

**FOCUS REVISIT**

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

**Who supported the Nazis?**

**ACTIVITY**

- 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.
    - Study the following list of different sorts of German people likely to. Then put each group in a column, with the strongest supporters/opponents at the top and the weakest at the bottom.
    - Discuss your results with the rest of the class. Compare them with the detailed evidence on pages 118–23.
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Retired professor<br>Low-ranking civil servant<br>Army general<br>Shopkeeper in northern Germany<br>Female industrial worker<br>Junker<br>Catholic priest<br>Protestant small retailer | Industrial worker<br>High-ranking civil servant<br>Protestant student<br>Small farmer<br>Catholic unemployed worker<br>Unemployed ex-soldier<br>Unemployed artist |
|--|---|
- What attracted people to vote Nazi?
    - Write down on separate slips of paper four different Nazi slogans illustrating how the Nazis appealed to the German people.
    - 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.
    - 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 87 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 46 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 681 autobiographies of Nazi members. In 1954 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.

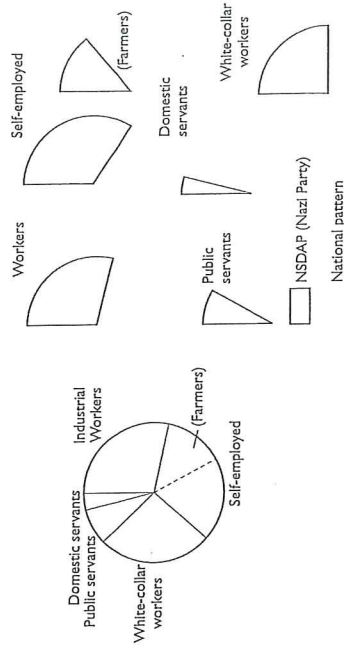
**ACTIVITY**

- Using Source 7.10, identify two groups that were over-represented in the Nazi Party and two that were under-represented in 1933.
- How did the membership of the Nazi Party change between 1929 and 1933 and then again after 1933? Why might this be?
- What do Chart 7B and Source 7.11 show about Nazi support from the working class?
- What do Sources 7.12, 7.13 and 7.15 tell you about the nature of Nazi support?
- Were there differences between those who were members of the Nazi Party and those who voted for the Nazis?
- Using Source 7.14 and Chart 7C on page 121:
  - How does support for the Nazi Party differ by region?
  - Why do you think it differed in this way?
- 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 1933	1933	
	A Number	B % of total members	C Number	D % of total members	E Number	F % of total members	G Estimated % of society
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
Total	129,563		719,446		2,493,870		

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



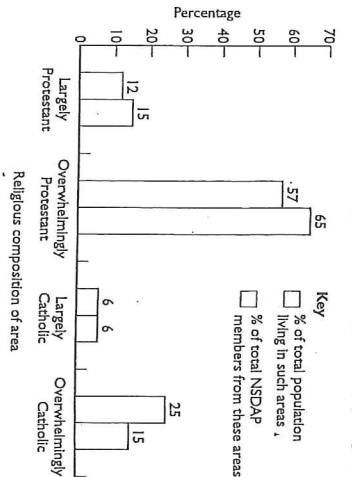
The pie chart on the left shows the occupational structure of the Nazi Party. The segments and shading on the right show the proportion of the German population for each social group overlaid by the proportion of Nazi Party members who were of that group.

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

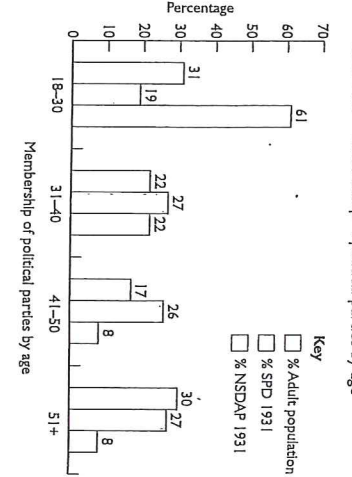
*The betrayal of socialism, of the German working people and thereby of the German nation by the SPD's leaders has led millions of proletarians, rural workers and impoverished members of the middle classes into the ranks of the NSDAP. In particular the... SS and SA boast a high percentage of proletarians. 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.*

