THE RISE OF THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST
PARTY IN GERMANY

APPROVED:

J L KINGSBURY
Major Professor

James F. Webb
Minor Professor

David W. Newton
Director of the Department of History

L A Sharp
Chairman of the Graduate Council
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PARTY IN GERMANY

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Droel H. Looney, B. S.

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PREFACE

Nazi Germany is today threatening world democracy. The armies of Hitler already dominate all of continental Europe except Sweden, Spain, and Switzerland. Nazi political ideology has penetrated all of the nations of the Western Hemisphere, to a more or less degree. This penetration has been carried on by propaganda, and by economic warfare. In Europe, where in some cases economic relations were not sufficient to force acceptance of the Third Reich, fierce wars have been waged and are being fought today.

What is responsible for the rise of this radical National Socialist Party in Germany that has done so much to disturb the normal conditions of the world?

I have attempted to give a clear, concise, and logical interpretation of material relative to the causes of the birth and growth of Nazism. It is not always easy to distinguish between propaganda and facts, but in this study of the conditions in Germany leading up to Hitler's dictatorship, I have tried to use only those materials that present a true picture.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. J. L. Kingsbury of the History Department for his help in guiding my work. His
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CHAPTER I

CONDITIONS IN GERMANY BEFORE AND
DURING THE WORLD WAR

The roots of Nazism lie buried deep in the history of Germany. They reach back to medieval times when the German social structure was of a dualistic nature, composed of the land-owning aristocracy and the peasant.\(^1\)

The abolition of serfdom and the rise of the middle class with the industrial revolution did not change the basic structure. The landed aristocracy was still the supreme power in the land, and the peasant and bourgeois were forced into subservience. To understand the fundamental principles behind the rise of Nazism it is necessary first to understand the German peasant.

As early as the beginning of the sixteenth century a peasants' revolt was successfully defeated in the German Empire. By the end of the century serfdom was especially common in Bavaria and Hanover, and in the latter country peasants had only a life interest in their goods. East of the Elbe River the land that had been colonized in the

\(^1\)Frederick L. Schuman, Germany Since 1918, p. 4.
Middle Ages by the Germans and Swedes, was being seized by the war lords. Peasants whose lands were seized were forced into a bondage bordering on serfdom. West of the Elbe, the peasant, though conditions were variable, occupied a position not dissimilar to that in France. That is, the peasants owned small plots of ground and were freemen.2

Conditions such as these existed through the seventeenth century, owing to the amount of military activity. By the middle of the eighteenth century the middle class had become the matrix of nationalism and liberalism in France and England. This class had been able to bring about changes in the government, but not in Germany. The military landowners were in power and the army was really the government. Democracy did take root during the French Revolution, particularly in western Germany, Prussia, however, was not touched by these democratic tendencies. The Junkers there still lived almost as in medieval times.3

Beginning with the nineteenth century a change began to take place in eastern Germany, where a rural labor class began to rise. Prussian reforms emancipated the peasant and allowed him to become a free landowner. The estate owner should be paid in land for allowing the peasants their freedom. This so reduced the possessions of

2"Peasantry," Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, XII, 51.

3Schuman, Germany Since 1918, p. 5.
some peasants that they were forced to become wage earners to gain a livelihood.  

The rise of this rural wage-earning class marked the beginning of a class distinction. Before this time even the well-to-do peasant had performed some labor on the estate. When the wage earner was paid in money rather than in a share of the products, he was no longer retained as a year-round laborer but as a seasonal worker. Thus, the common bond was broken between the peasant and the landowner. The wage earner naturally wanted constant work, and this he found in the city where industrial development called for unskilled labor.

The peasant who remained on the land became a sturdy independent farmer, suppressing for the time being the secret longing for a division of the Junker estates. They "voted and acted conservatively, championed conventional religion, morality, and property rights and accepted the guidance of the landed nobles."  

The masses of the peasants, until 1929, formed the backbone of the German Empire. Though kept in a subservient position by the land-owning aristocracy or Junker class, they had always been most patriotic. Aside from desiring

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5Edward Eyre, editor, European Civilization, V, 133.

