

B) How well organised were the Nazis?

The Nazis' success partly stemmed from their organisational structure throughout Germany. The party was organised in a series of areas, or *Gaue*, headed by a local leader, the *Gauleiter*, appointed by Hitler and subordinate to his orders. Outside these orders, the *Gauleiter* enjoyed considerable latitude to develop the party according to local circumstances. The Nazis also built up a series of associated organisations for young people, women, students, lawyers, factory workers, etc. Especially important was the Nazi Welfare Organisation which ran soup kitchens and organised food donations to people in distress, putting into practice their idea of a *Volksgemeinschaft* or national community. Under its organisation chief, Gregor Strasser, the party built up an efficient structure that allowed it to exploit the economic deterioration after 1929.

Although the Nazis had a centralised party propaganda machine under Goebbels, they also paid great attention to local propaganda. Most Nazi members and votes were won over by personal contacts or by attending a meeting addressed by a local speaker, not through direct contact with Hitler, despite his energetic campaigning. The Nazis targeted key individuals in a local community, such as a butcher or teacher, and hoped he would influence others. Their growing membership allowed them to organise concerted door-to-door campaigning and leafleting. They also used direct mailing and the publication of pamphlets. For example, they distributed 600,000 copies of their Immediate Economic Programme during the July 1932 election campaign. Posters conveyed simple messages; simple in both what they offered and how they portrayed their opponents.

The Nazis put great effort into training speakers. Over 6,000 had passed through their training school by 1933. Speakers were licensed by the party to ensure quality and were provided with booklets on policies and propaganda techniques. The Nazis used the latest technology - loudspeakers, slide shows, films and even planes - as in, for example, the 1932 presidential election campaign. 'Führer over Germany'. Initially, they relied on traditional forms, such as mass rallies, marches in uniform and drill. Music, lighting and the display of disciplined enthusiasm fostered the message as much as the words. Once in power, they made great use of radio and films.

Success was also due to the campaigning effectiveness of the Nazi Movement (*Bewegung*). (The Nazis called themselves a movement to distinguish themselves from other parties.) Firstly, they developed a powerful message. The Nazis promised to restore hope and create a new national community for all Germans (*Volksgemeinschaft*). Economic problems would be solved and the people provided with work and bread. The interests of all Germans would be looked after, but especial attention was given to the needs of the true German peasant and small trader who would be saved from 'the clutch of Jewish moneylenders'. The feeble Weimar democratic system would be replaced with strong leadership, which would smash communism, end Jewish influence, destroy the Versailles settlement and end reparations. Germany's new military might would allow it to secure vital living space (*Lebensraum*) and Germany would be a great nation once more.

Nationalism was crucial to the Nazi appeal, providing a form of ideological cement to hold together potentially diverse and conflicting interest groups. Anti-Semitism was prominent in the early stages in the 1920s, but was not a major reason for their mass support in the 1930s.

The Nazis' ability to convey their message gained a great boost from their 1929 anti-Young Plan alliance with Alfred Hugenberg's Nationalist Party. This alliance gave Hitler access to Hugenberg's vast media empire. Their ideas now reached beyond the party's own paper, *Völkischer Beobachter*, to a range of mass-circulation papers. Funds were also attracted so that the party could compete in the numerous Reichstag, presidential and state elections that marked the final years of the Weimar Republic. Initially, the Nazi Party had some funding from the army and wealthy patrons, but most of its money came from ordinary members, through donations and charges for attending meetings. The party did receive some funding from industrialists, most notably Thyssen, but it was not a major factor in its success.

The rapid expansion of the Nazi Movement created an aura of success, which further boosted membership and resources. After their startling electoral success of 1930, the Nazis immediately intensified their propaganda in readiness for the next elections. In the following year, membership rose from 390,000 to 800,000. On the other hand, turnover was rapid, as some apparently became disillusioned, especially late in 1932, with their apparent failure to gain power.