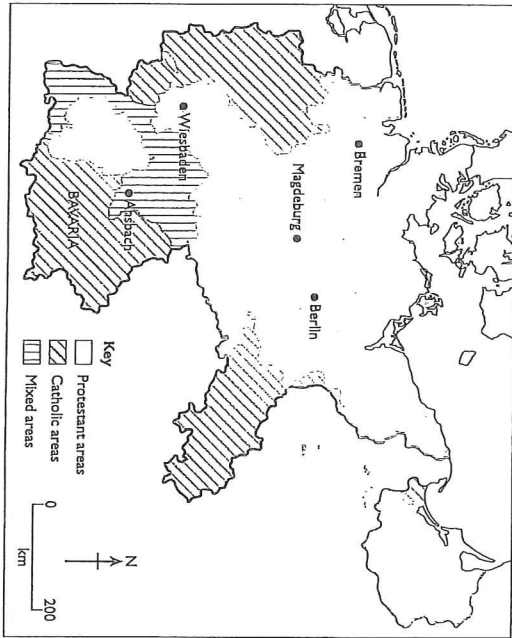
SOURCE 7.12 Membership of the NSDAP, 1925-33, by religion



SOURCE 7.13 Membership of political parties by age



SOURCE 7.14 The distribution of Protestants and Catholics in Germany



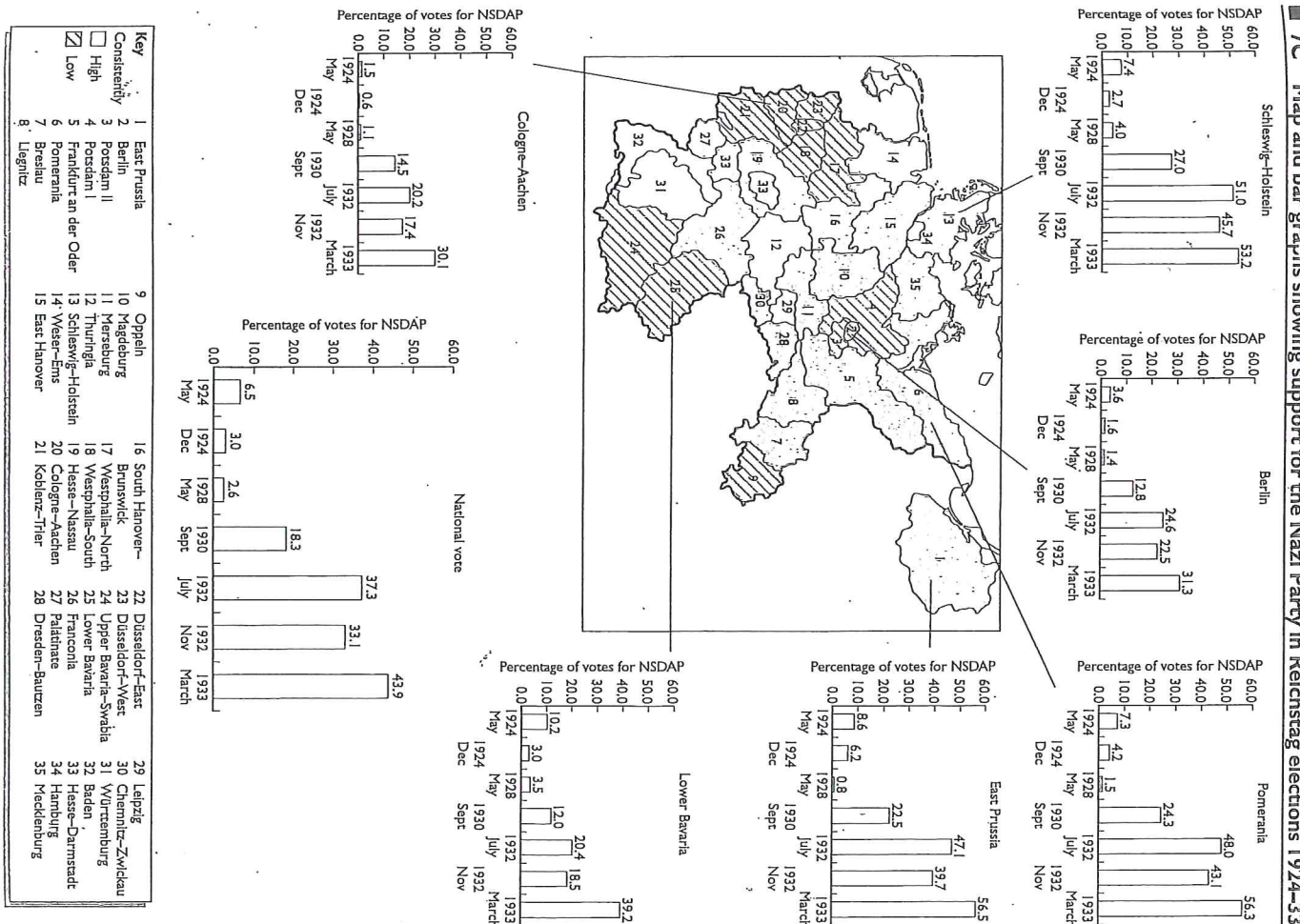
SOURCE 7.15 Percentage of German males/females voting Nazi

