Primary Source Review

Name

Institutional Affiliation

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The chosen source in this prompt is the infamous 1939 speech of Adolf Hitler to the German military commanders, explaining the premise behind his call for war and the decision to attack Poland. The address came at a time when the Führer was facing substantial doubts from his people regarding a conflict with Poland and his focus on rearmament, just when the economy had recovered. Hitler sought to convince the generals why 1939 was the ideal time to invade Poland, citing such reasons as the feebleness of the western powers and the alleged planned attack by Poland. Hitler also wanted to reaffirm his commitment to a superior Germany, which could be extended through conquest. In his perspective, it was time to test the military’s readiness in battle.

Hitler portrays significant bias in his speech. A primary partiality is the issue of his character, abilities, and position in the country. The leader presents himself as the ultimate being, specially designed to deliver victory to the people of Germany, despite notable economic and political challenges during his tenure. He basis the premise of the proposed attack on his character and finite life, arguing that immediate action was needed since his fate was unknown. He also highlights his political talents as exceptional, implying that only he could successfully lead the nation in any future battles. Additionally, Hitler commends on his unquestionable authority and the unwavering support of fellow Germans. This is quite overstated, given that his power was based on systematic suppression of political opponents, the merging of the chancellor and presidency, and military tyranny. Such influence does not emanate from an individual, but the institutional powers controlled by a leader. The country was also witnessing extreme divisions before 1939 due to the commitment of resources towards rearmament at the expense of consumer satisfaction. Any support could, thus, be as a result of fear rather than the effect of the Führer.

Another bias evident in the speaker’s sentiments is the perspective he has of other world leaders and the influence they command in regional politics. Hitler claims that the French and British lacked a notable leader, whereas his actions were partially limited by the potential intervention of the two nations. He regards the leaders of such countries as Turkey as persons with "petty minds," a statement that indicates his prejudice.

Based on other literature describing the political situation in the 1930s, I do not agree with Hitler's depiction of the circumstances in his speech. Most of the points are overrated and born from an individualistic perspective. Primarily, the presentation of Hitler as a highly influential leader under the backing of his constituents is far from reality. The monolithic statue of the Führer is a sum effect of the authoritarian regime imposed in the country. Fulbrook (2015) regards it as a myth since Germany was a one-party state run under a single ideology with the support of the military. Such an outlook was promoted by the Nazis, who sought to encapsulate Hitler as a unifying factor through their extensive and honorable parades and the "one people, one empire, one leader” motto. Additionally, the depiction of Hitler as a leader interested in the wellbeing of the people is a fallacy for militarization. His 1933 speech, a week after assuming chancellorship, confirmed the first five years were focused on preparing every German for war-arm-bearing, and every activity was geared towards militarization rather than restoring the economic status of the people as promised (Fulbrook, 2015). This contradicts the arguments presented in his 1939 speech.

The reviewed source contains notable parallels with other primary texts from the same period. Unification and military superiority occupy a central feature in these documents, with the sampled leaders calling out to the citizens to unite and reclaim the glory of their nations. The main reason for this commonality of themes can be judged as the effects of the first world war and the desire of leaders to establish preeminence.

The speech reveals that most of the historical trends during the 1930s revolved around political dominance and territorialism. The main focus of the speaker is a war to conquer other nations and establish supremacy. The same can be judged to be the case for other leaders who are identified in this speech. Hitler talks of the influence of such authoritarian leaders as Mussolini and Stalin, and the continuing battle in the middle east and the Mediterranean region over occupancy.

References

Fulbrook, M. (2015). *A history of Germany, 1918-2014: The divided nation* (4th ed.). Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.

“Hitler’s Speech to the Commanders in Chief (August 22, 1939).” (n.d.). *Germany History in Documents and Images*, 7, 1–5.