6Schuman, Germany Since 1918, p. 6.
a feeling of security on the land, the peasants were the calmest of all groups, because they led a more sheltered life, free from contact with the outside world. Germany did not present so colorful and fast-changing a picture in the nineteenth as in the twentieth century, but rapid improvements in agrarian interests were evident. Besides the emancipation of serfdom and the redistribution of land, there were movements toward the development of co-operations and scientific farming.\(^7\)

Thus, until the World War, the condition of the peasant was not particularly deplorable. It is true that the peasants had little political influence. Though they had the right to vote, they were under the complete domination of the Junker class. On the other hand, they lived under fairly comfortable circumstances, considering the lack of really fertile soil, although it is true that as a whole their standard of living was below that of the city or town dweller.

The ease with which the peasant was led into the folds of National Socialism cannot be laid solely upon events happening after the World War. There has always been a spark of rebellion behind the peasants' complacent submission to the landed aristocracy. Since the sixteenth century the peasant had felt that the Junker class should

divide the land with the peasant group. National Socialism, or any other organization that promised to achieve this end had a powerful ally in the dormant desire of the peasant for land.

The Junker class was the landed aristocracy. Many of the great estates have been handed down through the generations from the sixteenth century. For each fully equipped fighting man the military leader placed at the disposal of the government, a certain amount of land was added to his estate. Naturally, the Junker class included the nobility. From this class the various governmental positions were filled. The noble in possession of a large estate was the ruler of his workers in much the fashion of a king or emperor, until after the abolition of serfdom.

The industrial revolution reduced the power of the Junker class over the peasant, but at the time of the World War it was the most dominant one in Germany despite the rapid growth of the bourgeois industrialists as a result of control over the land.

From the period around 1880 the reforms of Bismarck tended to take away some of the power of the Junkers. They no longer had complete control of the governmental policies of Germany. Bismarck knew that the life of the newly formed German Empire depended upon the development of a unified people. Such unity could not be maintained with the Junker class in complete control.
The German people were the last to achieve national unity. Germany has been the battleground of Europe for centuries, and the resulting internal and external strife served to prevent the Germans from becoming unified. This strife has been partly due to the failure of the aristocracy to take cognizance of the problems presented by their domination of the land.

In 1848, when the middle-class liberals failed to achieve unity or democracy, the war lords took control. The middle class changed their democratic aspirations for patriotism until the Junkers grudgingly accepted a constitutional monarchy after Bismarck had formed the German Empire. Even then the Junkers were the dominant force in the government, and the only course open to the liberals was to organize their forces and carry on a battle for reform legislation.

The liberal movement barely got under way by 1850. Its adherents were the middle-class industrialists, shop keepers, skilled laborers, wage-earning peasants, and day laborers. Without the understanding aid of Bismarck the condition of the German peasant and the middle class might have been much worse. His aim was the building of a great Empire, and the fact that middle class must be appeased was incidental. He had no desire to break down the feudalistic social structure of Germany except as it would further the development of this unity.
The Junker class, then, down to the World War, had lost no appreciable amount of their power. Outwardly it would seem that under the constitutional monarchy of William II a fairly equal distribution of power in the government was maintained. As a matter of fact, however, the Junker class was the real ruler of Germany, in spite of the growth of various socialistic democratic political parties.

The Social Democratic Party was organized in 1869. Although every effort was made by the aristocracy to curb its growth, the Social Democrats had become quite powerful by 1880. They had gained such headway as to cause Bismarck to institute some reforms in order to prevent a revolution. These reforms, hinted at in an earlier paragraph, were (1) collective bargaining and (2) unemployment and sickness insurance. By 1914 this party had become the largest political party in Germany and offered quite influential opposition to the aristocracy.

In addition to the Social Democrats, there were National Liberals and the Conservatives. The National Liberals were very similar fundamentally to the Social Democrats without emphasizing the socialistic tenets quite so strongly. The Conservatives were composed chiefly of the Junkers and the peasants. This illogical combination of

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8 Schuman, Germany Since 1918, p. 7.
the Junker and peasant classes is explained by the more or less indifferent attitude of the peasant. The close relationship of these two classes was brought about by a feeling of interdependence. The peasant, though hating the Junker, was dependent upon him; and the Junker class, with its feeling of social superiority, was dependent upon the poor peasant.

Because of the strength of these liberal political parties, particularly the Social Democrats, one would think that in a coalition government they would play a large part in governing the German Empire. As a matter of fact, it, as well as the other parties, had very little to do with the government. Prussia dominated the Empire. The King of Prussia was the Emperor of Germany. The people were entirely dependent upon a bureaucratic government. Despite the obvious lack of democracy, there was, before 1914, no significant move against the dynasties, chiefly because of the conservatism of the peasant population.