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	55.6	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.*

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



## Who supported the Nazis?

Source 8 shows Nazi support in 1932.

1. Study Source 8. Re-order the following list so that the largest segment of Nazi support is at the top and the smallest at the bottom:

- office workers
- industrial workers
- peasants
- the self-employed
- government employees.

2. If the Nazis were doing equally well in all groups in society, then the bottom bar of Source 8 would look the same as the top bar. As you can see, they did **proportionately** better in some groups, and proportionately worse in others.

- a) Which groups did they do best in proportionately?
- b) Which worst?

The Nazis also did better in some areas than in others (see Source 9).

- They were more successful in rural areas than in industrial or urban areas.
- They were more successful in northern Germany than in south Germany.
- They were more successful in Protestant areas than in Catholic areas.
- They were more successful in middle-class areas than in working-class areas.





The big question is why they were so successful in these areas and among these groups. The previous pages will have given you some general ideas. You are now going to look in detail at one small town to see if you can answer the question as to why the Nazis were so successful among the middle classes in rural, Protestant, north Germany.

German society as a whole

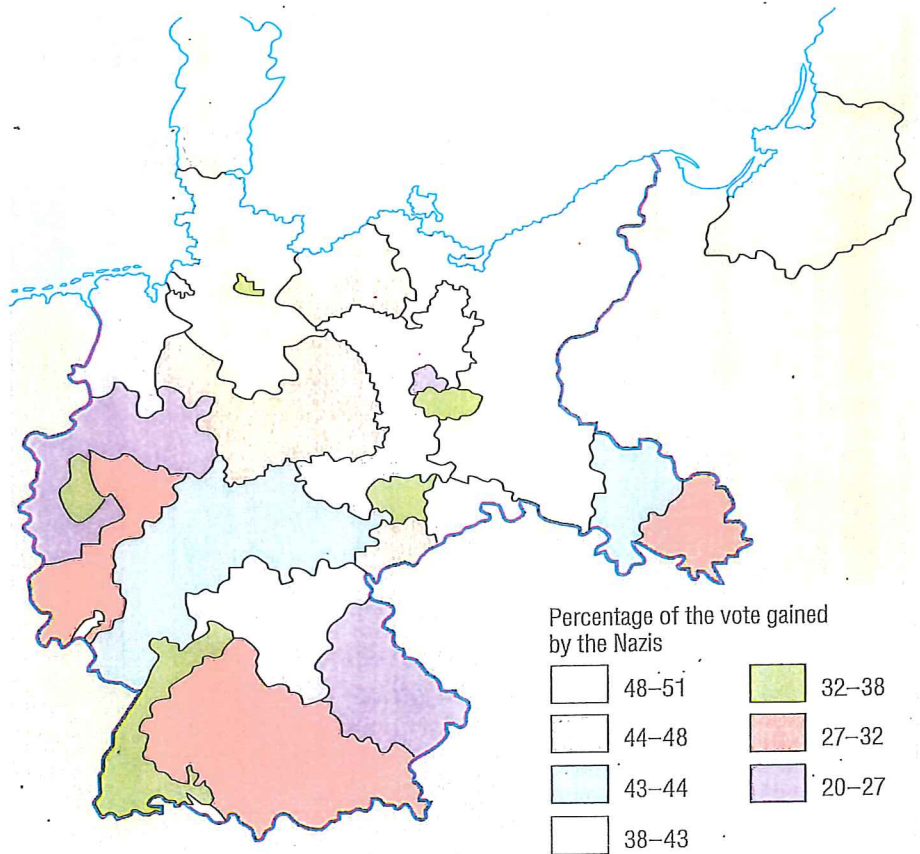
Working class	Middle class			Peasants	Other
46.3%	12.4%	9.6%	4.8%	20.7%	6.2%

Nazi Party membership in 1932

31.5%	21.0%	17.6%	6.7%	12.6%	10.6%
Working class	Middle class			Peasants	Others

Key	
	Industrial workers
	Self-employed
	White-collar workers
	Government employees

**SOURCE 8** Who supported the Nazis?



**SOURCE 9** Map showing support for the Nazis in Germany, based on the July 1932 election figures. It may help you to refer back to the map on page 4

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 sections 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 SPD 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 Socialist 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?

