

# Hitler

## 1. Oct Nov 2021/ 41

- To what extent do economic factors explain the fall of the Weimar Republic?
  - Arguments supporting the idea economic factors played a major part might include discussion about how there were many deep and lasting memories of the hyper-inflation of the early 1920s which hit the middle class so hard. There was also mass unemployment – over 6 million were unemployed and there was serious underemployment. There was additionally a failure by government to grasp the issue. Schacht had produced radical and realistic plans to deal with the problems (later largely adopted by Hitler) but there was not the political will to deal with them after the death of Stresemann. The impact of deflation may also be considered. It was seen by economists as having a more damaging effect on morale nationally than inflation, as well as a major effect on the economy. Governments seemed unable to simply manage the economy, which was also over dependent on US loans, as both the Dawes and the Young Plans revealed.
  - Arguments discussing other factors may consider how governments simply failed to implement Schacht's plans. There was a focus on political gain and not on national need. There was also a real lack of support for the Weimar system from so many of the elites, ranging from the Churches to the Army, the Judiciary to the business cartels. Stresemann's death meant there was no leader who could command wide respect. The skills of the Nazi propaganda and electoral machine may also be discussed, as might the growing use of violence by the Nazis and the fear engendered in the minds of many by the growth of the Communist Party. The failure of political groups of all types to unite to save the system and defeat Nazism may also be explored.

## 2. Oct Nov 2021/ 42

- How important were Nazi ideas to Hitler's rise to power by January 1933?
  - Arguments supporting little importance might consider how the economic collapse and mass unemployment were much more significant factors. They may also consider how it was his skill as an orator and that of Goebbels as a propagandist that were more important – the medium was more important than the message. Additionally, the inability of the Weimar Government to manage either Hitler or the economic crisis may be considered of greater importance than Nazi ideas. These arguments may also identify how many of the elites, ranging from the army, through the Church to the judiciary showed little, if any, support for the democratic process and the great divisions between Left and Right and Centre precluded any joint action, and that there were major divisions within each grouping as well. Men like Von Papen mistakenly thought they could manage Hitler, while Hindenburg was ageing and badly advised by Nazi sympathisers. There was also a complete lack of any sensible economic ideas in Nazi thinking. Mein Kampf was incoherent, and the least read best seller of the times – 'the intellectual detritus of History'. The electoral system and the Weimar Constitution worked in his favour.

special courts with fairly arbitrary powers to deal with acts of 'political' violence. The latter was vigorously used against Nazi opponents, and not the SA. The work of legally appointed ministers such as Goebbels and Goering, mainly working within their statutory authority, further consolidated the regime. The exclusion of the Communists following the Reichstag fire was technically legal, possibly. Although he failed to win an overall majority in the March 1933 election, he did manage to get through the Enabling Act. This was the decisive factor in establishing the dictatorship. Although initially only for four years, it abolished local jurisdictions and all other parties. It provided a firm basis for a dictatorship which lasted. The Reichstag abandoned democracy.

- The increasingly brutal SA was a major factor in creating the unrest which led to the crisis of early 1933. It was the presence of armed SA men in the Reichstag which was important in getting the Enabling Act through. Many key elites, such as the Army, the Church, the major industrialists or the academics could and perhaps should have opposed. Police and judiciary were reluctant to prosecute flagrant violations of the law. Many simply opted out. Dislike of the Communists led many to ignore, if not condone, illegality, in order to protect their own interests. The degree of intimidation in all the elections was high. The whole business of the Reichstag fire was an obvious example of blatant illegality with a veneer of legality. The best example, of course, is the Night of the Long Knives which had no trace of legality whatsoever. It was just mass murder.

