

FDR – HITLER: CONFLICTING POLITICAL SYSTEMS

Performance Standard (14A/14B/14E/16BW).J

Read information from various sources and contrast the governments of Germany and the United States just before the outbreak of World War II accordingly;

- *Knowledge:* identify the key concepts and themes that show the role taken by the German government in 1933 as well as role taken by the United States at the same time;
- *Reasoning:* compare and contrast the actions and events that occurred in both nations; predict the outcomes for both governments; and
- *Communication:* write a summary that is well-organized, well-detailed and well-focused; express all ideas in a way that provides evidence of knowledge and reasoning processes.

Procedures

1. *In order to understand and explain basic principles of the United States government (14A), understand the structures and functions of the political systems of Illinois, the United States, and other nations (14B), understand United States foreign policy as it related to other nations and international issues (14E), and understand the development of significant political events (16BW),* students should experience sufficient learning opportunities to develop the following:
 - Describe how changing interpretations of the powers and limitations of our Constitution have affected rights and responsibilities of groups and individuals,
 - Critique how different forms of political systems throughout the world have tended to protect or violate basic human rights of people,
 - Compare how different political systems in other countries define and protect human rights, and
 - Compare/Contrast episodes of cooperation and conflict among proponents of opposing political ideologies.
2. Have students review and discuss the following assessment task and how the rubric will be used to evaluate their work.
3. The students will have read or discussed in class the period of world economic depression during the 1930's and discussed the role of government in the United States and Nazi Germany during World War II.
4. Have students read the letter from Ambassador Sackett to Secretary Hull. They will identify powers abdicated by the German legislature to Adolf Hitler.
5. Have students examine the timeline. They will identify words, phrases, and actions that show the manner in which the United States and German governments functioned during the first half of 1933.
6. Using the information from the letter, timeline and their discussions, students will write a summary describing how the United States and German governments functioned differently in 1933.
7. Evaluate each student's work using the Social Science Rubric as follows and add the scores to determine the performance level:
 - *Knowledge:* identification of the key words, phrases, or actions that illustrate differences in the two governments at that time is complete and accurate.
 - *Reasoning:* the comparison will show how the governments functioned differently in response to the situations and what the impact would be on each is thorough and well-reasoned.
 - *Communication:* the writing is well-organize, well-focused and well-detailed; the knowledge and reasoning were completely and effectively communicated.

Examples of Student Work follow

Time Requirements

- Two fifty-minute class periods

Resources

- Attached documents
- Social Science Rubric

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

FROM

GRAY

Berlin

Dated March 24, 1933

Rec'd 11:05 a. m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

44, March 24, 10 a. m.

The empowering law submitted to the Reichstag by the parties represented in the government and passed last night gives the Hitler Cabinet practically unlimited powers. It transfers certain presidential prerogatives to the Chancellor while the legislative powers of the Reichstag and Reichsrath are to be assumed by the Cabinet as a whole. It gives the Cabinet the right to enact legislation modificative of the constitution which normally requires a two-thirds majority in the Reichstag, with the sole limitations that the President's powers are to remain unaffected and that the Cabinet may not enact laws abolishing the Reichstag and the Reichsrath as such. The prerogatives of these two bodies, however, are quite thoroughly emasculated by the very next article of the law.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
MAR 24 1933
DIVISION OF
WESTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

FP

862.00/2930

MAR 25 1933

FILED

On

MET

2-#44 from Berlin, Mar. 24, 10 a. m.

On the basis of this law the Hitler Cabinet can reconstruct the entire system of government as it eliminates practically all constitutional restraints. The law remains in effect till April 1, 1937 unless the present Reich Government is sooner replaced by another in which event it becomes void.

Law was passed by 441 votes against 94 belonging entirely to the Social Democrat party. The two Catholic parties swallowed the bitter pill, the spokesman of the Center saying that his party would vote for the law in spite of many misgivings "which in normal times could scarcely have been overcome".

Upon the announcement of the result of the vote the Reichstag was adjourned sine die.

Text and translation of the law being forwarded by mail.

WEB-CBB

SACKETT

1933 – United States

- March 4** Franklin Delano Roosevelt inaugurated President.
- March 6** President Roosevelt declares four-day national banking holiday to prevent further bank closings.
- March 9** Roosevelt convenes Congress in special session. Congress introduces and passes Emergency Banking Relief Act, granting broad discretionary powers to the President to meet the economic crisis.
- March 10** Roosevelt requests passage of Economy Act to cut government salaries and veterans' pensions to ease strain on government budget. Bill passes March 20.
- March 12** Roosevelt broadcasts first radio "fireside chat" to reassure populace of government's ability to solve economic crisis.
- March 22** Roosevelt requests amendment to Volstead Act to legalize and tax the sale of wine and beer, thus increasing federal revenues. Passes April 1.
- March 31** Congress creates Civilian Conservation Corps to put to work thousands of unemployed young men.
- April 19** United States abandons gold standard.
- May 12** Congress enacts Federal Emergency Relief Act to provide states with matching grants for relief for the unemployed.
- May 12** Congress passes Agricultural Adjustment Act to relieve farmers through subsidies for reducing acreage in production and other financial support. (The Supreme Court would declare the AAA unconstitutional three years later.)
- May 18** Congress authorizes Tennessee Valley Authority, first giant federal public utility project, to harness the power of the Tennessee River in Alabama for the production of electricity, to serve the region's energy needs, to create jobs, and to develop area's natural resources.
- June 6** Congress establishes Employment Service to coordinate and streamline state employment efforts.
- June 13** Congress passes Home Owners Refinancing Act, establishing the Home Owners Loan Corporation to refinance long-term home mortgages at lower interest rates.
- June 16** Congress establishes Federal Bank Deposit Insurance Corporation to federally insure bank deposits to restore depositor confidence.
- June 16** Congress passes Farm Credit Act to refinance long-term, low interest mortgages for farms, providing same support for farmers that the HOLC offers home owners.
- June 16** Congress authorizes National Industrial Recovery Act to revive business and to de-