### AGREEMENT

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 REVENIERS – 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 rassenbewegung [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.

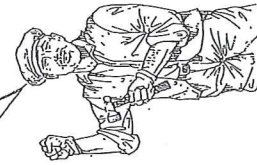
Secondly, more sources have been examined, with new techniques. The use of computers and refined statistical methodology have allowed more data to be viewed in different ways. There has been a growth in local studies, so the German people have been looked at in small groups and as individuals, not as 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

Workers of the world unite!

A Volksgemeinschaft to protect us all and make Germany great.



(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!

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

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 Brzegebirge 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.

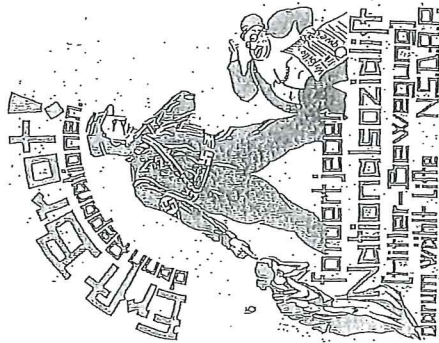
- 1 List the range of reasons why people voted for the Nazis.
- 2 Which of these reasons do you consider the most important?
- 3 How have historians' interpretations changed in recent years?

**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 8th 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!'



## Why did people support the Nazis?

### AGENDY

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?

### GERMAN WOMEN! GERMAN MOTHERS!

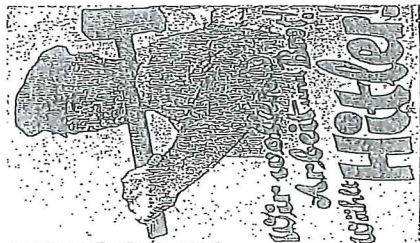
#### Our Young People Diefied.

The present Prussian Welfare Minister ... has confirmed ... that in a German Grammar School for girls 69 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 rancid and filthy, 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 handwork, 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?

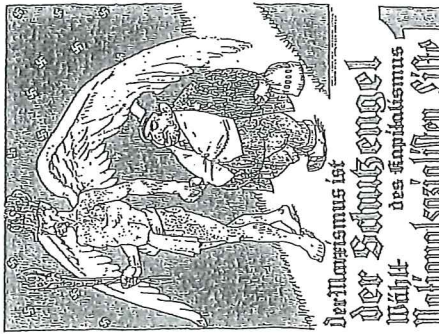
IF NOT, then vote for a National Socialist majority on July 31st. Then vote for

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

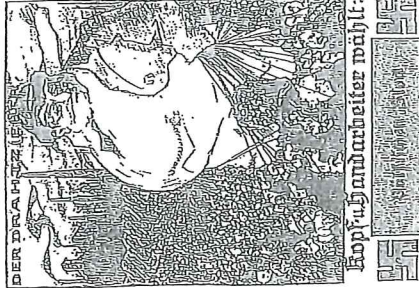
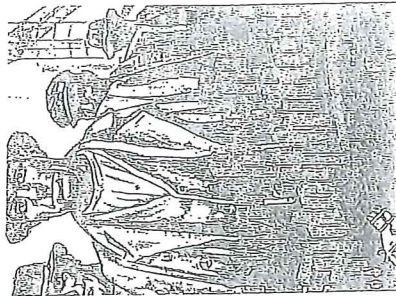


**SOURCE 7.26**  
A 1924 Nazi poster:  
'First bread! Then reparations!'

**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



'We're for Adolf Hitler!'



**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.

Invisible (never satisfied) Jewish race-hust and landgrabbers are the driving force 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 predatory high taxes, while you have insufficient income to set off against this because of low prices for livestock and grain?

High 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 wing your neck, under the protection of the state (they 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 shabby ration of bread, but an honourable life, decent earnings and the serenity 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 life 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

### Frauen!

WOMEN! Millions of men without work. Millions of children without a future. Save the German family. Vote Adolf Hitler!



