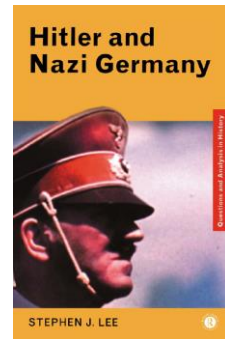


1

THE RISE OF NAZISM



BACKGROUND NARRATIVE

The Nazi movement originated in Munich as the German Workers' Party (DAP), one of a number of *völkisch*, or radical fringe, groups established immediately after the end of the First World War. Hitler, previously an impoverished Austrian artist who had served in the German army, joined in November 1919. He was placed in charge of the Party's propaganda and was largely responsible for drafting the 25 Point Programme in 1920 and for renaming the movement the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP). The following year he supplanted Anton Drexler as party leader and extended National Socialist (Nazi) activities into the media, with the acquisition of the *Munich Observer*, and into paramilitary activism with the formation of the Sturm Abteilung (SA).

The early conception of Nazism was revolutionary. In 1923 Hitler made a bid for power in Munich, clearly encouraged by the success of Mussolini's March on Rome the previous year. The attempt ended in failure; Hitler was tried for treason and sentenced to imprisonment in Landsberg Castle. While he was out of circulation the NSDAP fell into disarray and had to be refounded on his release. Hitler now proceeded to revitalise the party and to alter his whole strategy for achieving power. Instead of coming to power by revolution, he now proposed to achieve his objective by legal means and then to introduce the revolution from above. Between 1925 and 1929 he succeeded in winning over the northern contingents of the NSDAP under Gregor Strasser and Goebbels and in establishing his authority through a series of local party officials known as Gauleiters. The actual results of these developments are contentious. On the one hand, the NSDAP performed very badly in the Reichstag (or elected chamber) elections, dropping from 32 seats in May 1924 to 14 in December 1924 and 12 in 1928. On the other hand, there is evidence of a major upheaval below the surface within the middle classes which made them more receptive to the appeal of Nazism from 1928 onwards, a process which was accelerated by the Great Depression. The working class, too, became more fragmented and a substantial portion was detached from its normal political allegiance. The electoral impact of such changes was startling. The NSDAP won 107 seats in

1930 and were easily the largest party in the elections of July and November 1932, in which they won 230 and 196 seats respectively.

This increase in support was partly the result of the search by Hitler for respectability and his alliance with the other interests of the right, including the leaders of industrial cartels and the conservative National Party (DNVP). Encouraged by the apparent success of his strategy, Hitler played a double game. Below the surface of German politics the SA terrorised and victimised its opponents. Officially, however, Hitler sought power through election to Germany's highest office, the presidency in March 1932. However, he was defeated by the incumbent, Hindenburg, by 19.4 million votes to 13.4 million. Having failed to enter government through the front door, Hitler became involved in backdoor intrigues, involving the ex-Chancellor, Papen, and the President, Hindenburg. The latter was requested by the current Chancellor, Schleicher, for a dissolution of the Reichstag and the third election within six months. Hindenburg's response, however, was to take the advice of Papen, a political enemy of Schleicher, to appoint Hitler as Chancellor in a coalition cabinet consisting mainly of non-Nazis. Hindenburg and the rest of the conservative right considered that such a course was perfectly safe since Hitler would be effectively controlled. Within days, however, Hitler was to demonstrate that he had a programme of his own.

ANALYSIS (1): WHAT WAS NATIONAL SOCIALISM?