Though there had been no move against the dynasty, there were some problems under the surface. Manufacturing, trade, and finance were finding markets saturated and scarce because of competition. This group of industrialists and the Junkers demanded colonies because they were afraid that impoverishment of the proletariat would stimulate revolution; and adversity might make the peasant hungry
for land. The World War was a result of pressure from this group.\(^9\)

William II did a great deal toward the industrialization of Germany. Desiring to make it the most powerful empire in western Europe, he was tireless in his efforts to expand industry and commerce. From 1890 to 1914 the government maintained large research laboratories to find newer and better methods of developing better products from Germany's soil; to find substitutes for products that Germany could not produce. Manufacturing concerns were persuaded to spend more time and money in research and in exploiting new markets in surrounding countries. For this latter purpose the government did not hesitate at subsidizing certain manufactures.

It may be said that this policy of William's, combined with the greedy opportunism of the industrialists, led in a very direct way to the World War.\(^10\) It must not be supposed that these were the sole causes of the World War. It is true that German imperialism supplies the fundamental basis for the conflict, but certain entangling alliances, as well as German fear of the French, were very real factors leading up to the World War. These factors need not be discussed extensively here since we are attempting

\(^9\)Ibid., p. 10. See also Mildred S. Wertheimer, Germany under Hitler, p. 6.

\(^10\)Schuman, Germany Since 1918, p. 14.
only to cover significant facts in German history that
give an insight into conditions that led to the meteoric
rise of the National Socialist Party.

The desire of Germany for colonies, more world trade,
a "place in the sun," are the most basic reasons for the
World War. 11 German imperialism was not wholly the re-
sult of a desire to placate the laboring and peasant classes.
The laborer and the peasant were responsible for German im-
perialism. William II convinced his people of their
racial superiority. The total structure of his policies,
governmental as well as social and economic, were directed
toward this end. They were convinced, peasant and capital-
list alike, that the German people were commissioned by God
to bring civilization to the rest of the world. 12

In many ways the present world war brought on by the
Hitler-dominated Nazi party is similar to the first World
War. The motives are the same, and the ideology is the
same. The only thing that is different is the class of
people supporting it. William II had the backing of the
Junker and capitalist class. Hitler has the whole-hearted
active support of the peasant class of people. 13

The defeat and collapse of the German people in the

11 Ibid., p. 15.
12 Charles D. Hazen, Europe Since 1815, pp. 322-324.
13 Theodore Fred Abel, Why Hitler Came into Power, p. 122.
World War was due to the policies of the reactionary
Junker elements. Their blunders added America to the
list of enemies of Germany. When defeat was certain, they
refused to face the fact that odds were against them and,
instead of making peace and salvaging something, continued
desperately to try to win. This, coupled with the dis-
illusionment of the people regarding the fact that they
were not fighting a defensive war, were too much for a
hard-pressed country.

Under William II, Germany had become the leading na-
tion in the production of munitions of war. Expanding in-
dustry and commerce were encouraged in every way and in
all branches. Ship building, chemicals, electric ap-
pliances, textiles, coal mining, steel products, railroads,
canals, grew amazingly.

There were several reasons for this growth: (1) the
quickening of national energies due to the stimulus to am-
bition that followed national unification; (2) advantages
in money and land from the successful war of 1870; (3) in-
tellectual and moral reactions to the war of 1870 resulted
in a desire to achieve in the economic what had been achieved
in the sphere of politics and war; (4) profound respect for

14 Schuman, Germany Since 1918, p. 3. See also Michael
T. Florinsky, Fascism and National Socialism, p. 8.

15 Gerhard Friters, "Who Are the German Fascists?,"
Current History. XXXV (October, 1931), 532.
science and its application; (5) a high birth rate; (6) industriousness of workmen; (7) salesmanship; and (8) patriotism.16

The people as a whole were reasonably prosperous, happy, and contented. Living conditions were good, particularly for the workmen in the cities. The peasant, though he did not have as high a standard, was on a level with the peasants of eastern Europe.

The history of the German people has long been a decisive factor in the destiny of Western civilization. The skill of her generals, the genius of her scientists and technicians, the efficiency of her merchants, the initiative and industry of her business and professional men, and the loyalty of her people made Germany the world power she was in 1914. Had it not been for the imperialistic policies of a bureaucratic government, the German people might today be a shining example of democracy based on a constitutional monarchy.

