and used it to target many Germans' specific grievances. He was very flexible in what he actually said to the German people. He was able to tailor his message to his audience, and was able to appeal both to the socially downtrodden and to the agrarian and industrial elites. He was the central rallying figure that gave the various groups within the party cohesion and attracted wider support. Hitler also had a good sense of opportunity and timing. However, he was clearly not infallible, as was exemplified by his near-disastrous meeting with Hindenburg in August 1932 (see page 111). Furthermore, in 1930 the Nazis did as well in areas where they had not organised mass rallies as in those where they had. It must also be said that many people who encountered Hitler were not impressed.

## TALKING POINT

Some have argued that modern advertising tactics are partly inspired by Hitler's views and approaches. Do you think there is a case for this?



## FOCUS ROUTE

Make notes on the Nazi Party's

- organisational structure
- methods of building support
- fundraising
- message to voters.

## B How well organised were the Nazis?

The Nazis' success partly stemmed from their organisational structure throughout Germany. The party was organised in a series of areas, or GAUE, headed by a local leader, the GAULEITER, appointed by Hitler and subordinate to his orders. Outside these orders, the *Gauleiter* enjoyed considerable latitude to develop the party according to local circumstances. The Nazis also built up a series of associated organisations for young people, women, students, lawyers, factory workers, etc. Especially important was the Nazi Welfare Organisation which ran soup kitchens and organised food donations to people in distress, putting into practice their idea of a *VOLKSGEMEINSCHAFT* or national community. Under its organisation chief, Gregor Strasser, the party built up an efficient structure that allowed it to exploit the economic deterioration after 1929.

Although the Nazis had a centralised party propaganda machine under Goebbels, they also paid great attention to local propaganda. Most Nazi members and voters were won over by personal contacts or by attending a meeting addressed by a local speaker, not through direct contact with Hitler, despite his energetic campaigning. The Nazis targeted key individuals in a local community, such as a butcher or teacher, and hoped he would influence others. Their growing membership allowed them to organise concerted door-to-door campaigning and leafleting. They also used direct mailing and the publication of pamphlets. For example, they distributed 600,000 copies of their Immediate Economic Programme during the July 1932 election campaign. Posters conveyed simple messages: simple in both what was offered and how they portrayed their opponents.

The Nazis put great effort into training speakers. Over 6,000 had passed through their training school by 1933. Speakers were licensed by the party to ensure quality and were provided with booklets on policies and propaganda techniques. The Nazis used the latest technology – loudspeakers, slide shows, films and even planes – as in, for example, the 1932 presidential election campaign, 'Führer over Germany'. Initially, they relied on traditional forms, such as mass rallies, marches in uniform and drill. Music, lighting and the display of disciplined enthusiasm fostered the message as much as the words. Once in power, they made great use of radio and films.

Success was also due to the campaigning effectiveness of the Nazi Movement (*Bewegung*). (The Nazis called themselves a movement to distinguish themselves from other parties.) Firstly, they developed a powerful message. The Nazis promised to restore hope and create a new national community for all Germans (*Volksgemeinschaft*). Economic problems would be solved and the people provided with work and bread. The interests of all Germans would be looked after, but especial attention was given to the needs of the true German peasant and small trader who would be saved from 'the clutch of Jewish moneylenders'. The feeble Weimar democratic system would be replaced with strong leadership, which would smash communism, end Jewish influence, destroy the Versailles settlement and end reparations. Germany's new military might would allow it to secure vital living space (*Lebensraum*) and Germany would be a great nation once more.

Nationalism was crucial to the Nazi appeal, providing a form of ideological cement to hold together potentially diverse and conflicting interest groups. Anti-semitism was prominent in the early stages in the 1920s, but was not a major reason for their mass support in the 1930s.

The Nazis' ability to convey their message gained a great boost from their 1929 anti-Young Plan alliance with Alfred Hugenberg's Nationalist Party. This alliance gave Hitler access to Hugenberg's vast media empire. Their ideas now reached beyond the party's own paper, *Völkischer Beobachter*, to a range of mass-circulation papers. Funds were also attracted so that the party could compete in the numerous Reichstag, presidential and state elections that marked the final years of the Weimar Republic. Initially, the Nazi Party had some funding from the army and wealthy patrons, but most of its money came from ordinary members, through donations and charges for attending meetings.

**SOURCE 7.5** Report of the Prussian state police, in June 1930, on the NSDAP's speakers' school

*The training of speakers is accomplished by correspondence course in the form of monthly instruction packages... A participant at the Speakers' School is only finally recognised as an official party speaker after participating in the correspondence course for 12 months and speaking publicly thirty times within 8 months.*

*This year it is planned to hold a further, oral course in Herrshing. The precondition for attendance is a minimum of 6 months satisfactory participation on the correspondence course... Speakers in possession of a 'certificate of aptitude' are permitted to hold local training evenings at which they can train speakers according to the methods of the speakers' school.*

**SOURCE 7.7** A Nazi meeting, July 1931, described in the Nazi monthly journal, *Wille und Weg* (The Will and the Way)

*The first meeting in a village must be prepared in such a way that it is well attended. The prerequisite [essential thing] is that the speaker is fairly well informed about specifically rural questions. Then, it is most advisable to go to a neighbouring village some time after but to advertise the meeting in the first village there as well, then many people will certainly come across. After this, one holds a big German Evening in a central hall for a number of villages with co-operation of the SA and the SA band... The German Evening, provided it is skilfully and grandiosely [with a great show] geared to producing a big public impact, primarily has the task of making the audience enthusiastic for our cause, and secondly to raise the money necessary for the further build-up of propaganda. The preparation of the village meetings should best be carried out in the following way: most effectively through written personal invitations to every farmer or inhabitant; in the bigger villages by a circular, which is carried from farm to farm by party members.*

The party did receive some funding from industrialists, most notably Thyssen, but it was not a major factor in its success.

The rapid expansion of the Nazi Movement created an aura of success, which further boosted membership and resources. After their startling electoral success of 1930, the Nazis immediately intensified their propaganda in readiness for the next elections. In the following year, membership rose from 390,000 to 800,000. On the other hand, turnover was rapid, as some apparently became disillusioned, especially late in 1932, with their apparent failure to gain power.

## TALKING POINT

What do you think is the difference between a movement and a party?

**SOURCE 7.6** Report for the 1930 accounts of the town group in Preussisch Holland, East Prussia

Preussisch Holland 8.3.1931

Receipts	Marks	Expenditure	Marks
Subscriptions from members	616.10	Subscriptions paid to central party SA insurance	248.05
Donations Voluntary and collections	1,620.68	Administrative expenses	468.97
Meetings Sale of admission tickets to meetings; donations at meetings to fighting fund	1,957.70	Propaganda Advertisements, leaflets, speakers' fees, travel, rent, etc.	2,249.64
		Extras SA/Hitler Youth damages at meeting	896.61
General	475.95	General	298.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,670.43</b>		<b>4,332.17</b>

**SOURCE 7.8** Extracts from the course held by the National Propaganda Directorate II, 17–31 August 1931

**Saturday 22 August**

09.30–11.30 Dr Konopath, Chief of the Cultural Policy Section of the National Directorate: *Blood and Race in the German Nation*

15.00–18.30 Town Councillor Fiehler, Specialist in Community Politics Issues within the National Directorate: *National Socialist Community Politics*

22.00–23.00 Plenary [attended by all members] Session. Speaker: Dr Konopath

**Sunday 23 August**

07.30–10.00 Reinhardt: *The National Socialists in the Reichstag: the others and us*

10.30–12.00 Alfred Rosenberg: *National Socialist Foreign Policy*

14.00–15.30 Alfred Rosenberg: *The Militant League for German Culture*

16.00–18.00 Walther Darré, Chief of the Agricultural Policy Section of the National Directorate: *National Socialist Agricultural Policy*.

**Tuesday 25 August**

**Wednesday 26 August**

*Whichever of these days sees good weather will be kept free to allow the party comrades time to participate in a long-distance tour of the Bavarian Alps.*

*[Other sessions included 'Tribute, Currency and Economy'; 'National Socialism and Support for War Victims'; 'Work and the Shaping of Social Life'; 'Hitler Youth'; 'National Socialist View of the State'; 'Educational and Religious Policy'; 'Military Policy'; 'The Jewish Question'.]*

## C How important were the SA and the role played by violence?

### FOCUS ROUTE

- 1 Who joined the SA and why?
- 2 Why did the SA make a positive impression on many Germans?