The official name of Hitler's movement throughout the period 1920 to 1945 was the National Socialist German Workers' Party. How accurate was it? Certainly the 25 Point Programme, formulated in 1920, contained principles which could be seen as both nationalist and socialist. The former predominated, demanding 'the union of all Germans in a Greater Germany' (Article 1); the 'revocation of the peace treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain' (Article 2); the acquisition of 'land and territory to feed our people and settle our surplus population' (Article 3); the replacement of Roman Law by German Law (Article 19); the formation of a people's army (Article 22); and the establishment of 'a strong central state power' (Article 25). The nationalist component was given further emphasis by a strong racial slant. Hence, Jews were to be excluded from German nationhood (Article 4); all 'non-German immigration must be prevented' (Article 8); and non-Germans should be excluded from any influence within the national media (Article 23). The socialist element was apparent mainly in the emphasis on 'physical or mental work' (Article 10); the 'abolition of incomes unearned by work' (Article 11); the 'confiscation of war profits' (Article 12); extensive nationalisation of businesses (Article 13); 'profit-sharing in large industrial enterprises' (Article 14); the extension of old-age insurance (Article 15); and land reform (Article 17).¹

It soon became clear that Hitler was not particularly committed to the socialist element of the party programme. Indeed, the German Worker's Party was to some extent a misnomer, since he aimed at creating a broadly classless movement which would at the same time appeal to the middle class. The 'creation and maintenance of a healthy middle class' was the purpose of Article 16 and certainly became the basis of Hitler's electoral strategy after 1925. There were Nazis who emphasised the socialist element of their ideology, but these did not include Hitler. In fact some, like the Strassers, came in for serious confrontation with Hitler over the latter's refusal to take socialism seriously. Instead, Hitler focused more and more on racial rather than economic explanations for major historical trends. He argued in his 1925 book *Mein Kampf (My Struggle)* that 'The adulteration of the blood and racial deterioration conditioned thereby are the only causes that account for the decline of ancient civilizations; for it is never by war that nations are ruined, but by the loss of their powers of resistance, which are exclusively a characteristic of pure racial blood'.²

This raises the key issue concerning the Nazi movement and ideology. Were they unique phenomena dependent on Hitler alone? Or were they part of a more general phenomenon? There is an increasingly important debate between those historians who are Hitler-centric and those who maintain that Nazism was merely a branch of fascism, a general trend which reflected problems throughout the continent during a particular phase of European history. The two main schools have been called 'intentionalists' and 'structuralists'.

Structuralism subsumes a variety of approaches. The longest established is the Marxist view of Nazism as one manifestation of a general crisis of capitalism; East German historians, in particular, maintained that Hitler was above all the tool of big business. Non-Marxist historians acknowledge an economic influence but place this within a broader context of national and international influences. Particular sections of the German population were vulnerable for economic reasons which had their roots in the nineteenth century: the middle classes experienced a crisis of industrialisation which made them susceptible to radical ideas. These, too, had a long history, in the form of pan-Germanism and anti-semitism, and in the quest for *Lebensraum* ('living space'). During the Second Reich (1871–1918) these ideas had been confined to the fringe but, within the crisis of Germany's experience between the Wars, they became the focal point. None of them were new but Nazism was particularly effective, in an eclectic sense, in combining 'snippets of ideas and dogmas of salvation', which could be used as 'a deliberate simplification of political world views'.³

Structuralism also emphasises that Nazism was part of the fascist mainstream. The roots were a widespread disillusionment with modernism and rationalism and the emphasis on a curiously twisted form of romanticism. Fascism also emphasised the profound threat of communist and socialist parties while, at the same time, drawing upon a number of socialist ideas which had been modified to appeal to the middle classes. Fascism everywhere was militaristic and expansionist, focusing upon the revival of centralism within the state and future

conquest outside it. All fascist parties depended upon the cult of a father-figure and developed mass movements to energise the masses with enthusiasm and commitment. According to Broszat, therefore, National Socialism was rooted in a combination of ‘the general European crisis’ and ‘Germany’s national history and its peculiar divergence from the West’.⁴

