

# Who killed weimar democracy



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Who killed Weimar democracy? It is hard to access a simple answer to this question because there are many factors which led to that. Beginning with the hard situation of Germany after the First World War, going through reigns of chancellors, ending on the president and Hitler's high political skills. However in my essay I would like to mainly concentrate on the role of chancellors: Brüning, Papen, Schleicher and the president Hindenburg. I will try to estimate in turn whether these four persons deliberately undermined Weimar democracy or helped Hitler by their choices.

Brüning was appointed a chancellor in very hard time for Germany. After the First World War Germany was in a weak position and in addition it had to pay reparations. Heinrich Brüning wanted to quickly begin his reign and introduce his plans. But Reichstag rejected to some of his measures. Thinking quickly and under pressure he decided to dissolve the Reichstag. He made this because Hindenburg advised him so and as it turned out it was his big mistake which can be his first step to undermine the Weimar democracy. In the new elections the extremists took control and it became even harder for Brüning to gain the co-operation and rule.

He wanted to deepen the Depression to achieve ending of reparations. He reckoned that it is a great plan to convince world that Germany could not afford to pay reparations. On one hand it really released Germany from paying the reparations, but on the other it made people very angry and unhappy. When people did not have anything to eat and conditions to live dissatisfaction was growing. This chancellor can be blamed for Hitler's eventual appointment, because firstly dissolving Reichstag gave Nazis an

opportunity to gain higher position and then the deflationary policies made millions voters to support Nazi.

It is important to mark that Hindenburg advised Brüning to use the Article 48. After the fall of Brüning he was forced to resign and a new chancellor Franz von Papen was appointed. As far as I am concerned his reign was a complete disaster from its beginning. He formed a non-party government of 'national concentration' which consisted of the elite. None of the members were in Reichstag. It was supposed to be a more presidential government and Papen naively wanted to gain support from the Nazis. So the only way to rule was using the presidential decrees.

His next horrible move was overthrowing democratic government in Prussia. It was a further disaster to the Weimar democracy and great help for Hitler as a chancellor to achieve the power faster by inheriting the Prussian state and overthrowing other states governments. Subsequent fatal decision was to call a new election in which Weimar regime completely loose, but extremists mainly Nazis gained about 40% of the votes. Because of this fact Hindenburg decided to dissolve the Reichstag after one day and planned with Papen not to call a new one, but it could cause a civil war.

Next election weakened the position of Nazis a little but did not improve anything for Papen. The last desperate move Papen could make was to conclude a deal with Hitler and persuade Hindenburg to replace next chancellor Schleicher with Hitler and in return become deputy. Because of the hard situation Hindenburg was considering new government and chancellor. It was very close to appoint Hitler but in the end Schleicher won.

Nevertheless he failed to get any support and he did not make it to do anything. Schleicher did not do anything during being a chancellor but he was very active before.

He advised Hindenburg to appoint Brüning and then to dismiss him. Subsequently he did the same thing with Papen and it was also Schleicher who told Hindenburg that plan to not call new election could lead to the civil war. Summarising he was a very intelligent and influential person, thanks to whom other chancellors were chosen and many decisions were made. I suppose that he can be connected with events which led to the death of Weimar democracy but in the smallest degree. Moreover if not him Hitler would be a chancellor earlier. Eventually it is Hindenburg turn.

As for me he contributed to many decisions, which I mentioned above, made by chancellors which deliberately undermined Weimar democracy and helped Hitler to seize the power. From the very beginning he took too little control and was not strong and decisive enough. His age could be an excuse but it not change the fact that he was too easily persuaded by Papen and his son Oscar to appoint Hitler, who he did not like. Maybe if he could not let use Article 48 so easily, and from the start choose a right person for the chancellor with a proper government with the support in Reichstag whose move and choices he could control, the

Weimar democracy could survive and Hitler would not be let to power.

Summarising I blame Papen for the death of Weimar democracy. A person who did not think about the country and society but about his own business. Obviously every person who I have mentioned contributed to it but Franz von

Papen firstly lost completely control and then intensely helped Hitler to seizure the power. At first he, with great help of Bruning, causes great gains of votes for Nazis and later strongly affected Hindenburg's decision. Adrian Grochowski