#### **18. May June 2019/ 43**

- To what extent did Hitler become Chancellor because of the failings of Weimar's leaders?
  - The focus of the response should be on the 1928–33 period. There is no need to go beyond his appointment as Chancellor.
  - Certainly the failings of Weimar's leadership were to play a key role in Hitler's rise to power. The reluctance of the moderate Right and the Centre to unite, let alone work with the Left, to stop Hitler was a major factor. The Communists and the Socialists would not work with each other, let alone with the Centre. Schacht provided Keynesian solutions to the terrible problems of unemployment (later implemented by Hitler) but there was no will by men like Brüning and Schleicher to implement them. Hitler's illegal methods, using the SA to break up opponents' meetings, for example, could have been successfully prosecuted, but there simply was not the will to do so. The police and judiciary were often too sympathetic to the Nazis and their aims and tolerant of their methods. In the final stages of 1932, there was the feeling by men like Von Papen that Hitler could be managed and utilised for their own ends. The Weimar system could be partially blamed. A PR electoral system like that adopted tends to reflect political instability (current opinion suggests that it does not cause it). Hindenburg was simply not up to the task and defending democracy was not part of his thinking. Germany had been used to decades of authoritarian rule and a genuine democracy was a very recent, and rather discredited, arrival.

## Stalin

### 1. Oct Nov 2021/ 41

- ‘Russia gained little and lost much.’ Assess this view on the results of Stalin’s economic policies.
  - The focus should be on all aspects of Stalin’s economic policies, and not just on one of industrialisation and collectivisation. Arguments supporting the idea of gains might consider how there was a total modernisation of the Russian economy. It started to realise its vast potential. The Five Year Plans demonstrated real vision and showed what might be attainable by central planning using the full resources of the nation for the benefit of all. The nature and extent of industrialisation was profound – Russia attained in less than a decade what other nations had taken fifty years or more. The policies also created a major war machine which enabled it to stand up to the Nazis - with some success. They also created full employment and there were real benefits in terms of health provision and education. Management and leadership were open to all classes and not just a privileged elite. Careers were open to talent – in theory, and there was much more scope for careers for women. Resources could be used to benefit the people and not just overseas investors. Whole new industries were created, and agriculture could move from its subsistence approach to feeding an urban population and gaining foreign currency from exports.
  - Arguments challenging the idea of gains may consider that while plausible in theory, many of the policies did not work in practice, especially collectivisation. There was also limited focus on consumer goods or housing and the standard of living of a very large number of Russians was appalling. There was also a human cost. Vast numbers of ‘kulaks’ died, and the use of slave labour was highly inefficient and wasteful. There were prestige projects which were disasters, like the White Sea Canal while people who knew nothing about agriculture took dreadful decisions about agriculture. The Lysenko affair is an excellent example of this. The focus was so often on quantity and not quality and the policies created one of the largest man- made famines in human history. The quality of management was often low and there was little effective co -ordination or forethought. The great Stalingrad tractor factory never got around to providing spares, and they were often delivered to areas which had no supplies of fuel for them.

### 2. Oct Nov 2021/ 42

- How far had Stalin achieved his aim of ‘socialism in one country’ by 1941?
  - Arguments supporting the idea that Stalin achieved his aim might consider how the 1936 Constitution said socialism in one country had been achieved. Furthermore, 95% of agricultural land was collectivised and the Five-Year Plans had been imposed on the USSR by central government – including the Asian territories. Russia had been industrialised and in theory there was equality for all. There had also been massive spending on health and education and there was state ownership of all the means of production and distribution. There was full employment, total state control of all labour and social policy.

which damaged Trotsky was vital. He deliberately sidelined Trotsky, accusing him of factionalism. Stalin's alliance with Bukharin and the way in which he defeated the United Opposition is a very good example of his devious and opportunist, and highly successful, approach. The OGPU, carefully infiltrated with his own supporters, was carefully used to break up loyal Trotsky supporters groups. The manipulation of the whole NEP issue is always seen as the perfect example of Stalin's manipulation of an issue to his own advantage. He presented himself, using his military experience in the Civil War, as a 'no-nonsense leader'. He simply outclassed all opponents and they invariably failed to realise what he was really up to – until it was too late.