16 Hazen, p. 9.
CHAPTER II

THE REVOLUTION OF 1918-1919, AND THE
FOUNDING OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

Just prior to the Armistice, conditions in Germany became critical. Food riots were a common occurrence, laborers were striking, soldiers on furlough were seizing local governments, and mass meetings were demanding the abdication of Kaiser William II, Police power was lost, officials did not exercise their duties, and chaos reigned supreme.

In this state of revolution the Kaiser abdicated along with the other dynasts, and a republic was proclaimed. This revolution was not a mass movement against monarchy. The people were not revolting because of new ideas of government, but because of wrath at the government they had. As a whole, they were not eager to change the structure of the government, but wanted a change in rulers. Street fighting and communist uprisings would have collapsed for lack of support. It seems that the proclamation of a republic was more the opportunism of the Social Democrats than the sincere wish of the people.¹

¹Ibid., pp. 769, 771.
The revolutionary movement was known as the "Spartacist uprising." This group proclaimed the dictatorship of the proletariat, and established workingmen's and soldiers' councils in imitation of the Soviet in Russia. They had the sympathy, but not the active support, of the Independent Socialists. The Spartacist movement was led by Kurt Eisner, Karl Liebknecht, and Rosa Luxemburg. In January, 1919, fierce fighting took place in Berlin that recalled the days of 1848. In this revolt two of the leaders, Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, were killed. The Socialist government of the new republic suppressed the movement mercilessly. In Bavaria, Eisner was killed and his followers dispersed. The republic, by its determined effort against the Spartacists, soon discouraged other small disorganized groups of revolutionists.

This revolution of 1918-1919 is said by some writers to be one of the major events responsible for the National Socialist movement, and began some two months before the cessation of hostilities. There was no organized effort to overthrow the government. The working class, agitated by the Bolsheviks, turned against a government in whom most of the people had no confidence. Why should they not lose confidence? They were hungry, and there was no food. The allied blockade had stopped all possible imports of foodstuffs, reserves were running low, and there was not sufficient fertile soil to supply food for a nation at war.
even had there been manpower at home to cultivate it. People who are hungry have no patience to wait for a victory.

The complete breakdown of governmental control came with the defeat of the front-line forces. On October 6, the Kaiser was asked to abdicate and to cease hostilities. He would not, and his act of holding on to a lost cause served to break down completely the strained morale of the German people. Soldiers at home led groups of desperate citizens against the local governments. These governments set up machinery to control their subjects by force.\(^2\)

Before the Peace Conference President Wilson had proposed fourteen points as a basis for lasting peace. These were (1) open covenants, openly arrived at; (2) absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas; (3) removal of economic barriers among all nations accepting the peace; (4) guarantees of armament reduction; (5) impartial adjustments of colonial problems; (6) evacuation of all Russian territory; (7) evacuation and restoration of Belgium; (8) all French territories freed and restored; (9) readjustment of Italian frontier along clearly recognizable lines of nationality; (10) the peoples of Austria-Hungary should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development; (11) Roumania, Serbia, and Montenegro should be evacuated; (12) nationalities under Turkish

\(^2\)Abel, p. 14.
rule should have the right of autonomous development; (13) erection of the independent state of Poland; and (14) a general association of nations formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small alike. 3

From these "points" the German people expected to have an opportunity to reconstruct their badly damaged political and economic condition. Had the treaty of peace closing the war been based on these points, this assumption might have been warranted. As a matter of fact, the treaty ultimately signed by Germany has since proven to be one of the important events leading to the present chaotic conditions.

The revolution reached its height with the abdication of the Kaiser on November 10, 1918. He realized, with the surrender of Bulgaria, that to resist further was useless. It is possible that he might have remained as Emperor had he been willing to face the task of restoring order. The officials of the nation were not in actual opposition to him; they simply refused to exercise their duties in the face of the disaster that had overcome their country. The strikes of workers in all branches of industry had created such a shortage of supplies that there were no materials with which to effect a restoration of order.

3 Hazen, p. 738.
The realization that the army was no longer loyal to him sent the Kaiser into exile, and when the members of his government fled with him, the last chance of regaining the loyalty of the masses was gone. The government was left in the hands of the revolutionists, who were wholly incapable of meeting the task before them. The first task, of course, was the conclusion of a treaty with the Allies.  

