

## United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

# UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM 2018 25

## Hitler Comes to Power

In the early 1930s, the mood in Germany was grim. The worldwide economic depression had hit the country especially hard, and millions of people were out of work. Still fresh in the minds of many was Germany's humiliating defeat fifteen years earlier during World War I, and Germans lacked confidence in their weak government, known as the Weimar Republic. These conditions provided the chance for the rise of a new leader, Adolf Hitler, and his party, the National Socialist German Workers' Party, or Nazi party for short.

Hitler was a powerful and spellbinding speaker who attracted a wide following of Germans desperate for change. He promised the disenchanted a better life and a new and glorious Germany. The Nazis appealed especially to the unemployed, young people, and members of the lower middle class (small store owners, office employees, craftsmen, and farmers).

The party's rise to power was rapid. Before the economic depression struck, the Nazis were practically unknown, winning only 3 percent of the vote to the Reichstag (German parliament) in elections in 1924. In the 1932 elections, the Nazis won 33 percent of the votes, more than any other party. In January 1933 Hitler was appointed chancellor, the head of the German government, and many Germans believed that they had found a savior for their nation.

### Key Dates

#### JUNE 28, 1919

##### TREATY OF VERSAILLES ENDS WORLD WAR I

In the Treaty of Versailles, which followed German defeat in World War I, the victorious powers (the United States, Great Britain, France, and other allied states) impose severe terms on Germany. Germany, under threat of invasion, is forced to sign the treaty. Among other provisions, Germany accepts responsibility for the war and agrees to make huge payments (known as reparations), limit its military to 100,000 troops, and transfer territory to its neighbors. The terms of the treaty lead to widespread political discontent in Germany. Adolf Hitler gains support by promising to overturn them.

#### OCTOBER 24, 1929

##### STOCK MARKET CRASH IN NEW YORK

The plummet in the value of stocks that is associated with the New York stock market crash brings a rash of business bankruptcies. Widespread unemployment occurs in the United States. The "Great Depression," as it is called, sparks a worldwide economic crisis. In Germany, six million are unemployed by June 1932. Economic distress contributes to a meteoric rise in the support for the Nazi party. As a result, the Nazi party wins the votes of almost 40 percent of the electorate in the Reichstag (German parliament) elections of July 1932. The Nazi party becomes at this point the largest party in the German parliament.



A crowd cheers Adolf Hitler as his car leaves the Reich Chancellery following a meeting with President Paul von Hindenburg. Berlin, Germany, November 19, 1932.

— *National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Md.*

**NOVEMBER 6, 1932****NAZIS LOSE SUPPORT IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS**

In the Reichstag (German parliament) elections of November 1932, the Nazis lose almost two million votes from the previous elections of July. They win only 33 percent of the vote. It seems clear that the Nazis will not gain a majority in democratic elections, and Adolf Hitler agrees to a coalition with conservatives. After months of negotiations, the president of Germany, Paul von Hindenburg, will appoint Hitler chancellor of Germany in a government seemingly dominated by conservatives on January 30, 1933.

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