The ‘intentionalists’ place more stress on the unique importance of Hitler as the creator of the Nazi programme and ideology: most of his ideas are contained in *Mein Kampf* and the *Zweites Buch* (*Second Book*). Trevor-Roper, for example, emphasises Hitler’s own vital influence in the whole process of Nazism: ‘about that despot, too, who has often been represented as a tool, but whose personal power was in fact so undisputed that he rode to the end above the chaos he had created, and concealed its true nature.’⁵ Bullock, too, accentuates the personal influence of the leader (*Führer*).⁶ Erdmann goes further: ‘Hitler’s greatness was diabolical: it was that of a world figure who confused the minds of men.’⁷ A vital component of Nazism was the ‘Führer principle’ (*Führerprinzip*). It is true that the cult of leadership is to be found in all fascist movements, but it was of particular importance in the Nazi context since Hitler’s ideas were crucial in defining the nature of Nazi eclecticism. Fascism without Mussolini is just about imaginable, and historians have even drawn a distinction between ‘Mussolinianism’ and fascism. But no one has seriously suggested separating ‘Hitlerism’ from Nazism. Above all, Hitler provided Nazism with a unique vision of racial purity and anti-semitism which were entirely absent in Italy. In this respect, as in others, the generic label of German fascism hardly seems appropriate.

Which is the more realistic approach? There are certain obvious deficiencies in structuralism. The Marxist approach to Nazism as capitalism in crisis does not explain why some countries remained democracies in spite of experiencing similar problems. Capitalism, in other words, was equally capable of assuming democratic forms. On the other hand, we should not write out structuralism. The popularity of Hitler is impossible to explain without the existence of a strong degree of receptivity within Germany—and this could well be set in a wider European context. There was much in Hitler which was ludicrous: it was converted into a compelling form of radicalism because it worked upon the needs of the population at the time. Structuralism is essential to explain the extent of this appeal but cannot cover the way in which the attraction was presented. This was very much within the scope of intentionalism.

Questions

1. Was ‘National Socialism’ the right name for Hitler’s movement?
2. Were the Nazis fascist?

ANALYSIS (2): WHY DID HITLER COME TO POWER IN 1933?

Hitler was appointed Chancellor by President Hindenburg on 30 January 1933. He was the leader of the largest party in the Reichstag and also had the support of much of the conservative right who had dominated Germany politically since 1929. The explanation as to why this happened can be advanced in three stages. First, Nazism was fortunate in that the Weimar Republic (formed in 1919 and ended in 1933) had become a flawed structure which contained a destabilised and increasingly volatile population. Second, Nazism emerged as a dynamic movement which was capable of gaining support from a substantial part of the disillusioned electorate. And third, the conservative right provided a channel which enabled the new dynamic to penetrate and force open the flawed structure.

The rise of Hitler depended directly on the vulnerability of the Weimar Republic. Although in many respects an advanced democracy, the Republic was politically flawed and susceptible to economic crisis.⁸ There were practical difficulties arising out of the constitution. Proportional representation, without a threshold, produced a multiplicity of parties, encouraged splinter groups and made coalition governments inevitable, with all the potential for internal disagreement which these so often carry. This was exacerbated at certain points in the history of the Republic by economic crises, especially those of 1921–3 and 1929–31. The collapse of democracy in 1929 was due to the interaction of the two processes. The Great Coalition—which comprised the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Centre, the People's Party (DVP) and the Democratic Party (DDP)—was already in disarray before 1929 but was brought down by the disagreement between the SPD and the Centre over proposals to cut unemployment benefit. The results were the decline of party politics and the growth of authoritarian government with less and less recourse to the Reichstag. As will be seen, this was an ideal situation for the Nazi Party. The crisis of the democratic Republic saw the alienation of substantial numbers of the German people.

The radical left became bitter opponents because of the Government's ruthless suppression of the 1919 revolt of the Spartacus League, the incipient Communist Party. The result was that the Communists could at no stage be relied upon to support the SPD against any offensive from the conservative right. The latter became increasingly likely with the triumph of the 'stab in the back' myth. This claim that republican politicians cravenly surrendered to the Allies in November 1918—against the wish of the German army—was started by Hindenburg in 1919 and combined with criticism of the Treaty of Versailles in a devastating attack on the whole rationale of the Republic. Between the two political extremes lay the supporters of the moderate liberal parties (the DVP and the DDP) and the SPD. But substantial numbers of these eventually abandoned their normal party allegiances because of the impact of economic crisis and the apparent inability of the coalitions to deal with it.