### 17. May June 2019/ 42

- 'The benefits of Stalin's rule to the Soviet Union outweighed the harm.' 30

How far do you agree?

- Some reflection on what may be seen as 'benefits' and 'harm' in this context might well be the best route to the higher levels. Candidates might also consider the issue that what might be a benefit to, say, Russia's ability to wage a modern war might not have necessarily been of real benefit in material terms to the majority of the Russian people. The fact that Russia was on the way to becoming a major world power may have been of limited importance and value to a zek in the gulags doing 25 years for no crime. Many of the possible 'benefits' came at great human cost.
- Possible benefits might be:
  - The industrialisation programme – electrification
  - Collectivisation
  - Rearmament
  - The further integration into the USSR of many of the nationalities
  - A degree of equality
  - The reduction of social and economic divisions
  - Improvements in health and education
  - Some improvements in living standards for some of the population
- Possible harm might be:
  - Industrialisation which focussed on quantity and not quality and did huge environmental damage
  - Dreadful housing
  - Collectivisation – the death of millions – a deliberately engineered famine
  - The purges
  - Disasters like the White Sea Canal
  - The absence of any quality consumer goods
  - Frequent hunger
  - The rise of the 'nomenklatura'
  - The absence of the rule of law
  - The terror

embedded in Russia and that all the 'old order', be it aristocratic or bourgeois as well as Bolshevik, had to be eliminated for this to happen.

- The extent to which it was just the paranoia of a suspicious and warped mind needs to be considered as well and the extent of his personal involvement in the whole process is very well known. The situation in Russia, political, social and economic played a part, as did the rise of Fascism in Europe. Stalin had always reacted savagely towards others, but on a smaller scale, when he felt threatened. He did feel, probably correctly, that his leadership was threatened by the many grumblings in 1934 at the Seventeenth Party Congress. What role Kirov played is not clear, but clearly he was seen as a potential threat and was probably eliminated on Stalin's orders. Quite why the army was purged to the extent that it was has never been identified. Some suggest that it was simply a wish to fill the gulags with a supply of cheap slave labour. How the appalling damage that the purges caused is fitted in to the explanation also needs reflection for the highest marks.

### **36. May June 2016/ 43**

- 'Many failures and few successes.' Is this a fair judgement on Stalin's rule in Russia?
  - What is looked for is some reflection on what might be seen as a failure, or success, in the context of Russia under Stalin in the period c.1930–1941. What might be seen as a success in terms of Stalin's bid for absolute power might, of course, be seen as a complete failure from the point of view of Russia and its people. There needs to be a balance in the response and the best will make a sustained judgement.
  - Issues like collectivisation could be seen in different ways. By 1939, according to Russian statistics, about 99% of land was collectivised; this could be seen as a success for the state. Grain production did start to increase. There was now the capacity to support a rapidly growing industrial workforce. However, it could be seen as a total disaster from another point of view. The human cost was staggering and Russian agriculture never really recovered, and it was now open to disasters such as Lysenko's ideas.
  - Heavy industry could be seen as a great success. New industries were created where none existed. Production of coal, electricity and steel rose rapidly, and it is always stressed that Russia was able to withstand the Nazi invasion. It would have helped, however, if Russian tanks had been better built and if someone had remembered the need for spare parts and the sort of ammunition which could actually penetrate German armour. Thousands of tractors were built, but no arrangements had been made to get fuel for them.
  - Other factors such as the establishment of a Marxist state could be considered, but how 'Marxist' it was could be debated. It could be argued that he successfully created a totalitarian state, and he successfully purged all actual and possible opponents to his rule, but again, the human cost could be seen as a failure. Having to scour the Gulags to try and find some army officers left alive in 1941 is not a sign of success, and it was clear that slave labour was not the most efficient way of doing things. There is huge scope for debate here from many different perspectives.