The Changing Political Fortunes Of The Nazi Party Essay, Research Paper

?Account for the changing political fortunes of the Nazi Party from November, 1923 until January, 1933.?The main political changes that the Nazi Party or the NSDAP endured during the period of November, 1923 until January 1933 was its rise from a small extreme right party to a major political force. It is vitally important that the reasons behind this rise to power also be examined, to explain why the NSDAP was able to rise to the top. However first a perspective on the Nazi party itself is necessary to account for the changing political fortunes of the Nazi Party.

In late 1923 and early 1924 the German economy seemed to experience a mild period of economic stabilisation and ?prosperity?. In November, the government issued a new currency and ensured that tight restrictions were imposed. The economy was further stimulated by loans principally from the USA. However despite all this there simultaneously, was increasing numbers of unemployed persons. A well cited example of this is the coal mining industry where the introduction of more efficient machinery meant that one in four miners lost their jobs. No doubt that increased unemployment meant that the German population grew increasingly discontent with the Weimar government and this is the beginnings of the swing towards more radical political voting. Hitler knew that he had to have attractive political policies in order to attract a greater pool of voters, looking for alternative parties, and he recognized a possible solution to this was to attract the attention of the farming and rural community. The Nazi Party took this opportunity quickly and campaigned hard to win over the votes of the farmers and rural workers by promising tax reductions, cheaper electricity and a promise to rebuild the farming industry. “The peasants, the Nazis said, were of true German blood and their life was the true German life. They had shamefully been neglected by the Weimar Republic.” Hitler told the people of the land that under a Nazi Government, rural people would be the most important people in Germany. The rural Germans were on the brink of bankruptcy, constituting approximately 11 Billion marks by 1932. The Nazi?s promise of a return to rural prosperity was too good for them to resist. Yet this adoption of the rural Germans also proved useful in another sense because it allowed the Nazi party to use the Jewish people as a scapegoat towards the problems faced by the rural Germans.

In 1928 the Nazi Party was blessed with external situations which so happened to move in their favour. President Hindenburg made it no secret that he greatly disliked the most popular party, the Social Democrats. He mainly disliked them because they were opposed to the expansion of the German military. Hindenburg with the help of General Kurt von Schleicher came to a decision that the Social Democrats would have to be excluded and that Germany needed governments that had greater authoritarian tendencies. In November 1928 the iron and steel industries located in the Ruhr were paralysed by union and employer disputes. The workers wanted a higher wage, which they were eventually granted however the employers argued that the wages were too high. It was after this incident that the employers sought to circumvent institutions such as the arbitration system, and they therefore backed the idea of an authoritarian government which did not rely on the backing of the Reichstag majority. This is where Hitler was able to attract the all important support from the industrialists who were able to inject funds into the party. This was very important because approximately 70% of the Nazi party support was to come from wealthier socioeconomic groups.

Much of the rise in the Nazi Party?s success was due to Hitler himself and all his promises. When the Young Plan was proposed and eventually signed the German people were angry because this meant Germany would be paying reparations till the year of 1988. When this was announced, Hitler stated that he would not pay reparations and condemned the Weimar Government’s decision to agree to the Plan. On this matter, Hitler found an ally in Alfred Hugenburg, leader of the largest conservative party – the German National People’s Party. Hugenburg controlled a sizeable influence on the media, and used this to campaign against the Young Plan and ?The Enslavement of the German People’ as they called it. Although this attempt to stop the signing of the controversial document was unsuccessful, Hitler was given national publicity, and was given notoriety as a politician who strongly opposed the constraints set upon Germany after the embarrassing loss in World War One. As resentment over the loss of the war was still rife within Germany, Hitler’s stance on the reparations issue gained admiration, and added to his popularity. This situation displayed the Nazi?s as a political party with strong leadership, which especially appealed to the German sense of militarism.

Although the war was over, the militarism and fondness for military tradition remained strong in Germany. With their processions, military bands, leaflets and sheer energy, the Nazis attracted massive interest and appealed to the soft spot that many Germans had for the Prussian military style, with discipline and pride. The marches, often by the SA (Nazi Storm troopers), had a huge presence and were very impressive. Albert Speer, made the comment: “my mother saw a Storm Trooper parade … the sight of discipline in a time of chaos, the impression of energy in an atmosphere of universal hopelessness, seems to have won her over also.”

The sight of these parades was very emotive for some German people, and those who respected the militaristic values that Germany had previously stood for were very supportive of Hitler. The ideal of discipline appealed to many, and although the Nazi Party was quite small, it was a tightly controlled, highly disciplined organisation. This is one reason why the Nazis gained growing support. The opportunity of serving in the SA gave unemployed men the opportunity to at least earn a few pfennigs. In this manner, the Nazis were gaining support from the unemployed who traditionally favoured the socialists and communists. This is also an example of why the Nazis continued to grow in popularity as they were able to attract Germans from the right who appreciated the militarism displayed, whilst also attracting those from the left – unemployed men exciting at the opportunity to do something worthwhile.

The rise of the Nazi party is most obvious in the statistical evidence. In May 1924 the Nazi party had 6.5% (1.9Million) votes, however they dropped to a all time low during the period of economic prosperity to about 2.7% (0.87Million). However following the great depression the Nazi parties votes sky-rocketed. In July 1932 they were at 33.1% (11.7Million) and in March 1933 they were at 43.9% (17.3Million). During the initial rise of the Nazi?s votes there was also simultaneously massively increasing unemployment, which during its peak at 1933/4 was at 30%. It is definitely not difficult to see why the Nazi?s votes increased so dramatically. The German people were looking for alternative solutions to the failing Weimar government.

The great depression in 1929 spelled great trouble for the German economy which was built on loans from the USA, which were now being recalled, and thus Germany had little money to pay back the loans. The depression greatly affected all classes of Germany, but the lower and middle class were especially badly hit. The desperate Germans who had been ruined by the depression looked for a solution. This allowed Hitler to gather a large number of votes he may previously been unable to acquire.

Another important aspect to the political fortunes of the Nazi?s was the haste in which Hitler was able to shut out his competitors once being brought to office. Hitler immediately abolished free trade unions, eliminated the communists, the Social Democrats and Jews from any sort of influential role and political life. The Reichstag fires on the 27th February 1933 allowed the Nazi?s a grand opportunity to convince the Reichstag that the Communists were planning the social revolution they had talked about. The Nazi?s quickly rammed the ?Enabling Act? through parliament through cleaver political tactics. They required a two-thirds majority in induct the ?act?. However the communists were not present during the voting of this and the only party which actively opposed the Nazi?s were the Social Democrats. Had the Communists been able to vote and had the Nazi?s been unable to secure an alliance with the Catholic Centre Party, the vote would have been definitely vetoed. With the Enabling Act passed Germany overnight had taken a twist in the direction a totalitarian state.

Since the creation of the Weimar government Germany was plagued with problems, and none of these were paralleled with easy answers. With the virtual collapse of the German economy due to hyper-inflation and economic depression, the German people looked to other solutions. They found them in the polarisation of the political parties. However due to smart alliances and tactics by Hitler the Nazi Party was able to gain greater popularity and succeeded in becoming a major political force.

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