The Nazi Party fully exploited these flaws and this disillusionment. The early dynamic of Nazism, it is true, had very limited appeal. This was because it was a small fringe movement seeking power through revolution. In 1923 Hitler attempted to seize power in Bavaria through the Munich Putsch as a prelude to marching on Berlin: this ended in complete failure. But the new dynamic, developed by Hitler between 1924 and 1926, was far more effective in taking advantage of the problems of the Republic. The intention was to seek power through the constitutional process while, in the longer term, resorting to revolutionary change: revolution would follow power rather than achieve it. This was more likely to appeal to an electorate who were on the point of abandoning traditional loyalties without wanting to go through the experience of a revolution. Hitler was able to appeal directly to each class and sector within this electorate by making specific pledges calculated to it individually. At the same time, he used several more general policies as a means of cutting through class differences: these were based on a nationalist offensive against the ‘stab in the back’ and Versailles, a *völkisch* emphasis on the need for German expansion through *Lebensraum*, and the identification of ‘race enemies’ like the Jews. This dual approach to party policy meant that the NSDAP became the only party in the Weimar Republic able to project an appeal to all sectors of the population. In the words of T. Childers, the Nazis could speak ‘the language of both transcendent class or even national solidarity and sectarian special interest’.⁹ The process was carried out, especially after 1928, by an effective propaganda machine, organised by Goebbels and delivered by a style of oratory which singled Hitler out from the more staid politicians of Weimar. Hitler was therefore able to convert negatives into positives, to turn resentment against the Republic into support for the Nazi movement.

Where did this come from? A considerable amount of research has been carried out on the defection to the NSDAP during the late 1920s and early 1930s. The initial tendency was to see Nazism as having an appeal primarily to the middle classes, with minority additions from the working class and from the upper levels of society—neither of whom were as volatile in transferring their political allegiance. The overall emphasis of this has now been modified in favour of a more widespread support for Hitler.

It is still possible to say that the middle classes made up the largest single proportion of Nazi support, and that their defection from their traditional parties was vitally important in converting Nazism into a mass movement. Initially they had voted in large numbers for the DDP and the DVP, although some also supported the DNVP and, if they were Catholic, the Centre. Some historians, like Childers, have argued that the basis for the middle-class movement towards the NSDAP had been established during the late 1920s, even before the onset of Depression from 1929.¹⁰ Others maintain that the flow occurred only after 1929, making it a direct result of the Great Depression. The middle classes found unbearable the impact of a second economic crisis destroying the apparent recovery from the first. The psychological blow was so profound that they made

an uncharacteristic move away from the moderate centre to the radical fringe. It is, of course, possible to synthesise the two approaches. The older section of the middle class, comprising artisans, small retailers and peasant farmers, formed the core of the middle-class support for Hitler and were throwing their support behind him before the Depression. Theirs was a disillusionment with the structure and policies of the Republic itself. To these was added the weight of much of the new middle class—non-manual employees, civil servants and teachers—who aligned themselves with Nazism as a result of the Depression. It is possible that they were moving in this direction anyway.

But the simple fact is that the NSDAP secured only 12 seats in the Reichstag election of 1928; it therefore took the Depression to convert a trickle of middle-class support into a flood.