On February 11, 1918, at Weimar, a national assembly drew up a constitution and established a republican government. This republic, conceived in defeat and born in bitterness and humiliation, never had a chance to develop. How could democratic ideals take root in a soil so alien? The problems confronting it would have taxed the ability of a well-established government. The story of the failure of this republican government parallels the story of the development of Nazism.  

It is hard to conceive the extent of the economic and social disintegration that took place after the war. Accumulated wealth was gone; old industrial ties were severed, agriculture and industry were disorganized; and important industrial regions were taken over by the Allies. The republic had an impossible task to perform in bringing about a restoration of order and morale. The Allies made this task more intolerable by forcing the new German Republic

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4 Wertheimer, p. 8.  
5 Friters, p. 533.
to sign the Treaty of Versailles.

The revolution was not over with the establishment of the Weimar Republic. However, its continuation was not due to any activity of the peasant. After the war was over, the peasant remained undisturbed, passive, and to outward appearances, content. The chief factor in continuing the strife was the organized groups of dissatisfied soldiers, and workers who were communistic in their attitude toward government.

The Weimar Republic began life unwanted and unloved. Popular respect for the nobility had survived the collapse of the monarchy and the Junker class was able to take an active part in the new government. Essentially British in model, the republic did not have the backing of a strong organized political group. The multiplicity of party groups promoted irresponsibility in government, and made every cabinet a coalition.⁶

Regardless of the above statement, the Social Democratic Party is responsible for saving the republic, and even Germany, by its promptness in putting down proletarian revolt after the Kaiser's abdication, saving both feudalism and capitalism from destruction. German socialism crushed German communism in the only period when the latter could possibly have succeeded. This was no easy task. Throughout

⁶Schuman, Germany Since 1918, p. 14.
all Germany in the trying months after the Armistice, the red flag of communism was prominent. Several large and important cities were controlled by communists; German sailors hoisted the communist flag in the harbor at Kiel. Ebert, socialist leader who became chancellor after William II fled, directed the fight against the "red scourge."

The Social Democratic Party had become an essentially conservative, unadventurous bureaucracy, representing the trade unions. They had no enthusiasm for social revolution. Their main role had been to suppress the proletariat and some phases of feudalism, and, having done this, they were gradually supplanted by the Independent Socialists and the Separatists. The dissolution of this party and the resulting confusion paved the way for the birth of National Socialism.

The Weimar Republic was established by the bourgeois liberals and not by the Social Democrats. This group controlled the National Assembly of January, 1919, that provided for the provisional government ultimately termed the Weimar Republic. They had no particular liking for their task and, as a result, the fundamental distribution of wealth and power was unchanged. The old leaders were retained for the most part. That is, the old leaders who were not of the Kaiser's personal following. The latter had fled into exile at the time of William's abdication.

The Weimar constitution laid the foundation for a
democratic government. The spirit of democracy had been developing rapidly since 1870, but it had taken the form of social and economic reforms rather than political. Possibly no great attempt had been made in the latter field because of its patent lack of possible success in the face of the strong imperialistic government of a Prussia-dominated Germany. Now the people who wanted political democracy, the bourgeoisie, had their chance.

The constitution contained a bill of rights and provided for a highly centralized government. The president's term of office was seven years; a cabinet was to be headed by a chancellor appointed by the president and responsible to him; the chancellor named the cabinet, which was responsible to the Reichstag; an upper chamber (Reichsrat), was composed of local cabinet officials from the various state governments; a lower house (Reichstag) was to have a member for each sixty thousand persons of like political affiliations. Should the cabinet lose the support of the Reichstag, it either must resign or discharge the Reichstag and call for new elections.

This constitution, patterned after the government of Great Britain, failed to achieve any unity of purpose.

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7 This statement is made with no intention of contradicting a former statement where Germany is spoken of as "alien to democracy." The spirit of democracy that began to develop was new when compared to the hundreds of years of despotic government in Germany's past.

8 Schuman, Germany Since 1918, p. 23.
because of the large number of political parties flourishing in Germany as a result of the revolution and breaking up of the strong Social Democratic party. The authority of the president was too great. He might issue emergency decrees without parliamentary sanction, and this would one day prove fatal.

The first great task of the republic was to conclude a satisfactory treaty of peace with the victorious Allies. The provisions of this treaty, and the part it played in the rising of Nazism will be treated later, but it proved to be a millstone around the neck of the new government. German democracy felt that it had been betrayed by the treaty, and German patriots came to associate liberalism and the Weimar constitution with national paralysis and disgrace.