'We must struggle with ideas, but if necessary also with fists.' Hitler's words neatly summarise the main role of the *Sturm-Abteilung*, or SA. They were formed in 1920 as the *Sportabteilung*, or sports detachment of the Nazi Party, intended primarily to protect Nazi speakers. More aptly renamed the *Sturm-Abteilung* (storm detachment) in 1921, they had developed into a mass organisation of 500,000 by 1935. SA members were provided with a distinctive brown shirt, emblazoned with the swastika after, in 1924, the Party bought a stock of cheap, surplus German army tropical shirts. This was the origin of their other name, the Brownshirts.

From 1921 to 1923 and from 1930 to 1934, they were led by Ernst Röhm, who had participated in the 1923 Munich Putsch and was a friend of Hitler. He was eager for the Nazis to seize power and saw the SA as the army of a new Nazi state. Röhm represented the more radical, socialist aspect of Nazism, although, unlike fellow radicals the Strasser brothers, he was not a sophisticated thinker. He once explained his approach: 'Since I am an immature and wicked man, war and unrest appeal to me more than good bourgeois order.'

The original core of ex-soldiers expanded into a vast army of young men, attracted for a variety of reasons, ranging from hatred of communism, commitment to Hitler and love of excitement and violence to a desire for free soup and a new purpose in life. Over half came from the working class, especially the unemployed. Many were just ruffians and bullies. They were provided with a uniform, meals and sometimes accommodation in SA hostels. The SA ran occasional camps, with the stress on sport and military training. As an SA leader explained, the SA offered recruits 'what they almost always lack at home, a warm hearth, a helping hand, a sense of comradeship'.

The SA's work entailed distributing propaganda leaflets, protecting Nazi meetings and trying to drive the hated Communists from the streets. From 1930 to 1932 city streets saw increasing violence between political paramilitaries. Although these groups were not allowed to carry arms, many members were killed - nearly 100 in July 1932 alone. SA casualties were held up as martyrs for the cause. In 1932 Chancellor Brüning banned the SA. They formally obeyed but paraded without shirts. Brüning's successor as Chancellor, Papen, in an attempt to appease the Nazis, ended the ban.

The SA played a major role in Hitler's success. Their 'propaganda by deed' focused attention on the communist threat and the Nazis' determination to smash it. Despite the violence and disorder they caused, their disciplined marches created the impression that the Nazis would offer firm government to restore Germany to law and order. The fear of an SA seizure of power persuaded some in the elite to favour Hitler playing a role in government, since they thought he was the only one who could control the SA.

**SOURCE 7.9** A leader explains the power of the SA

*The only form in which the SA appears to the public is that of the military formation. This is one of the most powerful forms of propaganda. The sight of a large number of calm, disciplined men whose total will to fight may be seen or sensed makes the most profound impression on every German, and speaks to his heart in a more convincing and inspiring language than writing and speech and logic can ever do. Where whole hosts march purposefully, stake life and existence for a cause, all must be great and true.*

### ACTIVITY

Draw a left-wing caricature of an SA man.

### FOCUS ROUTE

Draw up two lists of evidence for and evidence against the Nazi Party being a socialist party.

#### Otto Strasser, 1897–1974

- A former member of the SPD, he became a Nazi in 1925.
- Born in Bavaria to a middle-class family, Otto was on the left wing of the Nazi Party. He advocated a nationalist and racist form of socialism that appealed to the lower middle classes and workers.
- Otto became disillusioned when he realised that the party as it was evolving under Hitler was neither socialist nor for the workers. He left in 1930.
- In 1934 he survived the Night of the Long Knives and went into exile.

#### Gregor Strasser, 1892–1934

- The brother of Otto, Gregor joined the NSDAP in 1920.
- In 1923 he took part in the Munich Putsch and led the party during Hitler's imprisonment.
- A gifted public speaker and organiser, he built up a mass movement in northern Germany with the help of his brother and the young Josef Goebbels.
- By the early 1930s he was second only to Hitler in power and popularity and a potential rival.
- Opposed to Hitler's anti-semitism and his courting of big business, Gregor resigned in 1932.
- On Hitler's orders, he was murdered during the Night of the Long Knives.

### Learning trouble spot

#### How socialist was the National Socialist German Workers' Party?

Students often have trouble with the word socialist in the full name of the Nazi Party because it seems to contradict the fact that it is considered a right-wing party. Here we try to clarify this issue.

- 1 **In what sense were Hitler and the Nazis Socialists?** There is a strong argument that the Nazis, as their name states, were national Socialists, as opposed to Marxist international Socialists. By socialism they meant a system that put the needs of the community before the needs of individuals. However, they saw community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) in national not class terms. In this respect they were similar to Fascists in Italy.
- 2 **Were the Nazis anti-capitalist?** Unfortunately the answer is yes - and no! The Nazis were certainly not left-wing Marxist Socialists. There were, though, anti-capitalist elements in the Nazi Movement (see, for example, their 1920 programme, page 52), but increasingly this anti-capitalism was modified, focusing only on some types of capitalism. There was hostility to FINANCE CAPITALISM, where wealthy people used their money to exploit others; finance capitalism was often synonymous with (considered the same as) Jewish capitalism. This view was attractive to indebted farmers. Nazism also opposed big business at times. This appealed to the petty bourgeoisie of artisans and small traders, who could not compete with department stores and mass production. The danger was that anti-capitalism might alienate the business elite, but Hitler reassured industrialists that it would not threaten their interests. In power, Hitler's ambitions were achieved through developing industrial might, not by protecting the petty bourgeoisie.
- 3 **Was Hitler a Socialist?** Unlike Mussolini, Hitler had never been a member of a socialist party. Issues of wealth distribution and class were never important to him. His concern was with a racially pure, ideologically unified and powerful Germany. He used the word socialist in the sense identified above but opposed party members with a traditional view of socialism.
- 4 **Were there genuinely left-wing Socialists in the Nazi Party?** Yes. They were strongest in the north where the Strasser brothers were based. They looked to attract workers by supporting strikes, and talked of social change, favouring ordinary Germans, not the economic elite. For them socialism meant a new order of society in which the material position of workers would be greatly improved. Some advocated co-operation with Communists, hoping to win them over to a national form of socialism. In 1932, some Nazis in Berlin co-operated in a strike with Communists. Schleicher's attempt in 1932 (page 135) to split the Nazis and gain the co-operation of trade unionists and the Strasserite Nazis was based on understanding this left wing of Nazism, and was not as unrealistic as is sometimes portrayed. Revolutionary socialist Nazis were strongly represented in the SA, whose leader Röhm favoured radical change. Tension continued between them and the mainstream movement until the Night of the Long Knives which effectively decapitated Nazi social radicalism (see pages 175–9). Left-wing elements were also strong in the NSBO, the National Socialist Factory Cell Organisation. These were bodies set up from 1925 by factory workers as a Nazi rival to socialist unions. They provided services for members and ran strikes. By 1933 they had 250,000 members.
- 5 **Were the Nazis a workers' party?** Right from its creation, the Nazi Party had 'workers' in its name, but the Nazis initially failed to gain much support from workers. The first sign of it becoming a mass party was in rural areas in 1928, when it shifted its emphasis to target farmers, whilst seeking a broad, pan-class (across class) base. Increasingly, the term 'workers' was interpreted loosely as all Germans working for the good of Germany, by hand or brain. Thus the Nazis could still appeal to industrial workers on a more socialist basis (see Source 7.11), whilst reassuring industrialists that their interests would also be looked after.



## FOCUS ROUTE

- 1 Which groups of people were most likely to:
  - a) be members of the Nazi party
  - b) vote for the Nazis?
- 2 How has the debate developed among historians over who voted for the Nazis?

## D Who supported the Nazis?

## ACTIVITY

- 1 Who voted Nazi? Before you examine some detailed evidence about Nazi supporters, try this preliminary exercise based on your current impressions. We will then see how far you will need to modify your views.
  - a) Study the following list of different sorts of German people.
  - b) Divide them into two groups: those most likely to vote Nazi, and those least likely to. Then put each group in a column, with the strongest supporters/opponents at the top and the weakest at the bottom.
  - c) Discuss your results with the rest of the class. Compare them with the detailed evidence on pages 118–23.
 