Source 5 – Report of the Prussian state police, in June 1930, on the NSDAP’s speakers’ school

The training of speakers is accomplished by correspondence course in the form of monthly instruction packages... A participant at the Speakers’ School is only finally recognised as an official party speaker after participating in the correspondence course for 12 months and speaking publically thirty times within 8 months.

This year it is planned to hold a further, oral course in Herrshing. The precondition for attendance is a minimum of 6 months satisfactory participation on the correspondence course... Speakers in possession of a ‘certificate of aptitude’ are permitted to hold local training evenings at which they can train speakers according to the methods of the speakers’ school.

Source 6 – A Nazi meeting, July 1931, described in the Nazi monthly journal *Wille und Weg* (The Will and the Way)

The first meeting in a village must be prepared in such a way that it is well attended. The prerequisite [essential thing] is that the speaker is fairly well informed about specifically rural questions. Then, it is most advisable to go to a neighbouring village some time after but to advertise the meeting the first village there as well, then many people will certainly come across. After this, one holds a big German Evening in a central hall for a number of villages with co-operation of the SA and the SA band... The German Evening provided it is skilfully and grandiosely [with a great show] geared to producing a big public impact, primarily has the task of making the audience enthusiastic for our cause, and secondly to raise the money necessary for further build-up of propaganda. The preparation of the village meetings should best be carried out in the following way: most effectively through written personal invitations to every farmer or inhabitant; in the bigger villages by a circular; which is carried from farm to farm by party members.

Source 7 – Report for the 1930 accounts of the town group in Preussisch Holland, East Prussia

Preussisch Holland 8.3.1931

| Receipts | Marks | Expenditure | Marks |
|--|-----------------|---|------------------|
| <u>Subscriptions from members</u> | 616.10 | <u>Subscriptions paid to central party SA insurance</u> | 248.05 170.40 |
| <u>Donations</u> Voluntary and collections | 1,620.68 | <u>Administrative expenses</u> | 468.97 |
| <u>Meetings</u> Sale of admission tickets to meetings; donations at meetings to fighting fund | 1,957.70 | <u>Propaganda</u> Advertisements, leaflets, speakers' fees, travel, rent, etc. | 2,249.64 |
| | | <u>Extras</u> SA/Hitler Youth damages at meeting | 896.61 |
| General | 475.95 | General | 298.50 |
| Total | 4,670.43 | | 4,332.17 |

Source 8 – Extracts from the course held by the National Propaganda Directorate II, 17-31 August 1931

Saturday 22 August

09.30-11.30: Dr Konopath, Chief of the Cultural Policy Section of the National Directorate: Blood and Race in the German Nations

15.00-18.30: Town Councillor Fiehler; Specialist in Community Politics Issues within the National Directorate; National Socialist Community Politics

22.00-23.00: Plenary [attended by all members] Session. Speaker: Dr Konopath

Sunday 23 August

07.30-10.00: Reinhardt: The NSDAP in the Reichstag: the others and us

10.30-12.00: Alfred Rosenberg: National Socialist Foreign Policy

14.00-15.30: Alfred Rosenberg: The Militant League for German Culture

16.00-18.00: Walther Darre, Chief of the Agricultural Policy Section of the National Directorate: National Socialist Agricultural Policy.

Tuesday 25 August/Wednesday 26 August

Whichever of these days sees good weather will be kept free to allow the party comrades time to participate in a long-distance tour of the Bavarian Alps. [Other sessions included ‘Tribute, Currency and Economy’; ‘National Socialism and Support for War Victims’; ‘Work and the Shaping of Social Life’; ‘Hitler Youth’; ‘National Socialist View of the State’; ‘Educational and Religious Policy’; ‘Military Policy’; ‘The Jewish Question’.]

ACTIVITY 3

1. What do you think is the difference between a movement and a party?
2. Make notes on the Nazi Party's:
 - a. Organisational structure
 - b. Methods of building support
 - c. Fundraising
 - d. Message to voters