

Hindenburg, Paul Von Beneckendorff Und Von

(1847--1934), German general and president of Germany who appointed Hitler chancellor in 1933.

Hindenburg, a career army officer, became Chief of Staff of the German Army during World War I. He and his aide, General Erich Ludendorff, ruined all efforts to end the war by a peace compromise. Nonetheless, the German people considered him a hero. In 1925 Hindenburg was elected the second president of Weimar Germany as a right-wing candidate. He originally tried to rule according to the Weimar Constitution, which called for democratic government. However, due to the growing unemployment and economic crisis, Hindenburg could not keep to the terms set by the constitution.

Hindenburg was reelected in 1932, this time as a centrist candidate. Although the Nazi Party received the most votes, Hindenburg refused to allow Hitler to form a cabinet. New elections were held in November; again the Nazis had a clear majority, but Hindenburg appointed General Kurt von Schleicher as chancellor. However, when Schleicher was unable to create a cabinet, Hindenburg was convinced to appoint Hitler in his stead. Despite his assurances otherwise, Hitler immediately took complete control of the government. Hindenburg nominally remained president until his death in 1934.

In early 1942 Hirschler established a Jewish Chaplaincy program, whose members helped the Jews imprisoned in French internment camps in the south of France. The chaplains visited camps, hospitals, and many other venues, providing Jews with both religious support and general aid. Hirschler worked tirelessly to help his fellow Jews. However, his activities ultimately led to his arrest in December 1943. Along with his wife and relief partner, Simone, Hirschler was sent to AUSCHWITZ in February 1943, where he died. (For more on Vichy, see also FRANCE.)