The Years of Struggle
(1919-1924)

Jonny Summers
Germans confused and surprised at loss of WWI (1918) → Blame Civil Government
Believed that loss of war was the fault of Social Democrats and Republicans in power
Labeled Provisional Government “November Criminals” for capitulating to Allies (even though they didn’t)
Instability of Weimar

- Many thought loyalty to GER = disloyalty to Weimar
- Many associated Weimar with treachery and defeat
  - Thought it was an agent of the Allies
- Threats to government came from left and right
  - Left - Communist Revolutionaries
  - Right - Thought Republic was “damned from the start”
  - Resentment → violence
Hitler after WWI

- Still in hospital at end of war
- Couldn’t stand the fact that
  1. GER lost the war
  2. GER was now run by Social Democrats
- He blamed the Jews
  - thought it was Jews who desired to defeat and humiliate Germany, and were now running the Provisional Government
Hitler after WWI (cont.)

- AH had nothing to lose but everything to gain
- Little prospect of finding a job
  - massive widespread unemployment

Why?

BULLOCK: “With a sure instinct, he saw in the distress of Germany the opportunity he had been looking for but had so far failed to find” (32).
Hitler goes to Munich

- *Mein Kampf* - Hitler says that a man shouldn’t partake in politics before age 30
  - turned 30 in 1919 - time is ripe!
- Goes to Munich (capital of Bavaria)
- Munich very sensitive to civil unrest
  - political atmosphere unstable
- Bavarians only respected orders from provisional government if they were supported by Munich government
- Freikorps - started in Bavaria
  - armed bands of volunteers
  - disliked Republic
Hitler’s First Job

● Hitler gets job working for the Press and News Bureau of the Army political dept.
● Told to inoculate troops against democratic, socialist, or pacifist ideals
● September 1919 - told to investigate German Workers’ Party
  ○ Party built on being pro-working class and nationalist at the same time
Hitler and the German Workers’ Party

- Goes to 1st meeting in September 1919
  - Got invited to more after making an impression
  - Returns with some hesitation
    - Why would he hesitate?
BULLOCK: “It was only in a party which, like himself, was beginning at the bottom that he had any prospect of playing a leading part and imposing his ideas. In the established parties there was no room for him, he would be a nobody” (35).

- After two days reflection, Hitler joins party committee as 7th member
April 1920 - Hitler leaves Army and devoted himself entirely to Party
Freikorps members join party and swell ranks
Other National Socialist Parties, but →

BULLOCK: “Hitler was too jealous of his independence to submit to interference from the outside” (36).
Hitler and Propaganda

- Early 1920 - Hitler put in charge of propaganda

BULLOCK: “Hitler’s genius as a politician lay in his unequalled grasp of what could be done by propaganda, and his flair for seeing how to do it” (36).

“Greatest demagogue in history”

- Hitler’s ideas = unoriginal
- Hitler’s propaganda techniques = brilliant
Propaganda - Hitler style

- Peoples’ understanding is feeble
  - they quickly forget
- Bare minimums and stereotypes
- Big lies
- No hesitation
- One-sided
- Violence, Passion, Fanaticism
- Rhetoric > written word
- Res posters to appeal to left
- Mass rallies
- Defense squads
  - Beginnings of Hitler Youth and SA
- Publicized violence
Hitler becomes Party President

- Summer 1921 - Hitler goes to Berlin
- Other committee members take charge
- Hitler comes back and offers resignation
  - Committee says no
- Hitler says he’ll stay only if dictator
- July 1921 - Hitler becomes President of Party with unlimited power
Hitler vs Everyone else

- Founders devoted to working class
- *Mein Kampf* - Hitler saw ideas as a means to an end to be dropped and adopted when necessary
  - end = power
- Didn’t want to limit membership to one class
  - saw all men, regardless of place in society, as means to power

BULLOCK: “it was work which suited him: his hours were irregular, he was his own master, [...] he lived in a whirl of self-dramatization, and the gap between his private dream-world and his outer life had been narrowed, however slightly” (42).
Chaos

- Naziism can only thrive in instability
- Instability furthered by collapse of mark and occupation of Ruhr by FRA (1922)
- Gov’t calls for passive resistance of FRA

BULLOCK: “The result of the French occupation was to unite the German people as they had never been united since the early days of the war” (46).

- Hitler blames the Jews (of course)
A United Germany?

- Germans united under gov. against FRA
- Hitler scared of Germany United under gov.
  - Why?
- Wrote in *Völkischer Beobachter*: “the real and deadly enemy of the German people lurks within the walls of the nation […] Down with the November Criminals, with all their nonsense about a United Front.”
A United Germany? (cont.)

- Difference in goals for SA:
  - Hitler → political army
  - Hitler’s generals → army to fight FRA

- Hitler still blamed the Jews
  - Said that the Republic was run by Jews
    - blamed gov for forgiving not defending against FRA and allowing inflation

- BULLOCK: “No accusation against the Jews was too wild for [Hitler]” (49).
It was good while it lasted...

- German feeling of Unity gone by fall 1923, but FRA occupation continues...
- September 26th, 1923 - Stresemann (Chancellor of Weimar) calls off passive resistance
- Lifts ban on reparations payments to FRA and BEL
  - Exactly what Nationalists needed
    - gave them rallying cry to overthrow the government
Hitler vs Government

- 9/26/23 - Bavarian cabinet declares state of emergency → bans 14 of Hitler’s planned rallies
- Hitler is furious → says he will answer Gustav von Kahr (state commissioner) with “bloody revolution”
- One problem → Hitler needed Kahr’s help
Uneasiness

- President Ebert gave army control of gov’t
- Kahr had his own ambitions
  - would likely betray Republic if given the chance
- Hitler now wants to use Kahr against Republic
  → uneasy alliance b/w Nazis and Kahr, both trying to exploit the other
Munich vs Berlin

- Tensions flared up when Kahr refused to take orders from Berlin to ban one of Hitler’s works
- Berlin goes over Kahr’s head, but Munich still disobeys
- Kahr demands resignation of Reich gov.
- Hitler: “Great!”
November 8th Revolution

- Kahr calls meeting of Hitler and Bavarian political leaders
- 20 minutes in, Hitler’s armed brownshirts burst into hall
- Hitler states that Reich is gone and new Nazi gov. in place
- Kahr swear allegiance → takes it back the next day
Next morning - 11/9/23
SA and Reich Army/Police face off in center of town
No one knows who opened fire
  Nazis broke ranks even though they greatly outnumbered police
Hitler arrested at Uffing 11/11/23
Hitler’s Failed Revolution

- Trial for Hitler’s conspiracy held in Munich
- Took full responsibility for attempt to overthrow gov.
  - appealed to nationalists
  - turned tables on prosecution
- “There is no such thing as high treason against the traitors of 1918.”
Q: Which factor is most responsible for the disunity in Germany between 1919 and 1924?

1. Nazis/National Socialist German Workers’ Party
2. Weimar Government
3. Treaty of Versailles
4. Anti-Semitism