Low-ranking civil servant	Industrial worker
Retired professor	High-ranking civil servant
Army general	Protestant student
Shopkeeper in northern Germany	Small farmer
Female industrial worker	Catholic unemployed worker
Junker	Unemployed ex-soldier
Catholic priest	Unemployed artist
Protestant small retailer	
- 2 What attracted people to vote Nazi?
  - a) Write down on separate slips of paper four different Nazi slogans illustrating how the Nazis appealed to the German people.
  - b) Mix up all the slips from the whole class. Then sort them out into four or five categories, such as economic, political, nationalist, etc., and see how many slogans there are in each category.
  - c) As a class, discuss whether the proportion of your slogans in each category does actually reflect the main emphasis of Nazi appeal.

## How can we tell?

Nazi support rose dramatically between 1928 and 1932. There has been much debate over exactly who supported this extremist party because historians are hampered by the absence of modern opinion polls. Several types of source are available, beginning with election results. However, the results of secret ballots do not tell us who voted for whom, just how many votes a party list got in any region. One exception is that the constitution allowed states to hold separate ballots for men and women. A few did so, with blue ballot papers for men and pink for women! Thus in a few areas we have figures available by gender.

Historians' analyses of electoral support for the Nazis from particular social or religious groups are normally based on comparing how well the Nazis did in areas that differed by religious or social composition. For example, if the Nazis got 57 per cent of the national vote, but only 25 per cent in a strongly Catholic area, it seems reasonable to argue that Catholics were less likely to vote Nazi. Similarly, if they gained 45 per cent in a predominantly farming area, and several areas show this pattern, then it would seem that farmers were more likely to vote Nazi. But caution is still needed because there could be a whole range of variables affecting the result.

Other evidence is more direct. We have membership records of the Nazi Party and the SA that give some personal details, for example of occupations, although not generally of religion. Even here there are problems, as classifying people's class position is not an exact science, and people do not complete forms in a consistent way. Historians have also used Nazi propaganda, such as leaflets, posters and speeches, as an indication of whom they were trying to attract and why. We also have autobiographies of some Nazi members. One of the most valuable, but still potentially flawed, sources is Abel's survey of 581 autobiographies of Nazi members. In 1934 this American academic offered prizes to Nazi Party members who wrote accounts of why they joined. They provide fascinating insights, but are not necessarily representative and may not be an accurate reflection of their authors' motives. There are also accounts by Germans and foreigners who lived in Germany and commented on the growing Nazi Movement and memoirs of former Nazi supporters. All such sources need to be treated cautiously.

## ACTIVITY

- 1 Using Source 7.10, identify two groups that were over-represented in the Nazi Party and two that were under-represented in 1933.
- 2 How did the membership of the Nazi Party change between 1929 and 1933 and then again after 1933? Why might this be?
- 3 What do Chart 7B and Source 7.11 show about Nazi support from the working class?
- 4 What do Sources 7.12, 7.13 and 7.15 tell you about the nature of Nazi support?
- 5 Were there differences between those who were members of the Nazi Party and those who voted for the Nazis?
- 6 Using Source 7.14 and Chart 7C on page 121:
  - a) How does support for the Nazi Party differ by region?
  - b) Why do you think it differed in this way?
- 7 Study Source 7.16. To what extent do these earlier sources confirm Hitler's claim that the Nazis were successful in appealing to 'every German'?

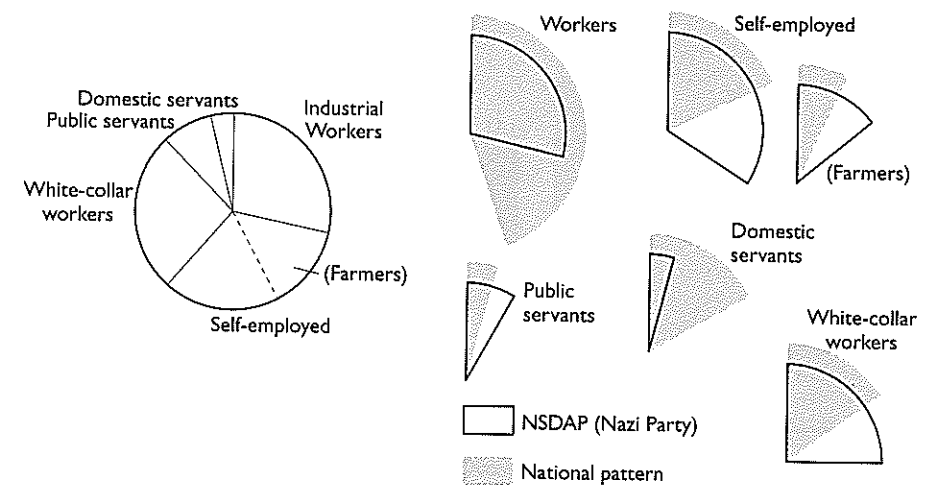
**SOURCE 7.10** This table gives detail of Nazi Party members. Columns A–F divide them according to when they joined the party. Column G gives estimated percentages of each social group in Germany in 1933

	Before Nov 1930		Nov 1930–Jan 1933		Total Jan 1935		1933
	A Number	B % of total members	C Number	D % of total members	E Number	F % of total members	
Workers	33,944	26.3	233,479	32.5	755,967	30.3	46.3
White-collar workers	31,067	24.0	147,855	20.6	484,054	19.4	12.4
Self-employed, including artisans	24,563	18.9	124,579	17.3	475,223	19.0	9.6
Civil servants, including teachers	10,015	7.7	46,967	6.5	307,205	12.4	4.8
Peasants	17,181	13.2	89,800	12.5	255,291	10.2	20.7
Others	12,793	9.9	76,766	10.7	216,130	8.7	6.2
<b>Total members</b>	<b>129,563</b>		<b>719,446</b>		<b>2,493,870</b>		

**SOURCE 7.11** Internal KPD document discussing the NSDAP and SA, December, 1931

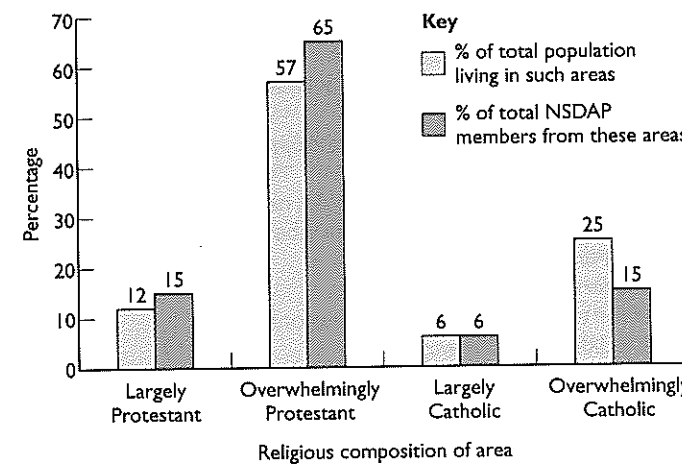
*The betrayal of socialism, of the German working people and thereby of the German nation by the SPD's leaders has led millions of proletarians, rural workers and impoverished members of the middle classes into the ranks of the NSDAP. In particular the... SS and SA boast a high percentage of proletarians. For sure the NSDAP, supported by finance capital, uses bribery to win over the unemployed masses. Unemployed who join the SA receive clothing and sometimes accommodation and board. But this bribery is not the decisive factor behind the flow even of the proletarian masses into the NSDAP. Decisive is the SPD's betrayal of socialism and the lying, pseudo-socialist demagoguery of Hitler's party. We have to recognise that a large proportion of the Nazi proletarians are misled workers who honestly believe that they are fighting against capitalism and for socialism.*