The first wave of revolt had passed. The mutinous army and navy men had been subdued by their officers and Hindenburg had succeeded in bringing the front-line men home. Strikes throughout the country were abating; civil strife was lessening. The passing of this first wave of revolution was not due entirely to the proficiency of the republic in putting it down by force. There had never existed a true spirit of revolt, or radicalism, despite the bloody rioting. The new government under the Weimar constitution made no fundamental changes in the life of the German people as a whole.
Throughout the revolution that followed the war there were some stabilizing factors in Germany: popular resistance to radicalism, and the support of the twenty-three million people who voted in the 1919 National Assembly elections to change to the republican form of government. The revolutionary groups were opposed by organizations of former imperial army officers. These same organizations which at this time were so loyal to the republic in fighting revolutionary movements are the same groups that were a little later to become the nucleus of the National Socialist Party.

The military groups mentioned above were not in sympathy with the republic. They were linked with the conservatives and the Junkers in their opposition to a government of the republican type. Their fierce opposition to the revolutionists is shown by the wresting of local governments from the would-be "communists." These acts, though a great help in the republic, were not done by the militarists out of love for it. They hoped to find a way eventually to return the Hohenzollern dynasty, and in the meantime it would not do for the communists to gain a foothold.

The "left" revolution having been crushed by the militarists, the republic felt that it owed them a great debt. In attempting to repay the officers and officials of the
militarist groups, the government was forced to alter the cause of a true democracy. Concessions were made in the matter of representation. The bureaucracy of the empire found its way into the republic despite the efforts of a few staunch democrats. By the time the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles were known, the militarists had become openly antagonistic.

The defeat suffered by the German people in the war was more than a defeat; it was the crumbling of the entire world, and destroyed traditional spiritual values.\(^9\) Sacrifices had been in vain. The present was bleak, and the future forbidding. Important industrial regions were gone, such as Alsace-Lorraine, the Saar, and upper Silesia. Old industrial ties were severed, and agriculture and industry were disorganized. Into all this turmoil there came a new government, hated by the people who, though in the minority, held the balance of power -- the militarists and the Junkers. How was the republic to restore order and conclude an honorable peace?

It may have been possible that the Weimar Republic could have restored order, both political and economic, had it not been for the Treaty of Versailles. The provisions of this treaty killed the republic before it had a chance to live. National Socialism in Germany received its greatest impetus from the feeling of shame and disgrace

\(^9\) Florinsky, p. 30.
brought about by the provisions of this treaty. The republic had to take the blame for signing it. The people felt that they had been betrayed by a government that had been given no alternative but to accept.
CHAPTER III

THE EFFECT OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES ON
THE RISE OF NAZISM IN GERMANY

All through the war the Allies proclaimed, as first among their aims, the destruction of German militarism (1) in its organization, (2) in its manpower, and (3) in its armament. It was necessary to wrest from Germany both the means and the temptations to make war; to reduce in the immediate present her military forces to the minimum compatible with the necessities of her defense and the maintenance of order.\(^1\) This was an immense task, which Napoleon, the conqueror of Prussia, had attempted without success over one hundred years earlier. But the Allies entered the Paris Peace Conference on January 18, 1919, determined to demilitarize and humiliate a once-powerful Germany to the point where it could never take part in a blood-letting like that following 1914. The world was still distraught from the fact that over nine million soldiers had been killed and more than twenty million wounded. In addition, some ten million civilians were killed or

\(^{1}\)Andre Tardieu, The Truth about the Treaty, p. 125.
lost their lives through famine, disease, or other causes directly attributable to the war.  

The Armistice paved the way for the destruction of German militarism. Signed on November 11, 1918, it provided for (1) cessation of operations within six hours of the time signed; (2) immediate evacuation of Belgium, France, Alsace-Lorraine, and Luxemburg; (3) withdrawal of all German troops; (4) Germany must surrender war material including five thousand heavy and field guns, twenty-five thousand machine guns, three thousand bomb throwers, seventeen hundred airplanes, five thousand locomotives, 150,000 railroad cars, and seventy-four surface ships; (5) Germany must renounce the treaties of Brest, Litovsk, and Bucharest; and (6) the occupation of the Rhineland by Allied troops. 

