

Adolf Hitler's Rise to Power and the Affect of Mein Kampf **By Walter S. Zapotoczny**

The Rise of the Nazi Party was achieved over an incredibly short period of time. From abject failure at the Munich Putsch and the imprisonment of Hitler to the election of Hitler as Chancellor took only 10 years. This turn around was due to a number of changes and policies implemented by the party within a very short period of time. The failure of the Putsch led Hitler to realize that the only way he would achieve power was through democratic, legal, means. As soon as the Putsch was over Hitler set about reorganizing the party to enable such a turn around in the parties' fortunes. The party played on historic fears and complaints with great effect. Hitler was well aware of the Germans animosity towards the Treaty of Versailles. He used this for political gain, blaming the Jews, often a scapegoat in European history, for many of the woes of the twenties and promising to tear up the terms of the hated treaty. While other groups also made similar claims, Hitler's party achieved a higher level of credibility among the German public by putting some of their rhetoric into action. The *Sturmabteilung* (SA) was deployed to break up communist meetings, which won the approval of a very nervous middle class. He made promises to farmers about the quality of life and a guarantee of earnings. Ex-soldiers were won over by the militaristic images that Hitler used and his promise of tearing up the Treaty of Versailles and restoring the forces to their previous size won acclaim from many former servicemen. Even while in prison, Hitler's aims and objectives proved to be fruitful. *Mein Kampf*, written while behind bars, became a best seller. It publicized the Nazi ideology and, as it was clearly a statement of intent with regards Germany's greatness, it was recognized as being an ideal. This contained his basic ideas including that Aryans were superior and they should control the world. He believed the only way to accomplish this would be to have a dictator ruling. Racial awareness would also be important with their hatred for all other "inferior" races, especially Jews. No class or other distinctions in German society mattered. Another of Hitler's major ideas was *Lebensraum* (living space). Hitler argued that Germany needed large amounts of territory to expand, which meant conquering territory and expelling or killing the local populations. Once out of Prison Hitler was able to play on the popularity of these ideals through speeches. He was famed for the power and effectiveness of his Rhetoric.

The Wall Street Crash of 1929 provided the spark that allowed the Nazi's to gain support. All of a sudden the support of the American's and the aid plans were withdrawn, Germany was again isolated and the economy was in crisis. The rise in unemployment and a renewed fear of a Communist uprising gave Hitler's messages a new importance. People were again interested in the views of this extremist party. In a land where the government was struggling to control the economy, the people and the communists any alternative that appears to be willing, and able, to combat the problems, through whatever means, is seen in a very positive light. Hitler wasted no time in consolidating his position as Chancellor. Once in power, the use of Propaganda, the radio, posters and film shows by the Nazis was groundbreaking. It captured the imagination of a disillusioned population and gave them fresh hope. An image had been created of a powerful party with strong leadership. Hitler and his National Socialist movement offered something for everyone and this, at a time when German politicians were failing to control the economy or the radical Nazi control of the Reichstag and its institutions was a necessity to enable his plans. Once the Nazi Party had taken power, or rather gained control of the Reichstag, Hitler made moves to gain control of the institutions that ran Germany on a day to Day basis. This was achieved in a number of ways. Following his election as Chancellor, Hitler was in a position where he was the nominal leader of the Weimar republic but he did not have the majority necessary to implement his political program. To do, as he wanted he required such a majority, he needed the opposition to be silenced.

A fire in the Reichstag buildings provided him with the ideal opportunity to take the initiative. The fire was publicly blamed upon the Communists. 4000 communist party members were consequently arrested and sent to concentration camps around Germany. In a stroke Hitler had annihilated the most potent threat to his leadership. This was followed, very quickly, by the Enabling Act. This measure allowed Hitler the right to rule without consultation of the Reichstag or the president. It was in effect a decree of a state of emergency. The result was the banning of all opposition parties, censorship of broadcasts and publications and a rapid replacement of Government officials who were deemed to be unsympathetic towards Nazi policy. Such swift actions left the Nazi Party with little political opposition, certainly no legalized opposition. Hitler now had a one party state and control of

most means of communication: the Nazi propaganda machine could begin its work. Even so, Hitler was not entirely certain of his position. The party itself was not united behind his vision of National Socialism. On the Night of the Long Knives this situation was rectified. Hitler asserted that Rohm, the leader of the SA, had plotted to overthrow him. 400 members of the organization were rounded up and killed. This brutal action secured the loyalty of the Armed forces, who had previously been wary of the SA's influence. Hitler was now in control of both his party and the Government.

Copyright © 2005 Walter S. Zapotoczny