### 7B The occupational structure of Nazi Party membership compared to national patterns

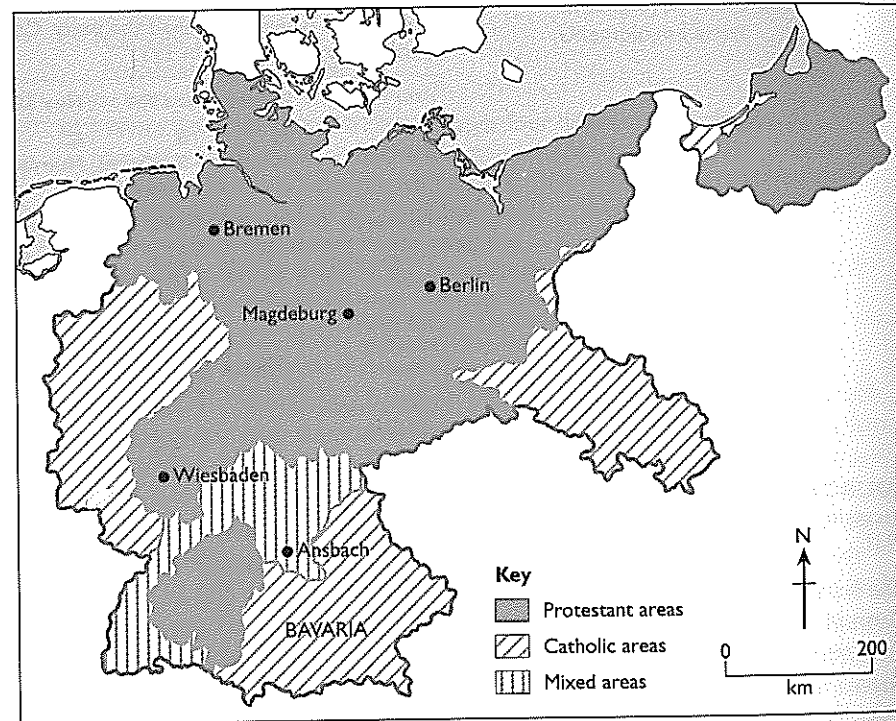


The pie chart on the left shows the occupational structure of the Nazi Party. The segments and shading on the right show the proportion of the German population for each social group overlaid by the proportion of Nazi Party members who were of that group.

SOURCE 7.12 Membership of the NSDAP, 1925-33, by religion



SOURCE 7.14 The distribution of Protestants and Catholics in Germany



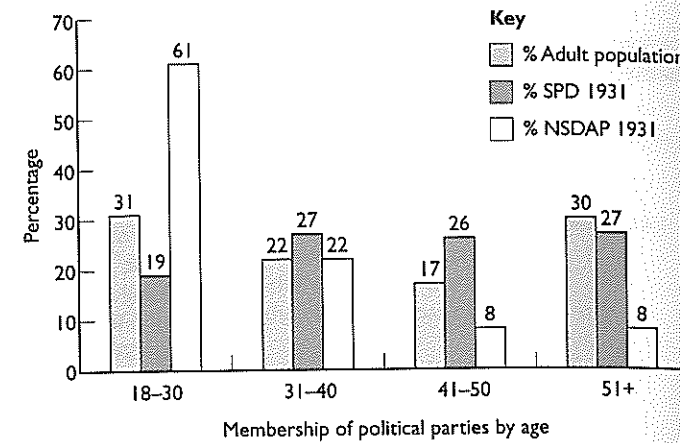
SOURCE 7.15 Percentage of German males/females voting Nazi

Area	1930		July 1932		November 1932		January 1933	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Bremen	12.9	11.1	29.9	30.9	20.8	20.9	30.8	34.4
Bavaria	18.9	14.2	29.2	25.6	27.4	24.7	36.2	34.4
Ansbach	34.6	33.3			47.6	50.0	51.2	55.6
Magdeburg	19.8	18.7	36.3	38.9	31.1	34.0	38.1	43.3
Wiesbaden	29.1	26.0	43.0	43.7	36.1	36.8	44.9	47.3

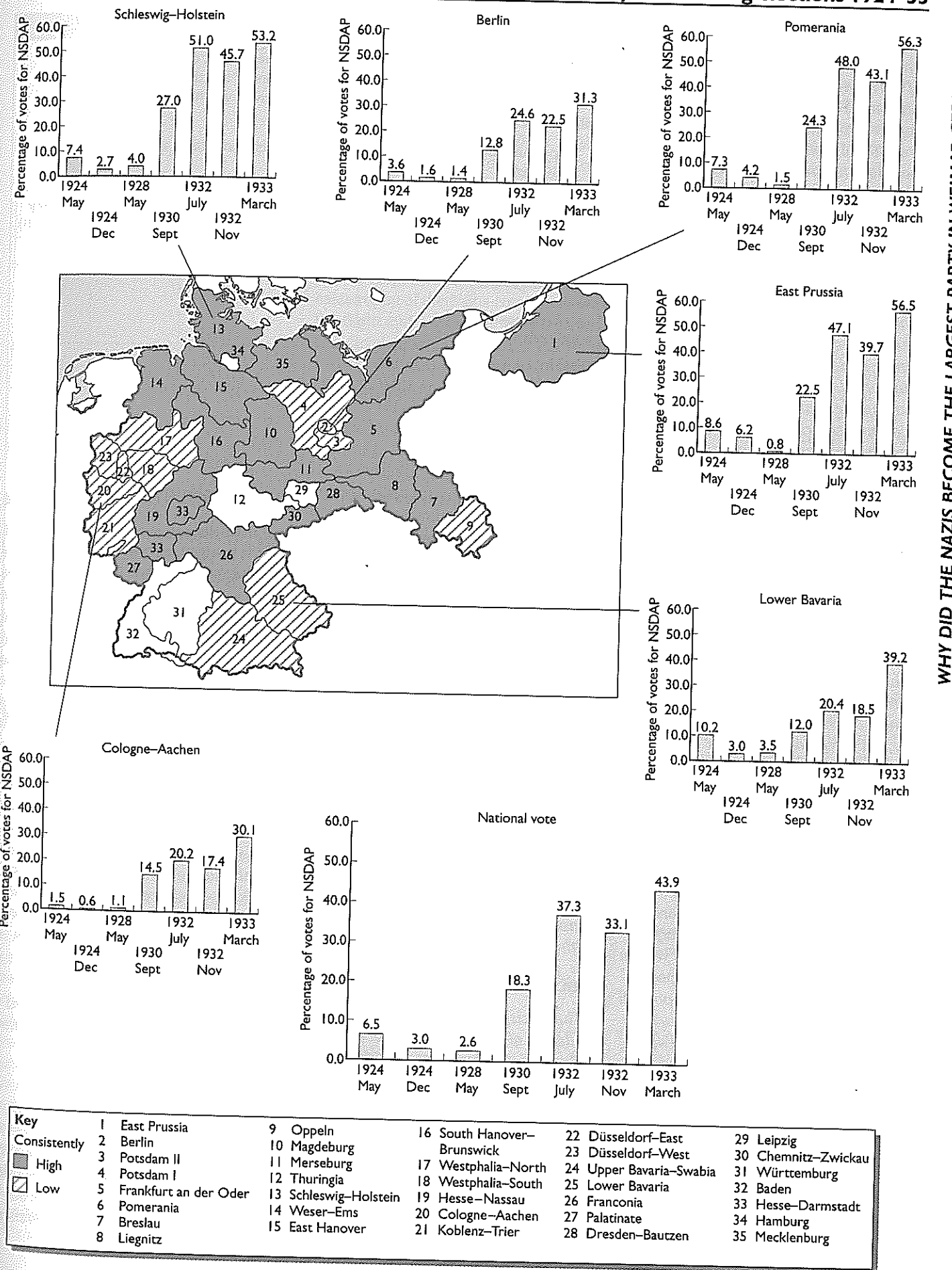
SOURCE 7.16 Hitler, November 1928

[The NSDAP is] not the movement of any particular class or of a particular status group or profession... [instead it is] in the highest sense of the word a German national party. It aims to encompass all elements of the nation and to embrace all occupational groups, to address each and every German of good will.

SOURCE 7.13 Membership of political parties by age



7C Map and bar graphs showing support for the Nazi Party in Reichstag elections 1924-33



**SOURCE 7.17** J. Noakes, 'The Rise of the Nazis', *History Today*, January 1983, p. 11

The Nazis did best in the rural areas and small towns of the Protestant parts of Germany, particularly in the north and east. They won much of their support from the most rooted and traditional section of the German population – peasant farmers, self-employed artisans, craftsmen and small retailers... In urban areas the party did best in those towns and cities which were administrative or commercial centres with large civil servant and white collar populations, rather than in industrial centres; and they tended to win most support in upper-middle-class districts. Nazi support also tended to be strongest among the younger generation. This was particularly true of the membership, which was also overwhelmingly male.