**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!'

### TRADERS! SMALL PRODUCERS! ARTISANS!

For a long time you have kept out of sight and let corruption, favouritism and the hegemony 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 victims 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, practiced away before the elections then disappeared into parliament until the next.

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

They horse-died over ministerial posts and never gave you a thought. They have riddled 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 business? 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**

# Economic Slump 1929-1932

## 7. How was Germany affected by the slump?

- 1 Explain briefly what happened to each economic indicator in Source 6.1.
- 2 What does Source 6.2 reveal about the government's response to the slump?
- 3 Look at Source 6.3. How was Germany affected compared to other countries?
- 4 List the effects of the slump on the German economy.

SOURCE 6.1 Key indicators of the state of the German economy, 1928-33

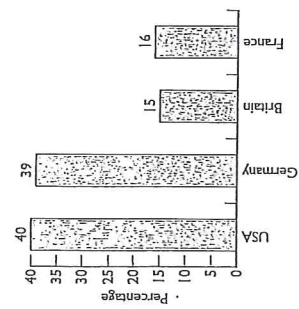
Aspect	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933
Industrial production (1913 = 100)	110	113	114	99	82	66	74
Exports (bn RM)		12.3	13.5	12.0	9.6	5.7	4.9
Imports (bn RM)		14.0	13.5	10.4	6.7	4.7	4.2
Unemployment (m)		1.4	1.8	3.1	4.5	5.6	4.8
Wages (nominal) 1913 = 100	145	164	169	155	137	113	115
Agricultural prices 1913 = 100	138	132	126	107	89	77	84
Industrial prices 1913 = 100		159	157	154	142	118	111
Government income bn RM*		9.0*				6.6*	6.8*

\* Income crosses year, i.e. 1928 figure covers 1928-9, etc.

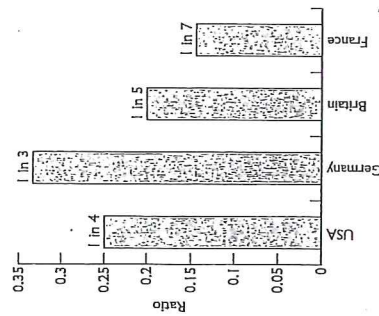
SOURCE 6.2 Government expenditure: per capita state expenditure (at all levels, i.e. federal, states, local) at 1900 prices (M) (i.e. so fluctuations in prices are taken into account)

Items	1913	1925	1929	1932
Economy, e.g. transport	17	16	22	18
Welfare services	20	65	102	106
Public housing	0.4	10	13	4
Education	17	20	28	24
Interest payments on National Debt	6	1	4	7

SOURCE 6.3 International comparisons



Drop in national income in 1932 compared to 1929 (%)



