

D Why was Hitler appointed Chancellor in January 1933?

FOCUS ROUTE

Explain the reasons why key members of the elite eventually favoured the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor.

On 30 January 1933 President Hindenburg summoned Adolf Hitler to Berlin and appointed him Chancellor. In many ways this was a surprising development. Hindenburg disliked Hitler. In August 1932 he had refused to appoint him Chancellor after the Nazis' great electoral success. Since then Nazi support had declined and the movement had been torn by divisions. Many in the elite were also wary of the radicalism and the generally vulgar nature of the Nazi Movement.

Despite this, in January 1933, members of the elite persuaded Hindenburg to appoint Hitler Chancellor. By 1932, key industrialists and landowners were very concerned about the lack of effective government. They had never been committed to parliamentary democracy and now believed their fears were confirmed. Some saw the possibility of using the Nazis' popular support to channel the political system in a more authoritarian direction. The Junkers were also upset by Brüning's and later Schleicher's reform proposals to buy up bankrupt estates to resettle poor farmers. This was seen by landowners as 'agrarian Bolshevism', and contributed to the intrigue that persuaded Hindenburg to dismiss both Brüning and Schleicher.

Members of the elite used a number of tactics in what has been called their 'taming strategy' for the Nazi Party.

- 1 The first tactic was to make Hitler Vice-Chancellor under Papen; this was put forward in August 1932, but Hitler rejected it, demanding to be Chancellor. Hitler's rejection was risky, since he did not get the chancellorship, and it was seen as a great defeat by many Nazis.
- 2 The second tactic was used in December 1932. Schleicher, hoping to split the Nazis, proposed the idea of himself as Chancellor, with the Nazi Gregor Strasser as Vice-Chancellor. This failed, and Strasser left the Nazi Party.
- 3 The final tactic (arranged by a Cologne banker, Kurt von Schröder, members of the Reich Agrarian League, industrialists and Oskar von Hindenburg) was to put Hitler in office as Chancellor, but surrounded by Papen as Vice-Chancellor and other conservatives. The Nazis' current difficulties would make them easier to control. Hindenburg agreed, against his own judgement. Papen commented to a friend, 'We've hired him', but he was fatally wrong.

8F Factors bringing the elite and the Nazis together – and factors that kept them apart

