

TALKING POINT

Hitler's membership card had the number 555 on it, since membership started at 501. Why do you think the founders of the DAP did this?

A What role did Hitler play in the rise of the Nazis?

FOCUS ROUTE

Make notes on:

- a) Hitler's leadership qualities
- b) Hitler's skills as a communicator.

SOURCE 7.1 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), 1925

Politics is the art of using men's weaknesses for one's ends.

Since the masses have only poor acquaintance with abstract ideas, their reactions lie more in the domain of feelings ... And the driving force which has brought about the most tremendous revolutions on this earth has never been a body of scientific teaching which has gained power over the masses, but always a devotion which has inspired them, and often a kind of hysteria which has urged them into action. Whoever wishes to win over the masses must know the key that will open the door to their hearts.

The receptive powers of the masses are very restricted, and their understanding is feeble. On the other hand, they quickly forget. Such being the case, all effective propaganda must be confined to a few bare necessities and then must be expressed in a few stereotyped formulas.

The art of leadership consists of consolidating the attention of the people against a single adversary [opponent] and taking care that nothing will split that attention ... The leader of genius must have the ability to make different opponents appear as if they belonged to the one category.

SOURCE 7.2 Otto Strasser, *Hitler and I*, 1940. Otto Strasser and his brother Gregor were early supporters of the Nazi Party and held leading positions in its organisation. Otto became disillusioned and left the party in 1930

Adolf Hitler enters a hall. He sniffs the air. For a minute he gropes, feels his way, senses the atmosphere. Suddenly he bursts forth. His words go like an arrow to their target, he touches each private wound on the raw, liberating the mass unconscious, expressing its innermost aspirations, telling it what it most wants to hear ... If he tries to bolster up his argument with theories or quotations from books he has only imperfectly understood, he scarcely rises above a very poor mediocrity. But let him throw away his crutches and step out boldly, speaking as the spirit moves him, and he is promptly transformed into one of the greatest speakers of the century.

SOURCE 7.3 E. A. Buller, *Darkness over Germany*, 1943. Buller was an anti-Nazi German teacher who left Germany

At one of the early congresses I was sitting around surrounded by thousands of SA men and as Hitler spoke I was most interested at the shouts and more often the muttered exclamations of the men around me, who were mainly workmen or lower-middle-class types. 'He speaks for me, he speaks for me.' 'Ach Gott [Oh, God], he knows how I feel.' Many of them seemed lost to the world around them and were probably unaware of what they were saying. One man in particular struck me as he lent forward with his head in his hands, and with a sort of convulsive sob said, 'Gott sei Dank [God be thanked], he understands.'

ACTIVITY

- 1 List the main points Hitler is making in Source 7.1 about how to win support.
- 2 Which of Sources 7.2 and 7.3 do you think is more reliable as evidence of Hitler's skills?
- 3 What can you learn from Sources 7.2–4 about Hitler's skills in winning support?