The end of hostilities left many problems of great importance facing the Allies. How much should Germany pay as a war indemnity? How should the frontiers of Europe be redrawn so as to insure the practical development of national unity in the new countries to be formed? How could the economic development of these new states be assured? What arrangements would secure peace, security, and good government for all territories severed from Germany and Turkey? World commerce must be restored quickly. The


3 Hazen, p. 727.
first step toward the settlement of these problems was the opening of the Peace Conference in Paris on January 18, 1919. It was attended by representatives from thirty-two nations. The number of delegates from each nation was determined by the importance of that nation's participation in the war. The "Big Five" were Great Britain, France, the United States, Italy, and Japan; and upon them rested the most important decisions. The minor belligerents, Belgium, Brazil, China, Cuba, Czecho-Slovakia, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Hedjaz, Honduras, Yugo-Slavia, Liberia, Nicaragua, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, and Siam, were no less interested in the outcome. A third group present were representatives of the five British Dominions: Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, and the Union of South Africa. A fourth group were those powers who had merely broken off diplomatic relations with Germany, namely, Bohemia, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay. The delegates of all these nations were accompanied by experts of every description, financial, legal, military, and economic. It was clear that the decisions must be the outcome of the best knowledge available.

Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States, headed the delegates from this country. It was he who had formulated the famous "fourteen points" in a declaration of America's war aims on January 8, 1918. Germany
had signed the Armistice on the basis of these "points," and, though the Allies accepted them with reservations, it was understood that they were to form the basis of further peace negotiations. A review of these points, discussed in an earlier chapter, will provide an insight into the character of Wilson. A scholarly man, former president of Princeton University, he had been elected by the people of the United States as their president in the hope that he would be able to prevent the entrance of the United States into the war. When a series of events brought about by the unrestricted submarine warfare of the German war machine forced our entrance into the war, he made it clear that we were fighting to "make the world safe for democracy." A thorough study of the happenings during the long months of debate leading to the ultimate Treaty of Versailles will show that Woodrow Wilson held out to the last for the incorporation of his "points" into the treaty. He withdrew from the discussions entirely when it became evident that there was no hope of creating a situation comparable to the pre-Armistice declaration of America's war aims.

Lloyd George, prime minister of Great Britain, played an important role. A man of definite convictions, he had been responsible for a great expansion of industry and

\[\text{\textsuperscript{4}}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. } 725.\]
commerce during his years as prime minister. Before the war he had been the idol of the British masses because of his social reforms. As war premier he had won the nation by his energy. At the Conference he, too, represented the war mood of his fellow-countrymen; but at the same time, without the desire of completely crushing the fallen foe.

The third leading figure was Clemenceau. His career was that of a journalist-politician who is as typical of France as a lawyer-politician is of America. Clemenceau was a brilliant editor whose articles were lively, witty, pungent, and cynical. As a young man he became a follower of Gambetta, and all of his political life he had been a foe of royalism and clericalism. His parliamentary career was more sensational than notable. His biting tongue and intimate knowledge of political under-currents made him a dangerous opponent of any ministry. Although a cynic, having faith neither in God nor in man, Clemenceau's militant nature drove him to espouse unpopular causes. He was a strong champion of Dreyfus, and this did much to bring about the popularity that resulted in his being made premier.

Clemenceau was chairman of the Paris Peace Conference. His undeviating purpose was to obtain a treaty that would give security to France whatever the cost to Germany. This

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5J. Salwyn Schapiro, Modern and Contemporary European History, p. 357.
cynical and witty journalist had been the soul of France in the darkest hour of the war. He now represented the mood of a nation embittered by the fearful sufferings of four and a half years of conflict waged on her soil. Clemenceau was not eager to make Germany's load easy. Discussions were dominated by Clemenceau and his hatred.

Since the Conference was too large to deal with all the questions before it, a Supreme Council was organized, consisting of representatives of the "Big Five," England, France, the United States, Japan, and Italy, to formulate all important matters, which were then to be acted upon by the Conference in a plenary session. Japan was interested only in matters pertaining to the Far East, and therefore paid little attention to the European problems. Italy withdrew for a time because of her opposition to the settlement of the Adriatic question. Therefore it devolved upon the "Big Three," Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemenceau, to make the great decisions. To the Council came the delegates of the minor powers to present their claims. Assisting the Council were numerous commissions, composed of representatives of the various powers, that dealt with special problems.