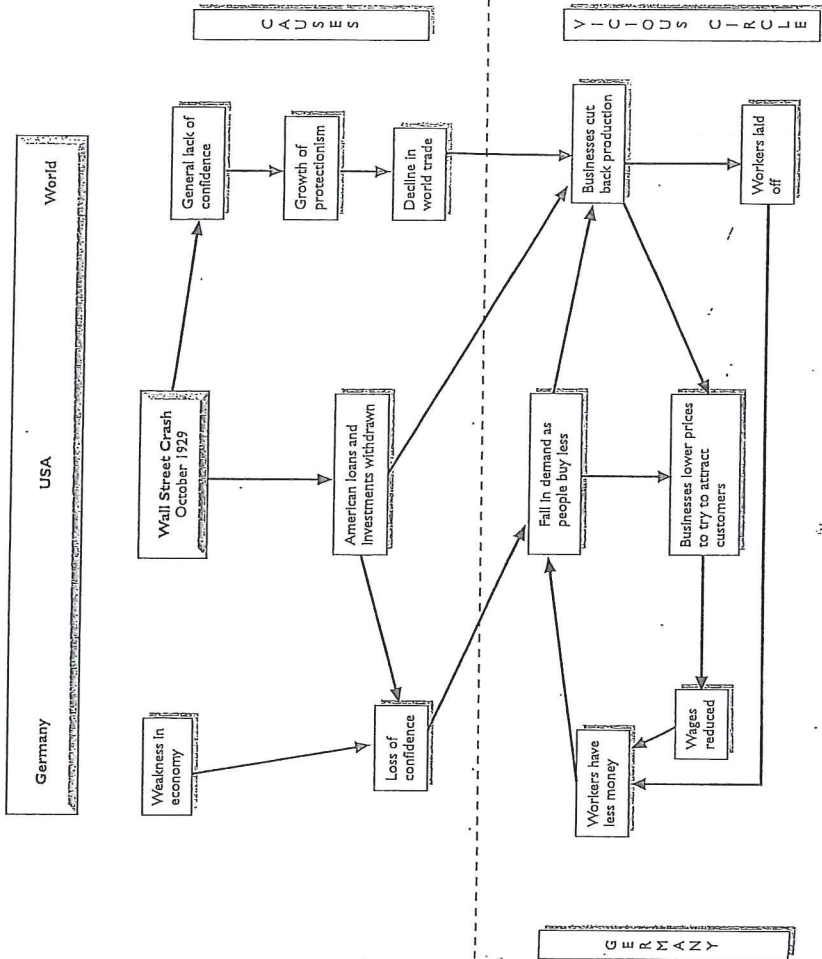
Ratio of unemployed in 1933

The effects of the slump were widespread. Many farmers had already been hit by high interest rates and falling agricultural prices. Their position worsened and by 1932 18,000 farmers had gone bankrupt. Industry equally suffered from the depression with 50,000 businesses going bankrupt between 1930 and 1932. The crisis had worsened in 1931 when five major banks closed down.

Just as significant was the fact that by 1932 over 6 million people were unemployed. For most, it was a disaster. Not only did they lose the income that they relied on, but they also felt unwanted and rejected, which had a deep psychological effect on many. In addition, millions of other people were affected by the job losses. Members of workers' families were hard hit, and traders suffered because of reduced demand for their goods. Even those who managed to keep their jobs had their wages reduced or lived in fear of losing their jobs.

## 6A How the slump became a vicious circle

The depression in Germany after 1929 is often blamed on external events, chiefly the Wall Street Crash. However, as this chart shows, the internal situation in Germany played a major part in the crisis.



### Offstage: the Government

No government was prepared to intervene in a major way to reflate the economy. Miller's coalition government 1928-30 could not agree on cuts. Brüning's government 1930-2 tried to use the slump for its own political and foreign policy purposes.

### The component parts of the economic crisis

- a) Agriculture: many farmers, hit by high interest rates, were going bankrupt by 1932; they were then hit by falling prices.
- b) Industry suffered a trade recession from 1929 on.
- b) Finance was hit by a banking collapse in the summer of 1931 when five banks went bankrupt.

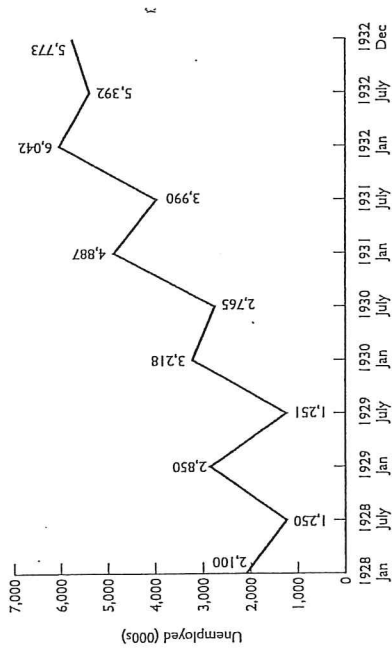


### How did German voters react to the slump?

- 1 Study the voting figures in Source 3.3 on page 63. Select evidence to support the view that the slump weakened support for Weimar democracy.
- 2 'Increased unemployment led to increased support for extremism in Germany.' Do Sources 6.4-8 prove this?

By the winter of 1932 about one-third of the German workforce was unemployed. This scale of unemployment overwhelmed the new unemployment insurance scheme. An increasing number of workers had to be given temporary relief, and were then forced back onto local authority handouts. Many were forced out of their homes, and lived in shanty towns. Mass unemployment had a great impact on the views of all Germans and how they consequently voted. Between 1930 and 1932 there were five major national elections, as well as numerous state elections. The effect of the slump can clearly be seen in German voting behaviour.