**SOURCE 7.18** J. Falter, 'How likely were workers to vote for the NSDAP?', in *The Rise of Nationalism and the Working Classes in Weimar Germany*, ed. C. Fischer, 1996, pp. 34 and 40

According to our estimates, probably one in three workers of voting age backed the NSDAP... From July 1932 onwards more workers would have voted NSDAP than voted KPD or SPD... On a regular basis more than a quarter of National Socialist voters were workers...

In terms of its electoral support the NSDAP was clearly Protestant dominated, but otherwise in social terms it was a distinctly heterogeneous [mixed] party... There is unmistakable over-representation of voters from the middle classes, a fact certainly disputed by no one as yet. On the other hand, it no longer appears admissible, given so high a proportion of voters from the working class, to speak of a middle class party. The National Socialists' electoral successes were nourished by so many different sources, that the NSDAP might really best be characterised as an integrative [all-embracing] protest movement... Its composition was so socially balanced... that... it possessed the character of a people's party or national party more than any other large Weimar party.

## Historical debate: who voted Nazi?

### ACTIVITY

The issue of who voted for the Nazis has been the subject of great historical controversy. To some extent this is because behind it lies the extremely sensitive question, 'Who was to blame for Hitler?' This activity will help you to identify the main trends in historians' explanations.

1 Copy the table below. Mark a tick if the historian identifies a group as prone to vote Nazi.

Group	1 Noakes (Source 7.17)	2 Peterson (Source 7.19)	3 Fischer (Source 7.20)	4 Falter (Source 7.18)	5 Geary (Source 7.21)
Working class					
Petty bourgeoisie/ middle class, e.g. shopkeepers, white-collar workers					
Wealthy, i.e. upper middle class					
Protestants					
Wide range, i.e. a people's movement					

- 2 What degree of historical consensus about Nazi support emerges from this exercise?
- 3 These are only extracts from the analyses of these historians so care has to be taken when assessing their views. However, the paragraph from Peterson (Source 7.19) is complete. Is there any surprising omission from his discussion of Nazi supporters? How might this be explained?
- 4 'The traditional stress on the petty-bourgeois base of Nazi support need not be discarded, but instead incorporated into a broader picture.' How far do these extracts substantiate this opinion?

**SOURCE 7.19** B. Peterson, 'Regional Elites and the Rise of National Socialism' in *Radical Perspectives on the Rise of Fascism in Germany*, 1989, p. 172

Most [historians] now generally agree that the social class most inclined to join and vote for the National Socialists was the petty bourgeoisie, including artisans, shopkeepers, and peasants. Substantial support, however, has been shown to have come from higher social strata. Recent studies have demonstrated that residents of affluent neighbourhoods, vacationers, cruise ship passengers, civil servants and RENTIERS – all arguably elite – supported the National Socialist German Workers Party. On the other hand, big business and Junkers – the core groups of the ruling class in Weimar Germany – were generally disinclined to join or vote for the Nazis, although some of them gave various other kinds of direct and indirect support.

**SOURCE 7.20** Conan Fischer, *The Rise of the Nazis*, 1995, pp. 63 and 99

[The Nazis] intended to MOBILISE all 'ethnic' Germans, tried to do so and enjoyed a degree of success in crossing class, regional, confessional [religious], gender and age barriers which was unprecedented in German political history...

An impressive body of evidence... supports the overall picture of National Socialism as a predominantly Protestant, middle-class rassemblement [movement], and this line of interpretation has provided the starting point and the conclusion for most of the general histories of Nazism... The latest EMPIRICAL work on the National Socialist constituency [voters] has now created problems for this long-standing consensus which have yet to be fully addressed. It appears that some 40 per cent of voters and party members were working class and some 60 per cent of SA members were working class, leading to the typification of Nazism as a popular or people's movement instead of a class movement.

**SOURCE 7.21** R. Geary, *Hitler and Nazism*, 1993, p. 27

The NSDAP was most successful where it did not have to cope with strong pre-existing IDEOLOGICAL and organisational loyalties. Where these did exist, as in Social Democratic and Communist strongholds, it did far less well. The same applied to Germany's Catholic community, strongly represented over decades by the Centre Party (or the BVP in Bavaria). Loyalty to the party was reinforced by a plethora [great range] of Catholic leisure organisations which penetrated daily life and also by the pulpit, from which the NSDAP was sometimes denounced as godless. On the other hand, Nazi success in Protestant rural and middle class Germany was facilitated by the fact that political loyalties there were either weak or non-existent.

Until the 1980s the predominant view was that the key group was the petty bourgeoisie (*Mittelstand*) who provided the Nazis with mass support. They shared responsibility with the elite (who intrigued to get Hitler appointed) for the catastrophe of the Nazis coming to power. Left-wing historians could thus blame the Right and portray the working class as largely without blame. By the 1990s two developments challenged this view. Firstly, the centrality of the whole concept of class has been questioned. The phenomenon of many workers voting for right-wing governments in Britain and the USA led to more sophisticated analysis of political support and voting behaviour. Other factors, such as religion and the local community, have been identified as additional important influences on voting. The end of the Cold War and the decline of Marxism as a major force in Western universities have also encouraged a more empirical approach.

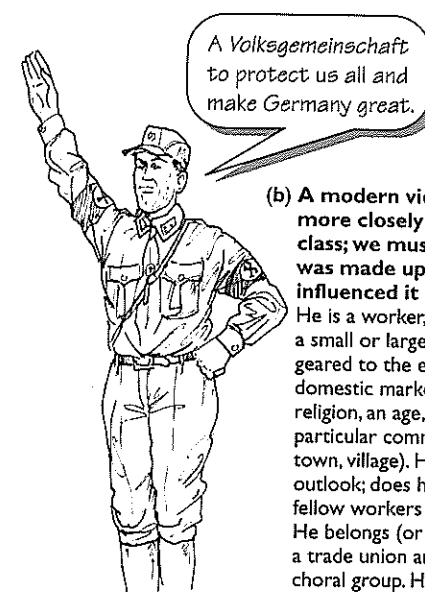
Secondly, more sources have been examined, with new techniques. The use of computers and refined statistical methodology have allowed more data to be viewed in different ways. There has been a growth in local studies, so the German people have been looked at in small groups and as individuals, not as classes. This has inevitably led to more complex views emerging. The collapse of the East German communist regime has further opened up many records. As a result, recent historians such as Falter, Conan Fischer and Brustein have all produced convincing arguments that German workers were far more attracted to the Nazis than many have argued in the past.

This does not mean, however, that the long-standing stress on the importance of support from the petty bourgeoisie can be rejected. The evidence does powerfully suggest that this class voted disproportionately for the Nazis, but far less than used to be thought. Religion and local community influences seem to have been a greater determinant of voting behaviour than class.

## 7D The working class and Nazism



(a) The traditional view: class is crucial  
He is an industrial worker and this will determine his voting. He will not vote Nazi.



(b) A modern view: we must look more closely at the working class; we must examine how it was made up and what influenced it  
He is a worker, but does he work in a small or large factory? Is his work geared to the export or the domestic market? He also has a religion, an age, a family. He lives in a particular community (city, small town, village). He has a particular outlook; does he identify with fellow workers or is he ambitious? He belongs (or does not belong) to a trade union and other bodies, e.g. choral group. He may vote SPD or KPD, but he might vote NSDAP!

**SOURCE 7.22** J. Falter, 1996, p. 10

The range of living and working conditions concealed behind the collective term 'worker' was huge. Thus the East Prussian or Pomeranian farm labourer who was paid largely in kind [goods] and received an hourly cash payment of 10 pfennig or less belonged to this group as much as the factory-employed craftsman or the highly specialised skilled worker who might earn ten times as much in the industrialised conurbations. Similarly, the foreman who had worked in the same Württemberg family for thirty years was as much a 'worker' according to the census as the young labourer in an Upper Silesian ironworks, the homemaker from the Erzgebirge or the daily help in a villa in Berlin-Zehlendorf. One might be in everyday contact with 'his' trade union and the workers' parties, while the other might have scarcely heard of either and align his voting intentions according to the political preferences of the estate manager or the proprietor of the small workshop with whom he went to school and who, possibly, belonged to the same hunting association or sporting club. In view of this it appears all the less likely that the working class as a whole would manifest even a degree of homogeneity in its voting behaviour.