There is a deeper controversy over the connection between Nazism and the working class. It was once strongly argued that the working class remained largely loyal to the parties of the left which, in any case, had a distinctively proletarian appeal. The Communist Party (KPD) was especially class-based and its support actually increased during the Reichstag elections of 1930 and 1932. Although the SPD lost seats, it came nowhere near the collapse suffered by the parties of the centre, clearly indicating that it retained the bulk of its support. The proletariat, by this analysis, was less drawn to Nazism because, in the words of P.D. Stachura, 'The Party was unable to establish a significant working-class constituency because it did not develop a coherent interpretation of "German Socialism".' This was partly because Hitler's 'innate contempt and distrust of the proletariat remained paramount'.¹¹ Other historians, such as Muhlberger, are not convinced by the 'middle-class thesis' of Nazism.¹² Recent research has tended to support the view that working-class input was substantial. Studies of Nazi membership records show something like 40 per cent of the membership coming from the working class, while 60 per cent of the SA were of the same origins. Parallel research on electoral trends has, through computer analysis of statistical data, produced very similar voting results. According to Fischer, 'a good 40 per cent of the NSDAP's voters were working class, remarkably similar to the proportion of workers in the party itself'.¹³ The likely synthesis here is that the working class never came to provide the largest body of support for Nazism. In that respect, the original views seem correct. On the other hand, it is possible to overestimate the continued loyalty of the working class to the parties of the left. After 1928 substantial shifts did occur: the growth of the Communists was more than offset by the decline of the SPD. The latter shrank by between a quarter and a third: many of these lost votes almost certainly went straight to the Nazis. Thus, although the NSDAP was not primarily a working-class party and the majority of workers remained with the parties of the left, the inflow of working-class support for Nazism was still a vital factor in the conversion of Nazism into a mass movement.

The attitudes of the upper classes to Nazism were largely pragmatic. Landowners, businessmen and industrialists saw in Hitler the prospects of safety

from the threat of communism and socialism on the left. Arguably, they saw beyond this and looked to Nazism to deliver over to them a disciplined and constrained workforce. They looked to Hitler to undo the pro-trade-union and welfare policies of most of the governments of the Weimar Republic. Even those who distrusted the violence and vulgarities of the Nazi movement were still likely to be supporting it indirectly. It was unlikely that the affluent levels of German society after 1929 voted in significant numbers for any party to the left of the DNVP, and the DNVP itself was in close collaboration with the NSDAP after Hugenberg assumed the leadership. Hence the Nazis benefited considerably from the respectability, publicity and, of course, funding brought by a relatively narrow but highly influential sector of society.

After 1928, therefore, Hitler succeeded in collecting for the NSDAP much of the electorate which had become disillusioned with the Republic's manifest deficiencies. This was essential for Hitler's rise to prominence but it does not fully explain his rise to power. A further step was needed—a means of forcing a way in through the Republic's fissures. This was greatly assisted by the drift to authoritarian rule after 1929 in which the democracy of the Republic was systematically undermined by the conservative right. The first stage was the recruitment of Brüning to form a government based on the Centre Party; lacking a majority in the Reichstag he came increasingly to depend on the use of Article 48 of the Constitution which made possible legislation by presidential decree. In 1932 Papen and Schleicher abandoned any remaining pretence of relating the chancellorship to a party base in the Reichstag and made executive decrees the normal legislative process. Hence by 1933 the ground had been well prepared for the emergence of dictatorship.

But why were the conservative right willing to allow Hitler and the radical right to benefit from this? The explanation seems to be that the conservative right (which included the DNVP, some of the army command, President Hindenburg and Chancellors Papen and Schleicher) intended to use Nazism for their own purpose. They believed that the Republic had outlived its usefulness and that any return to the party politics of the 1920s was impossible. Instead, conservative constitutional theorists argued in *Unsere Partei* that the party system would eventually fracture and be replaced by a broad front. For this reason, the DNVP therefore aimed to create a broad 'movement' of the right which would also include the NSDAP. The latter could, in fact, be used for its radical impetus. It had the capacity to destroy the Republic, but once that was achieved it would be brought into line with the more conservative objectives of the DNVP. The collaboration between the Nazis and the DNVP was crucial; Hiden goes so far as to say that it 'played handmaiden to Adolf Hitler and his movement at the close of the 1920s'.¹⁴

This strategy, which eventually proved to be fatally flawed, provided Hitler with access to power. His appointment as Chancellor was due to a fortuitous circumstance—the personal rivalry between the last two Chancellors, Papen and Schleicher. The latter faced a political crisis when, in January 1933, the

Reichstag challenged his use of Article 48. The Constitution provided a loophole in that the President could dissolve the Reichstag and call an election. But, having already done this twice in 1932, Hindenburg preferred to find an alternative Chancellor. This explains his receptiveness to Papen's recommendation that Hitler should be appointed, with himself given a watching brief as Vice-Chancellor.

