

History, Weimar and Nazi Germany

Lesson 19

Why was Hitler 'invited' into power?

Miss Shanks



How did the Nazi Party become part of the German government in 1932?

After **Bruning's resignation** on the **30th May 1932**, **President Hindenburg** had to appoint a new **Chancellor**. A high-ranking army general called **Kurt von Schleicher** was in a powerful position as **Hindenburg** would listen to his advice.

Von Schleicher had been organising a **coalition** of people who shared similar ideas, which included **right-wing** supporters such as landowners, industrialists (factory owners) and army officers. **Von Schleicher** knew that the new **Chancellor** wouldn't have the support of the **Reichstag**, but in his plan he wouldn't need it!



Schleicher's plan involved **President Hindenburg** agreeing to the use of **Article 48**. This would have allowed laws to be passed without the consent of the **Reichstag**. However, the whole premise, or idea, of the **Weimar Constitution** was that Germany was ruled by a **democratic** (an elected) government. The plan to use **Article 48** to rule the country, simply because the **Chancellor** would not have the support of the **Reichstag** was outrageous.

But, it wasn't surprising that **Schleicher** had included this as part of his plan, he had seen **Hindenburg** use **Article 48** previously when **Chancellor Brüning** did not have the support of the **Reichstag**.



Schleicher suggested the Chancellorship was given to **Franz von Papen** who was a wealthy politician, ex-general of the German army and a friend of **President Hindenburg**. **Schleicher** also needed the support of the **Nazi Party**. **Hitler** agreed to support this **coalition** but on one condition. This condition was that the previous ban on the **SA**, which **Bruning** had introduced, had to be removed.

On the **30th May 1932** **von Papen** is appointed as German **Chancellor** and the **Nazi Party**, for the first time ever, were part of the German government!



Reichstag elections

July of 1932 saw another election in Germany, this time it wasn't to elect the **President** but to elect the **Reichstag**. **Hitler** had proven popular with the German population during his Presidential campaign. This was due to his successful propaganda techniques, in particular the use of aeroplanes.

Campaigning for the **Reichstag** elections took place throughout June and July of 1932 and this campaigning became extremely violent. Approximately 100 people were killed and thousands wounded in clashes between the different political parties.



The results of the election were a spectacular victory for the **Nazi Party!** They had increased their percentage of the votes from 18% in 1930 to almost **38% in 1932**, this was an exceptional increase. They now had **230 seats** in the **Reichstag!**

However, the July election wasn't a success for **von Papen**. He was part of the Centre Party, and the election result earned the party only a 12.5% share of the vote.



According to the **Weimar Constitution**, as the leader of the party with the majority of seats in the **Reichstag**, Hitler should be appointed as **Chancellor**. So, in **August 1932** Hitler demands just that from **President Hindenburg**. He demanded that **von Papen** was sacked and he was appointed in his place.



Why doesn't Hitler become Chancellor until January of 1933?

Hindenburg refused **Hitler's** demands, even if he did lead the largest party in the **Reichstag**. **Hindenburg** did not particularly like **Hitler** or want him as **Chancellor**. **Von Papen** was trying to keep hold of his position as **Chancellor**. He called a new **Reichstag** election in **November 1932** in the hopes that support for the **Nazi Party** would decrease. Support for the **Nazi Party** did decrease, but they were still the largest party in the **Reichstag**. **Von Papen's** position was looking extremely weak.



At this point, **von Schleicher** abandons **von Papen**. He persuades **Hindenburg** that if he allowed **von Papen** to stay as **Chancellor** then Germany would descend into chaos and a civil war which the German army wouldn't be able to cope with. As a result, **Hindenburg** reluctantly told **von Papen** to **resign**.



Why doesn't Hindenburg appoint Hitler?

Hindenburg is struggling. It is December 1932 and there has been two Presidential elections, two different **Chancellors** and two **Reichstag** elections. But **Hindenburg** still refused to make **Hitler Chancellor**. **Schleicher** advises **Hindenburg** that support for the **Nazi Party** was decreasing, as shown by the **November 1932** election results. So, desperately in need of a German **Chancellor**, **Hindenburg** appoints **Schleicher** as **Chancellor** on the **2nd December 1932**.



Hitler had previously supported **Schleicher** earlier in 1932, but **Hitler** now removed this support. This left **von Schleicher** without the support of the Nazis, no real political power, no majority in the **Reichstag** and no support amongst the German people.

Schleicher's solution to these problems was to ask **Hindenburg** to suspend the **Weimar Constitution**, and make him head of a dictatorship supported by the military.

Hindenburg refuses this suggestion made by **Schleicher**. Rumours started spread about **Schleicher's** plans to have Germany ruled by military control.



Von Papen had also heard these rumours and felt betrayed by **von Schleicher's** early actions. **Von Papen** had been suggested as the replacement for **Bruning**, then **Schleicher** abandoned him. He advised **Hindenburg** to remove **von Papen** from the Chancellorship. **Hindenburg** wouldn't appoint **von Papen** as **Chancellor** again so **von Papen** offered a suggestion to **Hindenburg**. Appoint **Hitler** as **Chancellor**, but appoint **von Papen** as the **Vice Chancellor**. That way they could control **Hitler** and make all the decisions themselves. He would be the **Chancellor** in name but with very little power and influence. **Hindenburg** agreed, and on the **30th January 1933 Adolf Hitler** is **legally** appointed as the **Chancellor** of the Weimar Republic!



Glossary

Article 48 - This gave the Chancellor emergency powers to pass laws without going to the Reichstag, they just had to ask the President to agree.

Coalition - When multiple political parties join together temporarily.

Chancellor - The head of the Weimar Government and appointed (chosen) by the President.

President - The head of the Weimar Republic and elected by the people every 7 years.

Reichstag - The German parliament, where the country is run from.

Resignation - When a person quits their job.

Right - wing - Right wing groups in politics included extremist groups such as the Nazi Party whereas extremist left-wing groups such as the Communists had opposite ideas and beliefs.

Vice Chancellor - The position below the Chancellor.



Comprehension Questions

1. Who did Hindenburg appoint as Chancellor on the 30th May 1932?
2. Why was the July 1932 Reichstag election a success for the Nazi Party?
3. Why was von Papen asked to resign?
4. Why did Hindenburg eventually appoint Hitler as Chancellor?
5. Challenge question: How far do you agree that it was the actions of von Papen which helped Hitler to become Chancellor 1933?

You could use the following sentences to help structure your answer

There is a strong argument that it was the actions of von Papen which led to Hitler becoming Chancellor in Germany. This is because...

However, there are other reasons to explain why Hitler became Chancellor in 1933. For example...

Overall, I mostly agree/disagree that...

