

There the weimar
took over and a



There were many circumstances that led to the rise of Adolf Hitler as a great leader, and to the change to a one-party state in Germany, and the success of the Nazi party was due largely to the political and economic instability of the period.

Social unrest in Germany had been growing since the stipulations of the Versailles Treaty at the end of the First World War, and the results of the Treaty's sanctions and restrictions on Germany eroded the public trust and support in the recently founded Weimar Republic. The flaws of the Weimar Republic and the position of Germany allowed Hitler to create his one-party state. Hitler's oratory skills and emotive issues allowed him to gain many votes at such a time when people were ready to listen to anyone who said he 'had all the answers.' In 1918 military positions collapsed and shortly after the abdication, a new government known as the Weimar Republic went into power by gaining a majority. The Weimar took over and a new Constitution was drafted. The policies of the new constitution allowed the Nazi Party to take a seat in Parliament by proportional representation. The Nazi Party rose further as it enhanced its ways of increasing its votes through manipulation of the system of the Weimar Republic. Its brown-shirts (SA) were organized into battalions, thousands strong, to guard Nazi meetings, to break up other meetings, and to terrorize Hitler's opponents.

After the general election on the 14th of September 1930, the people of Germany awoke to the startling news of the results. Hitler and his party, The Nationalist Socialist German Workers' Party, made a spectacular breakthrough at the polls. They had attracted an alarming number of votes and were now the second largest party. This resulted in the party being

almost a majority, and the aristocrats invited Hitler as chancellor in hopes of being able to control him, but this was not the case. Soon after, the Reichstag Building was burnt down and a communist was accused of the arson. Hitler used this excuse to allow himself to gain emergency power and, in effect, arrest those who were involved with communist subversion. His position as chancellor allowed him as much power as he needed to be able to finish off his development of a one-party state.

In the next election the Nazi Party became a majority and gained further power to abolish all other political parties. Through this, Hitler rose higher and higher to the eventual role of dictator. The effects of the Versailles Treaty had been harsh on Germany's economy. An urgent vacancy for a great leader existed, and Hitler easily filled it, similar to how Napoleon easily took over the government in tumultuous post-revolutionary France. Hitler recognized the power of propaganda as a tool to appeal to the people and promote his position as a 'great leader.' The film, *The Triumph of the Will* (1935, directed by Leni Riefenstahl), is exemplary in showing Hitler's ability to come across as a national patriot and father-figure, intent on restoring Germany to its 'rightful' status. Specifically, appealing to the public's want/need of a 'great leader' was the axis upon which Nazi propaganda of the time rested.

Hitler was ushering the German people out of economic depression, and he wanted to be seen as a savior for doing so. He wanted to encourage the idea that well being and success in Germany depended completely on him; without its Fuhrer, Germany was nothing. This can be clearly seen in the first speech of the film, where Hess, speaking to Hitler, says, You are Germany.

When you act, the nation acts; when you judge, the people judge. Our gratitude to you will be our pledge to stand by you for better and for worse, come what may! Thanks to your leadership, Germany will attain her aim to be the homeland of all the Germans of the world. You have guaranteed our victory, and you are now guaranteeing our peace.

This is a perfect example of Hitler capitalizing on the emotions and spirit of the German people. By equating himself with the German nation, anyone with patriotism or national pride must in turn support him, as he represents the solitary leader, the driving force of the nation. In a following scene in the film, the audience is presented with troops of 52, 000 laborers awaiting orders from Hitler. The laborers pictured in this scene show extreme efficiency, arranged in neat rows and holding their shovels as rifles. To Hitler, they chant, One Nation, one Leader, one Reich - Germany! Very simply, this further expresses the role of Hitler as a ' great leader', incorporating the nation, the people, and the government all together into one person. By simplifying things in such a manner, Hitler makes it easy for the common person to profess their allegiance. As they support one facet, they support them all; in fact, by simply being a German citizen, they support Germany and everything that Germany entitles: the Nation, the Leader, and the Reich. Throughout the speech to the workers, images are shown of the laboring men listening with interest and excitement, ready to serve Hitler and the nation.

This is important as it encourages the audience to also work together for the benefit of Germany. Hitler realized the importance of Germany's youth in regards to the future. The film shows one of Hitler's programs for children,

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called Hitler Youth. Hitler wanted to instill in the impressionable youth the importance of a unified Germany under a single, strong leader. It is interesting to note that Hitler speaks not in a condescending manner but directly to the children, as a friend encouraging them to side with him.

The hair color and sex of the children shown are important, as a subliminal message of how Hitler hoped future Germany would be represented. While often breaking things down into simple terms and stressing the importance of working together as a unified nation, Hitler intelligently does not overlook the role of the individual as of itself. In his third speech of the film, Hitler is before 200, 000 assembled military men, and says, The men have assembled here, summoned by nothing but the order of their heart, nothing but the command of their fidelity. He goes on to emphasize the fact that the men were not forced to assemble by the state, but rather they came together as individuals, uniting for the common effort of the state. This is key, because Hitler is able to instill individual pride that leads to national pride and allegiance to the Fuhrer. By addressing the individual, Hitler makes him feel special, important, and, above all, like they are making decisions for themselves, although this is usually not the case.

An image used throughout the film that captures the idea of the individual being swallowed up into the nation or masses is the raised arm. Images of this are seen several times in Triumph of the Will, and are actually not at all democratic, as they show masses of raised arms as if separated from the people who raised them. No trace of the individual is left - the raised arms of the salute physically obscure the faces and identifying features. This reveals the Nazi extension of the national ideal from a legitimate principle to a

controlling ideology. In the Germany's state of economic depression following the Treaty of Versailles, Hitler's construction of a one-party state was unrestrained.

In control, Hitler relied on propaganda and the picture of a 'great leader' to increase his power and bring together the people of Germany. Hitler displays in his speeches a feeling that the mass meetings depicted in the film, which he knew were carefully staged, were genuine expressions of the national will. The film propaganda pretended that everyday life in the Third Reich was normal. If there were threats, they were clearly definable, and they could be overcome by a 'triumph of the will.'

'By equating himself to the people and to the nation, and through the compelling force of film, Hitler embodied Germany and reaped tremendous success as the 'great leader' he had always wanted to be.