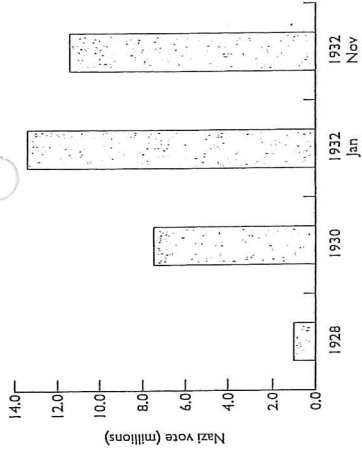
SOURCE 6.4 Unemployment 1928-32



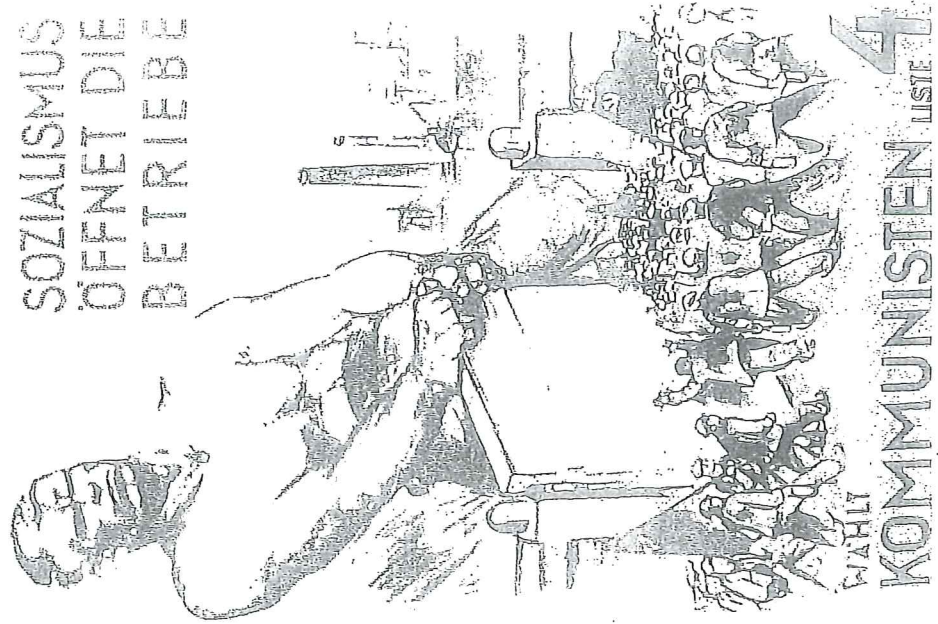
SOURCE 6.5 'Our last hope: Hitler.' A Nazi election poster from 1932



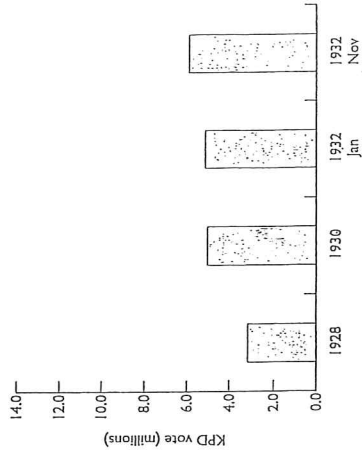
SOURCE 6.6 Nazi vote in Reichstag elections 1928-32



SOURCE 6.8 'Open the factories': a communist poster from 1932.



SOURCE 6.7 KPD vote in Reichstag elections 1928-32



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 1935 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.