**FOCUS ROUTE**

- 1 List the range of reasons why people voted for the Nazis.
- 2 Which of these reasons do you consider the most important?
- 3 How have historians' interpretations changed in recent years?

**SOURCE 7.23** Nazi publication, *Der Betriebs-Stürmer*, 1931

The years 1914-18 involved the destruction of the German Reich's economic pre-eminence and thus the freedom of German labour. November 1918 did not result in the deposition [overthrow] of the FEUDAL lords to the benefit of the workers. Instead the 9th November brought the defeat of Germany as a state. But the German worker paid the price.

His masters today are the irresponsible, faceless, international big capitalists and the Jews of the banking world ... National Socialism demands a transformation from the utterly unscrupulous profit-motivated economy to an economy geared to need.

**SOURCE 7.25**  
A Nazi election poster, 1932:  
'We want work and bread!'



**SOURCE 7.26**  
A 1924 Nazi poster:  
'First bread! Then reparations'

**SOURCE 7.27**  
A 1932 Nazi election poster showing Marxism as the guardian angel of big business. The angel has SPD on his helmet - the Nazis called the moderate Socialists Marxists to discredit them



**SOURCE 7.27**  
A 1932 Nazi election poster showing Marxism as the guardian angel of big business. The angel has SPD on his helmet - the Nazis called the moderate Socialists Marxists to discredit them

**E Why did people support the Nazis?**

**ACTIVITY**

We will begin to investigate the reasons why some people voted for the Nazis by examining Nazi propaganda in the form of leaflets and posters.

- 1 Draw and complete a table like the one below, using Sources 7.23-32.

Source	Group directed at	Their grievances	What the Nazis offered	Other comments

- 2 What overall conclusions can you reach from these sources?
- 3 How valuable are these sources as evidence of why people voted for the Nazis?

**SOURCE 7.24**  
A leaflet from July 1932

**GERMAN WOMEN! GERMAN MOTHERS!  
Our Young People Defiled.**

The present Prussian Welfare Minister ... has confirmed ... that in a German Grammar School for Girls 65 per cent of the girls had experienced sexual intercourse and 47 per cent had some form of sexual disease ... The number of sexual offences and cases of incest pile up in the most gruesome manner! ...

This is the result of the many years during which our people, and in particular our youth, have been exposed to a flood of muck and filth, in word and print, in the theatre and in the cinema. These are the result of the systematic Marxist destruction of the family ...

The National Socialists must win the election so that they can put a halt to this Marxist handiwork, so that once again women are honoured and valued, and so that the cinema and the theatre contribute to the inner rebuilding of the nation.

German women and mothers. Do you want your honour to sink still further?

Do you want your daughters to be playthings and the objects of sexual lust?

If NOT, then vote for a National Socialist majority on July 31st. Then vote for

**LIST TWO**

**HITLER-MOVEMENT NAT.SOCIAL GERMAN WORKERS PARTY**

**SOURCE 7.28** A 1929 leaflet

**TRADERS!  
SMALL PRODUCERS! ARTISANS!**

For a long time you have kept out of sight and let corruption, favouritism and the NEPOTISM of others run all over you. You believed that obeying law and order was the first duty of the citizen.

But what has this led to? Ever more exploitation by those in power. The tax-screw being turned ever tighter. You are HELOTS of this system. Your only job is to work and pay taxes which go into the salaries and pensions of ministers.

What have your parties done for you? They promised the world but did nothing. They made coalitions, prattled away before the elections then disappeared into parliament until the next.

They didn't unite against the treacherous leaders of Marxism.

They horse-dealt over ministerial posts and never gave you a thought. They have ruled with Social-Democrats and forgotten the aim of that party - Death to the Middle Class!

Have you forgotten the inflation? How you were robbed of your savings and commercial capital?

Have you forgotten how taxes have slowly throttled your businesses? Have you forgotten how the Department Stores and Co-operatives have ruined you?

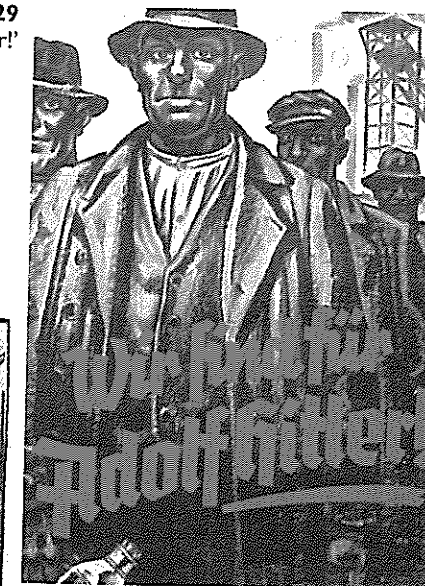
... Middle classes, why is it so bad? Why are your shops empty? Why are you out of business?

Look at the banks and their massive profits! They are eating you out of existence!

Marxism is guilty of pawing the German economy to international high finance. Therefore citizens, you belong to the ranks of those who make no pact with Marxism, but fight it wherever it is to be found.

**GERMAN NATIONAL SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY**

**SOURCE 7.29**  
'We're for Adolf Hitler!'



**Kopf-Handarbeiter wählt:  
Völkischen Block**

**SOURCE 7.30**  
An anti-Jewish poster. It says: 'The puppet master. Head and Hand vote Nazi.'

**SOURCE 7.32** A 1929 leaflet

**GERMAN FARMERS!**

**Farmers, it's a matter of your house and home!**

Factories, forests, railways, taxes and the state's finances have all been robbed by the Jew. Now he's stretching his greedy fingers towards the last German possession - the countryside.

Insatiable [never satisfied] Jewish race-lust and fanaticism are the driving forces behind this devilish attempt to break Germany's backbone through the annihilation [destruction] of the German farming community.

Doesn't it open your eyes when you see the economy of the countryside being crippled by unnaturally high taxes, while you have insufficient income to set off against this because of low prices for livestock and grain?

Huge imports of frozen meat and foreign grain, at lowest prices, undercut you and push down your earnings ... You cannot obtain credit to tide you over these hard times. If you want money the usurious [very high] interest rates will wring your neck. Under the protection of the state it won't be long before the greater part of the land-owning farmers will be driven from their farms and homes by Jewish money lenders.

**Help us build a new Germany that will be NATIONALIST AND SOCIALIST**

**NATIONALIST** because it is free and held in respect.

**SOCIALIST** because any German who works and creates will be guaranteed not just a slave's ration of bread, but an honourable life, decent earnings and the sanctity of his hard-earned property.

Farmers, it is a matter of the most holy possessions of a people, THE LAND AND THE FIELDS WHICH GOD HAS GIVEN US.

Farmers, it is a matter of house and home, Of life and death, of our people and our fatherland!

**THEREFORE FARMERS - WAKE UP!**

**JOIN THE RANKS OF OUR DEFENCE FORCE. FIGHT WITH US IN THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST GERMAN WORKERS PARTY**

**SOURCE 7.31**  
A 1932 Nazi poster:  
'Women! Millions of men without work. Millions of children without a future. Save the German family. Vote Adolf Hitler!'



**Wählt Adolf Hitler!**



## Historians' assessments of Nazi support

### Mood, manipulation or money: why did Germans vote Nazi?

Some historians have laid great stress on the emotional appeal of the Nazis, via a charismatic leader, symbols and rallies, to the many people who felt alienated in Germany at the time. The petty bourgeoisie was particularly attracted by this. It felt threatened by big business and by the powerful working class. These atomised (divided up, isolated) individuals in a new, mass society were looking for security and a sense of direction. The Nazis tapped this sense of unease and offered a bright future. The high turnover of Nazi Party membership has also been taken to indicate how many joined for emotional reasons, which could not be sustained on deeper reflection.

This stress on irrationalism (not based on reason) as the crucial factor in the Nazi appeal can also be used to support more recent interpretations that put stress on the broad base of Nazi support, that is a true *Volkspartei*. The prospect of firm action to take Germany out of the economic and psychological depression made Nazism attractive to millions of worried Germans, regardless of class. The Nazis were particularly successful with those Germans who had weak, unsupportive communities.

Many historians also stress the importance of propaganda organised to appeal to the emotions, especially mass meetings and rallies. Here there was no political discussion. What mattered was being there, surrounded by thousands of others, exhilarated by the carefully choreographed (designed) display. 'How could 20,000 be wrong?' 'Stop thinking, just believe!' As Goebbels said in 1934: 'Propaganda was our sharpest weapon in conquering the state, and remains our sharpest weapon in maintaining and building up the state.'

