

# HITLER'S RISE TO POWER

- Interviewer In January 1933, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, and I'm here with four trainee teachers to, to ask them how he did it. So, ladies and gentlemen – you're going to have to teach this next year, so what do you think: 'Why did Hitler rise to power?'
- John Because of HITLER himself!!! He was incontrovertibly a GENIUS! And persuasive – lots of people mentioned that he had particularly powerful, burning eyes ... He like ... CONVERTED people to follow him. It was psychological, perhaps because of his mother or father or something, or being a tramp. Or being gassed. Anyway, it made him, sort of ... well, he may even have been mad ... but he was certainly focussed. And he was tough – a war hero ... He never gave up, even after that Munich Putsch. That's it for me – Hitler's personal qualities.
- Interviewer And what about you, Andrea, what do you think?
- Andrea I think I'd go for propaganda. He tricked the German people. His programme was like SO full – when you read it – he just offered, well, everything to everyone ... he said what people *wanted* to hear. And he was also very much ahead of the game. He used all the latest technology, radio, aeroplanes – he had a newspaper, the *Volkischer Beobachter* ... HUGE rallies – everybody cheered and just sort of went: 'Let me in! I want to become a Nazi too...'  
... And of course, all this was connected with MONEY! All the rich people were scared of Communism, so they pumped money into him – not just Germans, either – all those American businessmen – like Henry Ford – they absolutely WORSHIPPED him – even after America entered the war, they were bankrolling Hitler!! That's how he afforded the propaganda.
- John But if you're saying it was Hitler's propaganda, and Hitler securing finance from rich anti-Communists, aren't you in effect saying that it was down to Hitler himself?
- Andrea Well, I suppose you're right in a way.
- Peter When I was doing my teaching practice, I told them pupils that it was because the Weimar Republic was weak. I drilled it into them every lesson: 'The Weimar republic had two inherent structural weaknesses' ... which did for it in the end. There was proportional representation, which meant that no party ever got enough seats to form a government with a majority, and there was Article 48, which gave the president the right to make laws by himself. PR gave Hitler the opportunity to come to power, and Article 48 let him become a dictator when he did.
- Andrea I'm quite happy to accept these as sort of ... the flaws in the system ... that Hitler was able to exploit. But it still begs the question as to how he ever got in a position where he could take advantage of them ... because how could anybody follow someone as evil as Hitler? I mean, he was saying really wicked things, and I find it hard to believe that German people were so evil as to agree ... so there's got to have been some kind of really powerful thing which sort of MADE them support him. For me, I'd focus on the Great Depression. I mean, they were already angry about the Treaty of Versailles, but then everybody lost their job, and they were all

starving, and they were DESPERATE – so then there’s this nutcase who says ‘Let me kill all the Jews and it’ll be OK’, and they say ‘Well, we might as well give him a shot’ but when he gets power it’s too late, they can’t change their mind. So I’d suggest that it was the Great Depression that preconditioned the German people to fall prey to Nazi propaganda.

- Peter                   The problem with that idea is that unemployed people joined the Communist Party, not the Nazi Party. It was the Middle Class who voted for Hitler.
- John                    But that was because of the Great Depression too – the Middle Class could see the country falling apart, and they sort of went ‘HELP! We need law and order! Please save us Mr Hitler!’
- Paula                   No, you’re ALL wrong ... because you’re all working on the idea that Hitler was *voted* into power – that he was brought to power by the popular acclaim of the German people. But he wasn’t. Nothing could be further from the truth – in fact at the last election the Nazis LOST seats! But then Hindenburg and Papen did this deal with him and MADE him Chancellor. Hitler didn’t ‘take’ power ... he was GIVEN power. So there’s your answer. Why did Hitler come to power? – one word only: HINDENBURG!
- Interviewer           So what I’m hearing is that a number of factors might have contributed to Hitler’s rise:  
Hitler’s genius;  
Nazi propaganda;  
Rich businessmen;  
Structural weaknesses of the Weimar Republic;  
The Depression; and  
Hindenburg.  
Thank you.