Hence Hitler came to power largely through a conspiracy. Yet this does not mean that the Nazis did little themselves to achieve it. The conservative right would not have been so willing to collaborate with a weak fringe group. It was evident to them that the NSDAP had managed more effectively than any other party to mobilise popular discontent against the Republic. Hitler appeared to them an elemental force which they intended to use in their own way. And they thought they *could*.

Questions

1. Were Hitler's aims 'revolutionary'?
2. Was the NSDAP a 'classless' party?
3. Was Hitler given power?

SOURCES

1.

THE IDEOLOGY AND PROGRAMME OF NAZISM

Source A:

from the Programme of the German Workers' Party, February 1920.

1. We demand the union of all Germans, on the basis of the right of the self-determination of peoples, to form a Great Germany.
2. We demand equality of rights for the German people in its dealings with other nations, and abolition of the Peace Treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain.
3. We demand land and territory (colonies) for the nourishment of our people and for settling our surplus population.
4. None but members of the nation may be citizens of the State. None but those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation. No Jew, therefore, may be a member of the nation....
7. We demand that the State shall make it its first duty to promote the industry and livelihood of the citizens of the State...
8. All further non-German immigration must be prevented...
11. [We demand] abolition of incomes unearned by work....

13. We demand the nationalization of all businesses which have been amalgamated.
14. We demand that there shall be profit-sharing in the great industries.
15. We demand a general development of provision for old age.
16. We demand the creation and maintenance of a healthy middle class...
17. We demand a land reform suitable to our national requirements...
25. That all the foregoing requirements may be realized we demand the creation of a strong central power of the Reich...

Source B:
from a speech by Hitler on 13 April 1923.

It has ever been the right of the stronger, before God and man, to see his will prevail. History proves that he who lacks strength is not served in the slightest by 'pure law'... All of nature is one great struggle between strength and weakness, an eternal victory of the strong over the weak. If it were any different, nature would be in a state of putrefaction. The nation which would violate this elementary law would rot away.

Source C:
from Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

The art of all truly great national leaders has at all times primarily consisted of this: not to divide the attention of a people, but to concentrate that attention on a single enemy. The more unified the fighting spirit of a nation, the greater the magnetic attraction of a movement, the more forceful the power of its thrust. It is part of the genius of a great leader to make it appear as though even the most distant enemies belonged in the same category; for weak and fickle characters, if faced by many different enemies, will easily begin to have doubts about the justness of their cause.

Source D:
Otto Strasser's recollection of a conversation with Hitler
(published in 1940).

I remember one of my first conversations with him. It was nearly our first quarrel.

'Power!' screamed Adolf. 'We must have power!' 'Before we gain it,' I replied firmly, 'let us decide what we propose to do with it. Our programme is too vague; we must construct something solid and enduring'

Hitler, who even then could hardly bear contradiction, thumped the table and barked: 'Power first! Afterwards we can act as circumstances dictate!'

Source E:
from a speech by Hitler at an election meeting in March
1928.

We can conclude that bourgeois nationalism has failed, and that the concept of Marxist socialism has made life impossible in the long run. These old lines of confrontation must be eradicated along with the old parties, because they are barring the nation's path into the future. We are eradicating them by releasing the two concepts of nationalism and socialism and harnessing them for a new goal, towards which we are working, full of hope, for the highest form of socialism is burning devotion to the nation.

Source F:
Otto Strasser's record of a discussion with Hitler on the
subject of socialism in 1930 (published in 1940).

Strasser: All that is very simple for you, Herr Hitler, but it only serves to emphasize the profound difference in our revolutionary and Socialist ideas... The real reason is that you want to strangle the social revolution for the sake of legality and your new collaboration with the bourgeois parties of the Right.