By stressing the power of Nazi propaganda it was possible to some extent to make excuses for Germans. They were manipulated: it could happen to anyone.

However, the recent work of Noakes and others has introduced a corrective to what they see as an excessive stress on propaganda. They argue that the Nazis had major electoral successes in some areas where there was little propaganda, and vice versa. Therefore, propaganda was more successful in reinforcing existing sympathies and feelings than in creating them.

An alternative view has recently come from other historians – notably Brustein – who have challenged the stress on emotions as an explanation for Nazi success, and have instead argued that Germans voted Nazi for rational economic reasons. Between 1930 and 1933 the Nazis put forward a series of economic policies, offering a third way between Marxist state planning and LAISSEZ-FAIRE capitalism. They said the economy should serve the needs of the state, not individuals. They advocated public investment in industry to boost the economy; financial controls to protect those in debt; economic AUTARKY to put the interests of Germans above those of foreigners and the creation of a continental economic zone dominated by Germany. They would support farmers through controls on prices, imports and debt, and help some resettle on unused land in the east. This package of policies, developed from 1928 to exploit the rising tide of protest in some farming areas, was reinforced by the SA and others taking action to defend farmers' interests, for example by disrupting auctions of bankrupt farms.

Brustein also sees economic factors as the reason for working-class support for the Nazis. Blue-collar workers in depressed industries were particularly attracted to their interventionist economic policies. Aspiring workers, those who had benefited from the social reforms of Weimar and were looking for further advance beyond their working-class origins, might be attracted by a Nazi future.

One commonly held view that is no longer propounded by historians is that virulent (poisonous/bitter) anti-semitism was a major contributor to Hitler's mass support. It was indeed a powerful attraction for many of the original Nazis and for some who joined the party, but not especially for voters. Other parties, such as the DNVP, were also anti-semitic. Hitler was deeply anti-semitic but played down Nazi anti-semitism as the prospects for power increased, instead stressing anti-communism which was much more attractive to the elite upon whom his chances might depend. Even the American Jewish historian

Goldhagen, who caused a storm in 1996 with his book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (see page 350) where he argued that Germany alone developed a strong desire to eliminate Jews, accepts that anti-semitism was not crucial in the Nazis' electoral success.

**SOURCE 7.33** In a survey of Nazi Party members, the following reasons were given as the main factor for joining the Nazis

Reasons for joining the Nazi Party	% of those surveyed
Anti-Marxism	65
National community	32
Supernationalism	22
Hitler cult	18
Anti-semitism	14

**SOURCE 7.34** A. Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives*, 1992, p. 249

*[Nazism was] a movement that was deliberately designed to highlight by every manipulative device – symbols, language, ritual, hierarchy, parades, rallies... the supremacy of the dynamic, irrational factors in politics: struggle, will, force, the sinking of individual identity in the collective emotions of the group, sacrifice, discipline.*

**SOURCE 7.35** W. Brustein, *The Logic of Evil. Social Origins of the Nazi Party 1925–33*, 1996, p. 184

*The Nazi Party did not gain its phenomenal mass constituency because of its emphasis on xenophobia but rather because the party designed a series of innovative programs that appealed to material interests of a broad constituency overwhelmed by the Depression. Xenophobia alone could not have brought the Nazis to power.*

*I must conclude that evil may have ordinary and rational origins. This applied to pre-1933 Germans as much as to all other peoples.*

### TALKING POINT

Why do you think Brustein called his book *The Logic of Evil*?

### ACTIVITY

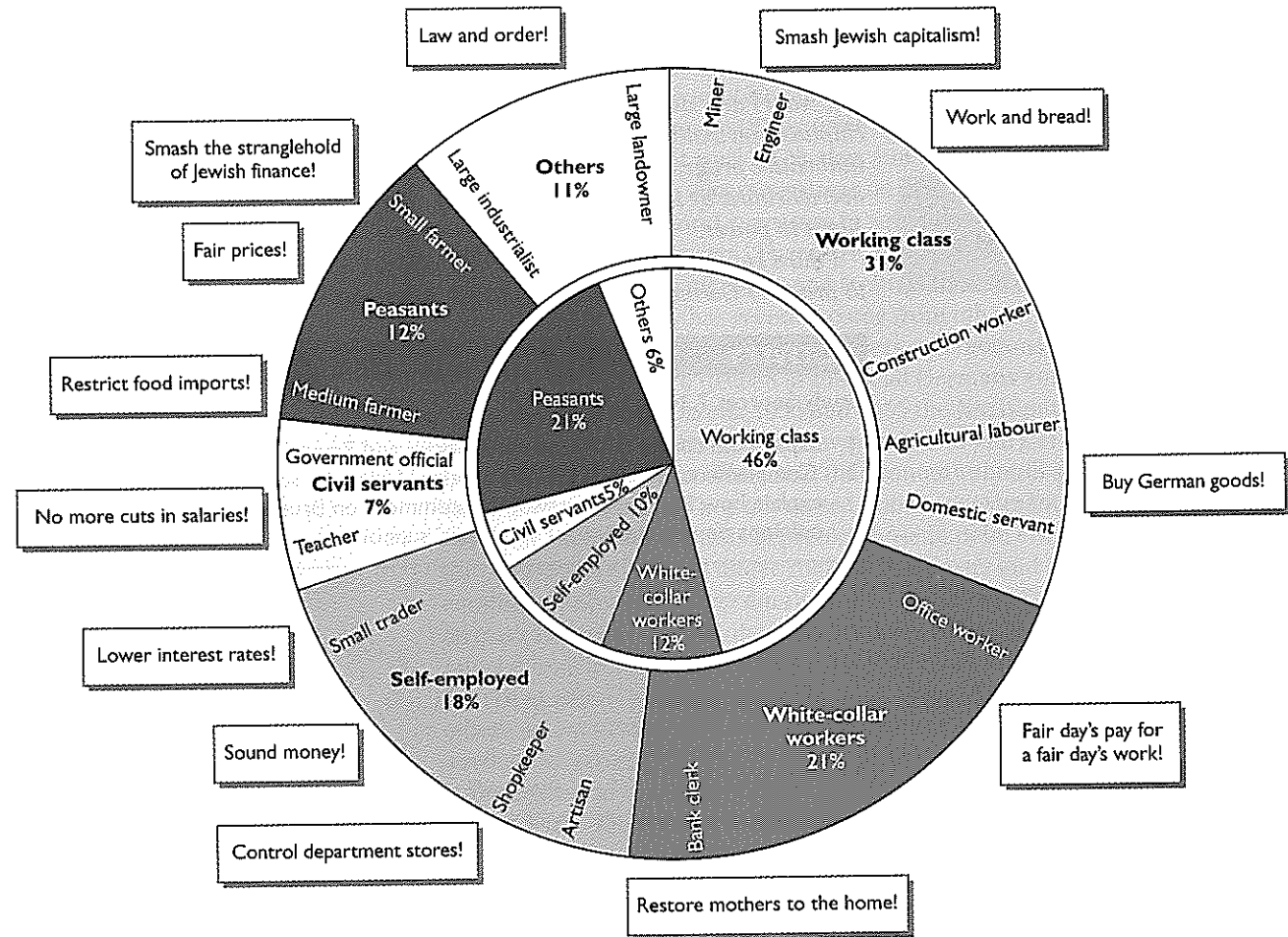
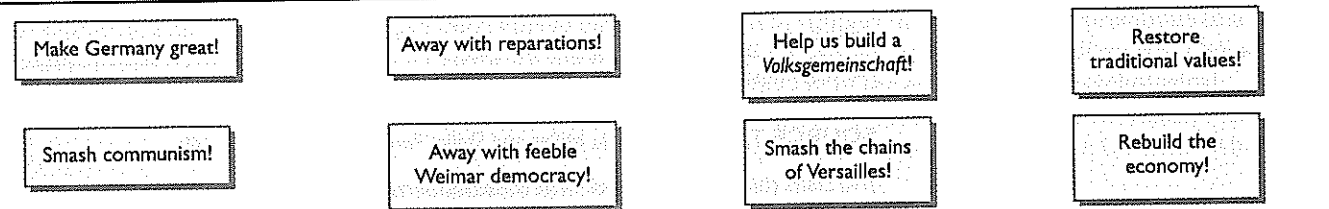
Study Sources 7.34 and 7.35.

