

The Years of Struggle (1919-1924)

Jonny Summers





Post Versailles Germany

- 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

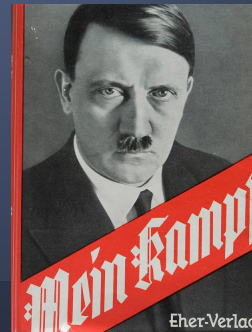
Hitler after WWI (cont.)

- 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

Hitler and the German Workers' Party (cont.)

- 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
 - charged with security of the Reich and Rep. Const.
- 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

November 8th Revolution (cont.)

- 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."

Socratic Seminar

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