Hitler: I am a Socialist, and a very different kind of Socialist...your kind of Socialism is nothing but Marxism. The mass of the working classes want nothing but bread and games. They will never understand the meaning of an ideal, and we cannot hope to win them over to one. What we have to do is to select from a new master-class men who will not allow themselves to be guided, like you, by the morality of pity. Those who rule must know that they have the right to rule because they belong to a superior race.

Questions

Figures in square brackets after questions indicate possible allocation of marks by examiners.

1. (i) What general term is normally used to describe the concept of struggle contained in [Source B](#)? [1]
(ii) Explain Strasser's reference to 'your new collaboration with the bourgeois parties of the Right' ([Source F](#)). [2]
2. How much evidence is there in [Source A](#) that the Nazis intended to follow a policy based on nationalism? [4]
- *3. How valuable are Sources [D](#) and [F](#) to the historian studying Nazi ideology? [5]
4. Using Sources [A](#), [D](#) and [F](#), explain the different viewpoints of Hitler and Strasser concerning the implementation of socialism. [5]

5. Using Sources A to F and your own knowledge, discuss the view that National Socialism before 1933 was ‘pragmatic rather than ideological’. [8]

Worked answer

*3. [The answer to this question should be confined to one—possibly two—carefully argued paragraphs. If at all possible, two sides should be presented, although these need not be evenly balanced. There is also scope for the inclusion of additional material, provided this is carefully controlled and directly relevant to the question.]

Sources D and F provide the historian with a valuable insight into Hitler’s political thinking. Source D shows that he could be strongly pragmatic: his emphasis on ‘Power first!’ and on acting as ‘circumstances dictate’ confirms his change of political strategy after the failure of the Munich Putsch in 1923. Strasser amplifies this in Source F with his references to Hitler’s policy of ‘legality’ and ‘collaboration’ with the right. Source F also reveals the extent of the ideological split within the Nazi Party between Hitler’s interpretation of socialism and Strasser’s. Source D also provides an intriguing picture of the more impetuous side of Hitler, who ‘screamed’ and ‘thumped the table and barked’.

There are two drawbacks of which the historian needs to be aware. The first is that Otto Strasser had every reason to give a distorted picture of Hitler’s views and mannerisms. He left Germany under a cloud and wrote his accounts while in exile. Second, the impressions were actually published in 1940, over a decade after the incidents: this opens up the possibility of inaccuracy in the precise wording. He was also concerned to present himself in a positive way by using phrases such as ‘I replied firmly’ (Source D). But these disadvantages are offset by the rarity of a frank, if hostile, view of Hitler from a Nazi colleague.

SOURCES

2.

THE BASE OF HITLER’S SUPPORT BEFORE 1933

Source G:

Reichstag election results 1928–32 (number of seats).

	1928	1930	1932 (1)	1932 (2)
NSDAP	12	107	230	196
DNVP	73	41	37	52
DVP	45	30	7	11

	1928	1930	1932 (1)	1932 (2)
Z	62	68	75	70
DDP	25	20	4	2
SPD	153	143	133	121
KPD	54	77	89	100

**Source H:
the social origins of members of the SA between 1925 and
1933.**

<i>Class</i>	<i>Occupational group</i>	<i>% of SA</i>
Working	Agricultural	2.9
	Unskilled	15.4
	Skilled	35.4
	Public sector	0.9
	Apprentices	1.5
	Servants	0.4
	<i>Subtotal</i>	56.5
Lower middle and middle	Master artisans	1.3
	Non-grad. professions	3.3
	Salaried staff	8.8
	Civil servants	2.7
	Soldiers and NCOs	0.0
	Salesmen	10.4
	Farmers	4.3
	Family helpers	2.1
	<i>Subtotal</i>	32.9
Upper middle and upper	Senior salaried staff	0.2
	Senior civil servants	0.1
	Military officers	0.0
	University students	4.1
	Graduate professions	1.2
	Entrepreneurs	0.2
	<i>Subtotal</i>	5.8