- 1 Explain the differences between Bullock's and Brustein's views.
- 2 'Complementary rather than competing.' Using the sources and your knowledge, explain how far you agree with this comment on Brustein's and Bullock's opinions on the reasons for the Nazis' support.

## F Review: Why did the Nazis become the largest party in Weimar Germany?

Chart 7E tries to summarise what you have learnt about the extent to which different social groups supported the Nazis, and what the Nazis offered. Then, to conclude, we look at two contemporary sources that shed light on the nature of support for the Nazis.

### 7E Who supported the Nazis and why?



Key  
 Inner circle: German population in 1933 by social group (%)  
 Outer circle: members of Nazi Party in 1932 by same social groups  
 [White box] General slogans  
 [Shaded box] Slogans targeted at particular social groups

### REVIEW ACTIVITY

- Which reasons for the growth of support for the Nazis are shown in Source 7.36?
  - Which reasons are not reflected?
- What can you learn from Source 7.37 about the reasons for the rise of the Nazis?
  - What can be deduced from this poem about Brecht's political position?
- A key reason for the Nazis' electoral success was that they offered both big ideas that could appeal to any German and also particular policies aimed at specific groups. How does Chart 7E support this view?
- Do you think the actions and skills of Hitler and the Nazi Movement were more important in winning support than factors outside their control such as the economic depression?

**SOURCE 7.36** 'Why I became a Nazi.' An extract from an autobiography of a Nazi member submitted in 1934 to a prize competition organised by Professor Abel at Columbia University, New York, USA. The writer was a farmer and fought in the First World War against the Russians

*Then came November 9 [1918]. Slowly and more strongly there grew up in me a hatred of this band of traitors and their followers. Soon the consequence of this betrayal of the nation became more and more evident.*

*[We lost West Prussia and Danzig; were hit by inflation; Jews became rich.] My inward aversion [hostility] to these men of a foreign race which had crucified the saviour and which now was betraying our people increased until one day it grew into hatred. The Jew was at fault for all the misery.*

*Then came November 9, 1923. Great and brilliant, the name of Adolf Hitler, which we heard not for the first time in these agitated days, appeared before us. We were all marching in step; we all had the same desire to wipe out the existing system which had come into power by betrayal of the people and country. We wanted something that was to grow out of the common experience of the war and the front, that would know no estates [social groups] and classes but only the German people. The word, Hitler, became for me a symbol of our future.*

*These first members are still our best. They grasped National Socialism not with their minds but with their emotions. They had not learned National Socialism from books. Their blood, their natural instinct drove them to the movement. Like myself, they sought the road to the people and, like myself, found it by ridding themselves of class consciousness and seeing only the fellow-countryman in every German.*

*In July the leader came to Tilsit. I saw him for the first time. About 40,000 people from near and far had gathered to greet him. I wore the brown shirt for the first time. Those hours are never to be forgotten. The Leader spoke. For the first time I heard his voice. His words went straight to the heart. From now on my life and efforts were dedicated to the Leader. I wanted to be a true follower. The Leader spoke of the threatened ruin of the nation and of the resurrection under the Third Reich. What matter personal interest, and social status? How insignificant had all parties become to my eyes. How despicable [vile] was Communism.*

*Another thing the Leader gave us was faith in the German people. If we won, Germany was saved; if we were defeated, a gate would open up and Moscow's Red hordes would swarm in and plunge Europe into night and misery.*

**SOURCE 7.37** 'Song of the SA Man' by Bertolt Brecht (translated by John Willett)

*My hunger made me fall asleep  
 With a belly ache.  
 Then I heard voices crying  
 Hey, Germany awake!*

*Then I saw crowds of men marching:  
 To the Third Reich, I heard them say.  
 I thought as I'd nothing to live for  
 I might as well march their way.*

*And as I marched, there marched beside me  
 The fattest of the crew  
 And when I shouted 'We want bread and work'  
 The fat man shouted too.*

*The chief of staff wore boots  
 My feet meanwhile were wet  
 But both of us were marching  
 Whole heartedly in step.*

*I thought that the left road led forward  
 He told me that I was wrong.  
 I went the way that he ordered  
 And blindly tagged along.*

*And those who were weak from hunger  
 Kept marching, pale and taut  
 Together with the well-fed  
 To some Third Reich of a sort.*

*They told me which enemy to shoot at  
 So I took their gun and aimed  
 And, when I had shot, saw my brother  
 Was the enemy they had named.*

*Now I know: over there stands my brother  
 It's hunger that makes us one  
 While I march with the enemy  
 My brother's and my own.*

*So now my brother is dying  
 By my own hand he fell  
 Yet I know that if he's defeated  
 I shall be lost as well.*



**REVIEW ACTIVITY**

This activity brings together your work in Chapter 3 and in this chapter on the rise of the Nazis and voting behaviour in general in the Weimar Republic.

- 1 Study the data on Weimar elections on page 63. Compose a linear graph showing the election results for all the parties 1919–33. You might like to do this using a computer.
- 2 Identify and explain the trend in support for the Nazis.
- 3 Which parties lost support as the Nazis gained it? Does this automatically mean that the Nazis took votes from these parties?
- 4 What happened to support after 1928 for
  - a) the SPD
  - b) the KPD
  - c) both left-wing parties together?
- 5 What happened to support for the Z/BVP throughout the Weimar period?
- 6 Explain what this exercise shows about why the Nazis became the largest party.

**KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 7: Why did the Nazis become the largest party in Weimar Germany?**

- 1 After the failure of the Munich Putsch of 1923, Hitler reorganised the Nazi Party on the *Führerprinzip*.
- 2 The Nazis were well organised in the regions, and established associations covering most groups in German society.
- 3 The Nazis used skilful propaganda techniques, and exploited Hitler's ability as a speaker.
- 4 In 1928, the Nazis were still on the fringe of politics.
- 5 In 1930, as a result of the impact of the slump, the Nazis became the second-largest party.
- 6 Success built up a momentum, and in July 1932 the Nazis won 37 per cent of the vote.
- 7 However, in August 1932 Hitler failed to be made Chancellor, and in November 1932 the Nazis' share of the vote dropped to 33 per cent.
- 8 The Nazis gained particular support from the petty bourgeoisie, but were a true people's party, gaining support from all groups. For some their appeal was emotional; others were attracted for reasons of material self-interest.
- 9 The Nazis made least impact amongst groups that had a strong sense of community, such as Catholics and Socialists.
- 10 The Nazis offered a solution to Germany's problems, were well organised, and rallied around an inspiring leader.

**8**

**Why did parliamentary government decline in Germany 1930–3 and why was Hitler appointed Chancellor in January 1933?**

**CHAPTER OVERVIEW**

We now come to the last part of our study of the key years 1929–33 that led to Hitler's appointment as Chancellor. We have seen how, mainly owing to the influence of the Depression, the Nazis had become the largest party in the Reichstag. However, 37 per cent of the vote was not sufficient in itself for Hitler to become Chancellor. He either had to obtain a majority in the Reichstag, or, more likely, he had to persuade President Hindenburg to appoint him.

In this chapter, we focus on what was happening in the Reichstag and within governing circles. We look at the problems facing the parliamentary system, and how the elite increasingly looked to establish a more authoritarian regime. This will enable you to decide whether effective parliamentary government was over before Hitler was appointed. Was Hitler indeed more the beneficiary than the cause of the Weimar Regime's failure?

It is important to avoid the assumption that Hitler's appointment as Chancellor was inevitable. In these years there were various ways in which German politics and government could have developed, as you can see in Chart 8A.

**ACTIVITY**

Before you begin this chapter in detail, think yourself into the political situation in 1930. Consider each of the four outcomes at the bottom of Chart 8A. List the reasons for and against each outcome taking place.

- A** Why did parliamentary government decline after 1930? (pp. 132–5)
- B** Brüning: potential saviour or destroyer of Weimar democracy? (pp. 136–7)
- C** Was Hitler's rise to power inevitable? (pp. 138–41)
- D** Why was Hitler appointed Chancellor in January 1933? (pp. 142–44)
- E** Review: Why did parliamentary government decline in Germany 1930–3 and why was Hitler appointed Chancellor in January 1933? (pp. 145–50)

**8A The Weimar regime in crisis**