crease unemployment through increased business cooperation. Creates Public Works Administration to provide jobs through public works projects. (The Supreme Court would declare the NRA unconstitutional in 1936.)

- June 16** Special session of Congress adjourns.

1933 – Germany

- January 30** President von Hindenburg appoints National Socialist (Nazi) party leader Adolf Hitler chancellor of German Federal Republic. Hitler tops a cabinet of three National Socialist ministers and eight ministers from other parties.
- February 1** Hitler pressures von Hindenburg to dissolve Reichstag and to call for new elections in an effort to strengthen Nazi representation in that body.
- February 4** Under pressure from Hitler, von Hindenburg issues a decree limiting freedom of the press and prohibiting free assembly.
- February 6** In an effort to centralize political control, Hitler pressures von Hindenburg to disband Prussia's representative legislature. Similar actions in other states across Germany would follow.
- February 27** Reichstag building in Berlin is destroyed by fire. Hitler blames incident on Communist Party.
- February 28** President von Hindenburg declares a state of emergency, suspending *habeas corpus* and other civil liberties. (The state of emergency would remain in effect until Hitler's death.)
- March 5** In the national election of a new Reichstag, 89% of the German voters cast their votes. The National Socialists win 43.9% of the votes. The traditional coalition of four moderate parties, long the basis of majority actions in the Reichstag, can no longer outvote the Nazi members.
- March 8** Concentration camps established for internment of political "undesirables."
- March 13** Hitler names Joseph Goebbels to newly-created position of minister of propaganda.
- March 23** Reichstag passes Empowering Act, surrendering its own constitutional authority to make law to Chancellor Hitler and the cabinet.
- April 1** First government-sponsored boycott of Jewish businesses fails. German people refuse to cooperate and pressure is brought to bear on the German government by the international business community.
- April 7** National Socialist Civil Service Act establishes new standard for government service, including removal of all non-Aryans and opponents of Nazi rule from the service.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

During the early 1930s, two men rose to power within their respective nations, providing strong leadership in a time of general instability. Upon first glance, seventy years after each achieved political prominence, then-President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and National Socialist party leader Adolf Hitler would not seem to have much in common. This conception, however, is one that fails to take into account both the men themselves, and the conditions of their countries—the United States and Germany, respectively.

The economic boom of the 1920s that followed World War I was followed by a worldwide depression, caused in Germany by the harsh demands of the Treaty of Versailles and in the United States by poor economic planning. Both countries were having problems with unemployment and agricultural and industrial production. The then-current governments of both were not taking adequate measures to relieve the pressure upon the general populace, and it was clearly necessary that a change needed to be made.

Adolf Hitler was a young man from a poor background, with little to his name but his ideals. From his humble beginnings he managed, by dint of his considerable speaking abilities and forceful nature, to rise to the position of leader of the National Socialist party—which would also be known as the Nazi party—and from there, to become the ruler of all Germany.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, in contrast, came from a high-profile family. The nephew of former president and trust-buster Theodore Roosevelt, "FDR," as he would be called, entered politics as a Democrat in 1910, after a successful career in law. From assorted New York state posts, the charismatic Roosevelt, with his vision of a "New Deal" for America, rose to eventually be elected for the presidency of the United States, defeating his opponent Herbert Hoover by a significant majority of the vote.

Upon becoming the leaders of their respective nations, both Roosevelt and Hitler immediately embarked on programs that would revive the economy. Although their goals were the same, their methods for achieving them were different. Hitler felt that, before instituting new economic policies, he first had to strengthen his party's power—and through them, his power—in the government. The first two months of Hitler's rule, from February 1 to April 1 of 1933, show a number of drastic changes in Germany's political structure, all focused on centralizing control under Hitler, such as the Reichstag's surrendering of its legislative power to Hitler and his cabinet.

Roosevelt was of the opinion that the first of his priorities was to get the United States back on its economic feet. To do so, he too had to strengthen his power, but in comparison to Hitler, he did relatively little to achieve that goal; five days after his inauguration on March 4 of

1933, Congress, in a special session, granted Roosevelt the broader powers necessary to fight the economic crisis. In the remainder of FDR's first three months in office (which would later be known as the "First Hundred Days"), he bent his will to the restoration of the United States economy, introducing multiple programs of relief and recovery.

Both Hitler and Roosevelt achieved their goals. By the end of the 1930s, Hitler had come to total power in Germany, and had used it to try and resolve the German economic situation by increased militarization. Roosevelt's programs too had been successful, setting the United States economy back on an upward trend, even though several Supreme Court decisions had declared some of his policies unconstitutional. It can be seen that although these two men came from different backgrounds and vastly different political views, both had the good of their country in mind and the personal force of will to accomplish their primary goals.