**Source I:
the social composition of the part of the electorate voting for
the NSDAP (%).**

	1928	1930	1932 (1)	1932 (2)
Working class	40	40	39	39
Middle and upper middle class	59	60	61	60

	1928	1930	1932 (1)	1932 (2)
% of total vote going to NSDAP	2	15	31	27

**Source J:
a confidential analysis, prepared by the KPD of the rise in
support for the NSDAP (1931).**

National Fascism [the NSDAP] is the opposite side of the coin from Social Fascism [the SPD]. The betrayal of socialism, of the German working people and thereby of the German nation by the SPD's leaders has led millions of workers, rural workers and impoverished members of the middle classes into the ranks of the NSDAP. In particular the disciplined, militarily-trained storm sections of the NSDAP—the SS and the SA—boast a high percentage of industrial workers and in particular unemployed proletarians.

**Source K:
from the application form of a recruit to the SA.**

...I completed my three-year apprenticeship as an electrical fitter at the firm of Karl Diehl. I was politically active in the Iron Front paramilitary for about one and a half years. After I had gradually become aware of the SPD's poor leadership and that its efforts couldn't help us, I resigned from the organisation. On the other hand, I am convinced that the new Germany, led by our People's Chancellor Adolf Hitler, signifies recovery and resurgence and I wish to devote all my efforts to this.

Questions

1. Explain briefly:
 - (i) the absence within the SA of 'soldiers and NCOs' and 'military officers' ([Source H](#)). [1]
 - (ii) the 'Iron Front' ([Source K](#)). [2]
2. To what extent is it possible to detect from [Source G](#) alone the origins of the increased Nazi electoral support in 1930 and 1932? [5]
3. Assess the contrasting value to the historian of the evidence provided in [Sources J](#) and [K](#). [5]
- *4. 'The rise of Nazism between 1928 and 1932 was based on the support of the middle classes.' To what extent do [Sources G](#) to [I](#) show this? [7]
5. In addition to [Sources G](#) to [K](#), what other types of source would be useful to the historian studying the increase in support for the Nazis between 1928 and 1932? [5]

Worked answer

*4. [The quotation is obviously too one-sided and needs to be rebalanced. It is therefore important to present a clear overall argument. The first sentence or two might contain a basic interpretation which can then be supported by more detailed reference to the sources. The concluding sentences might suggest something a little more subtle —if there is time.]

This statement is only partly correct. In terms of electoral support, the middle and upper middle classes seem to predominate. [Source I](#) quantifies them at between 60 and 61 per cent of Nazi voters. This kept pace with the increase in the total vote for the Nazis (15 per cent in 1930 and 31 per cent in June 1932), which was accomplished partly through the declining support for the three parties for which the middle classes usually voted—the DNVP, DVP and DDP: [Source G](#) shows these down in June 1932 to 37, 7 and 4 seats respectively. It does, therefore, seem that the NSDAP built the core of its support from the remains of the middle-class parties.

On the other hand, this would not have been enough to create a mass movement. This could be achieved only by attracting a substantial part of the working class. After all, as [Source G](#) shows, the name of the party, NSDAP, still contained the word *Arbeiter* (workers). Hence the 39 per cent and 40 per cent of Nazi voters drawn from the working class ([Source I](#)) were crucial in explaining why the NSDAP was able to overtake the SPD in June 1932 ([Source G](#)) as Germany's largest party. The quotation also underestimates the importance of the working class in providing members of activist movements like the SA, as opposed to more passive electoral support. Source shows that 56.5 per cent of the SA were recruited from this part of society.

Overall, these sources show that the NSDAP drew most of their vote from the middle classes and became the largest party attracting the middle classes. They also drew substantial support from the working classes but were unable to displace either the SPD or KPD to become the main party of the working class. They did, however, manage to combine their middle-class core and additions from the working class to become the only party in Germany to cut through class barriers.