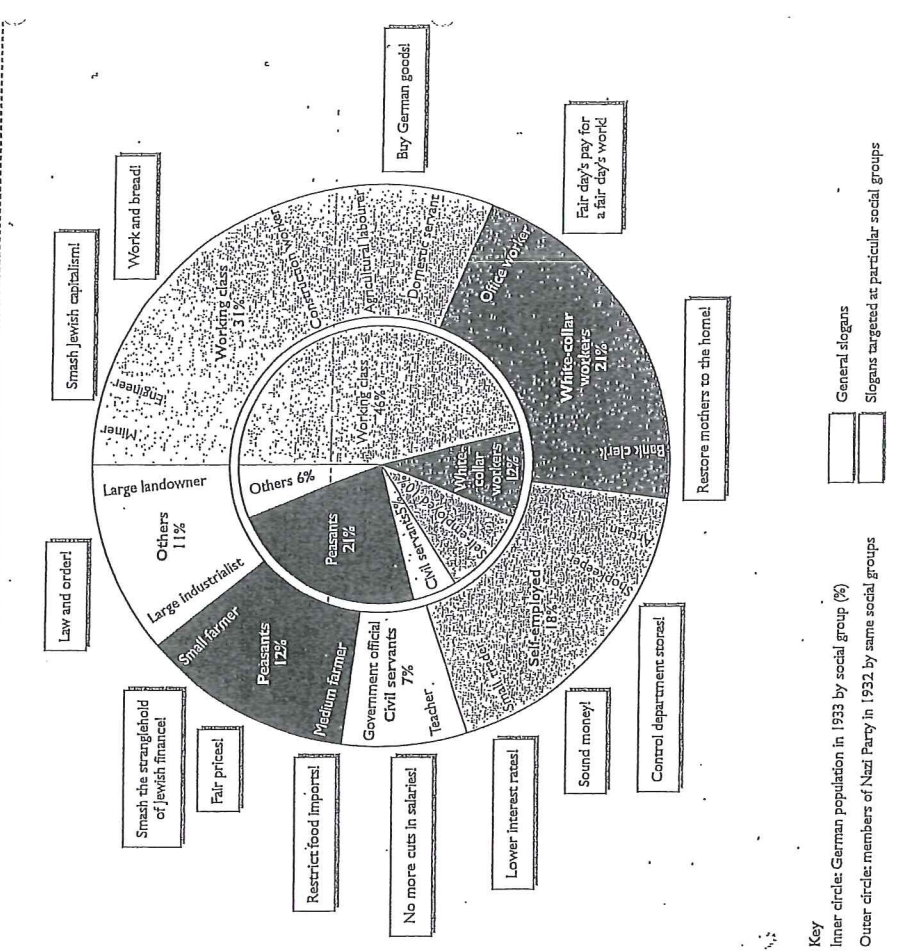
Brustein also sees economic factors as the reason for working-class support for the Nazis. Blue-collar workers in depressed industries were particularly attracted to their interventionist economic policies. Aspiring workers, those who had benefited from the social reforms of Weimar and were looking for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

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?

Chart 7E: A circular diagram with an inner ring for social groups and an outer ring for slogans. Social groups include Large landowner, Others, Large industrialist, Small farmer, Peasants, Medium farmer, Government official, Civil servants, Teacher, Self-employed, Small business, White-collar workers, Bank clerk, Office worker, White-collar workers, and Peasants. Slogans include 'Make Germany great!', 'Smash communism!', 'Smash the stranglehold of Jewish financial', 'Fair prices!', 'Restrict food imports!', 'No more cuts in salaries!', 'Lower interest rates!', 'Sound money', 'Control department stores!', 'Restore mothers to the home!', 'Fair day's pay for a fair day's work!', 'Buy German goods!', 'Work and bread!', 'Smash Jewish capitalism!', 'Smash the chains of Versailles!', 'Help us build a Volksgemeinschaft!', 'Smash the stranglehold of Versailles!', 'Smash the stranglehold of Jewish financial!', 'Smash communism!', 'Smash the stranglehold of Jewish financial!', 'Smash communism!', 'Smash the stranglehold of Jewish financial!', 'Smash communism!'.



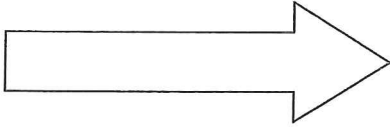
Key Inner circle: German population in 1933 by social group (%) Outer circle: members of Nazi Party in 1932 by same social groups General slogans Slogans targeted at particular social groups



# German Election Results 1924-1933.

Political parties in the German Reichstag	May 1924	Dec 1924	Sept 1928	July 1930	Mar 1932	Nov 1932	May 1933
Communist Party (KPD)	62	45	54	77	89	100	81
Social Democratic Party (SDP).	100	131	153	143	133	121	120
Centre Party (BVP)	81	88	78	87	97	90	93
Nationalist Party (DVNP)	95	103	73	41	37	52	52
Nazi Party (NSDAP)	32	14	12	107	230	196	288
Other parties	102	112	121	122	22	35	23

There were numerous elections in Weimar Germany between 1919-1933. The results of these elections reflect clearly the periods of recovery and stagnation at this time.



The results of the German elections from 1924 - 1933 have been given. Can you make use of this information in order to answer the following questions?

- Which party had the largest number of seats in 1928?
  
- Why did the Nazis and the Communists win relatively small numbers of seats between 1924 - 1928?
  
- Which political party gained the greatest number of seats between 1928 - 1930?
  
- How could this increase be explained?
  
- Why would the moderate centre parties have lost seats between 1928 - 1930?