The spirit which pervaded the Conference was shown by the words of President Poincaire of France as he opened the Conference:
Forty-eight years ago to-day on the eighteenth day of January, 1871, the German Empire was created by the army of invasion in the palace at Versailles. It was consecrated by the theft of two French provinces. It was thus from the very origin, a negation of right, and by the fault of its founders, it was born in injustice. It has ended in disgrace. You are assembled in order to repair the evil that has been done and to prevent the recurrence of it. You hold in your hands the future of the world. 6

The Conference did not have a free hand to deal with the momentous problems that demanded solution. Its decisions were influenced by secret treaties, entered into by the powers during the war. These treaties were made public by the Bolshevists when they got control of Russia. England and Russia had an agreement according to which the latter was to get Constantinople and the territory bordering on the Straits; and the former, most of the neutral zone of Persia, which contains valuable oil wells. For entering the war with the Allies, Italy was promised Trieste, the Trentino, Gorizia, part of the Dalmatian coast, part of the Tyrol, and the Dodecanese Islands. Rumania was promised Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovinia. Russia, England, France, and Italy agreed to partition Asiatic Turkey, and to divide nearly all her territory among themselves. Russia and France had an agreement concerning Germany: France was to have Alsace-Lorraine and a special position in the Saar Valley; the left bank of

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6Shepard Stone, Shadow Over Europe, No. 15 in the Headline Books Series, p. 27.
the Rhine was to be organized as a buffer state under French protection; and Russia was to have a free hand in determining Germany's eastern boundary and in reorganizing Poland. Because of the withdrawal of Russia from the war, this treaty was not considered at Paris. Japan and the Allies had an agreement that the former was to become heir of Germany in the Far East, and was to get Kiaochow, and economic privileges in Chantung. 7

With such a background it is not remarkable that there were no "open covenants, openly arrived at," 8 as was set forth in Wilson's "points," although the Allies had subscribed to them. The chief provisions of the Treaty of Versailles were: The neutralization of Belgium and Luxembourg was declared to be at an end; their future status was to be determined by the League of Nations. To Belgium was ceded Moresnet, Eupen, and Malmedy. Luxembourg was no longer to be included within Germany's tariff laws. The Saar district, rich in coal mines, was to be governed by a commission appointed by the League of Nations. At the end of fifteen years its inhabitants were to decide, by a plebiscite, whether they desired to continue with the existing system, to have union with France, or to remain with Germany. Alsace-Lorraine was restored unconditionally to France. Such districts in Schleswig as voted to join Denmark were to be permitted to do so.

7Schapiro, p. 742. 8Hazen, p. 728.
The problem of rectifying the eastern frontier of Germany caused much debate, due to the claims of the Poles and of the Germans. Those districts that were inhabited by Poles chiefly, such as Posen and West Prussia, were given outright to Poland. She also got a few districts in East Prussia after favorable plebiscites. What Prussia had gained from the partitions of Poland was now restored to that reborn nation. Danzig, overwhelmingly German, was organized as a free city with an independent government under control of the League, but was included in the Polish tariff system. East Prussia was now separated from the rest of Germany by the "Polish Corridor," but Germany was permitted free transit of goods and of persons across this area. Upper Silesia was to hold a plebiscite to determine whether it would be Polish or German.

Germany surrendered all her overseas possessions. These regions were not distributed directly among the Allies; they were given the status of "mandatories," whose government was to be administered by those powers into whose care they were entrusted. To the League of Nations was given the power to organize mandatories and to supervise the administration of the mandatory nations. Great Britain was given a mandate over German East Africa, the Union of South Africa, German Southwest Africa, New Zealand, German Samoan Islands; Japan, over the German Pacific
Islands north of the equator; Australia, over the German
Pacific Islands south of the equator and over German New
Guinea.

Germany ceded to the Allies all of her merchant ships,
over 1,600 tons as compensation, "ton for ton," for her
destruction of Allied shipping; and she was required to
build ships for the Allies to make up for any deficit.
Germany renounced all property and treaty rights in Siam,
Liberia, Morocco, Egypt, Turkey, and Bulgaria. All public
property in Alsace-Lorraine went to France. The Allies
reserved the right to liquidate all property rights be-
longing to German nationals within their territory, in-
cluding that ceded them by Germany. All public property
in the former German colonies passed to the new govern-
ments. Germany was required to deliver large quantities
of coal, annually for ten years, to France, Belgium, and
Italy. Most of these shipments were to be to France as
compensation for the destruction of French coal mines by
German armies. Germany was also required to give the
Allies five thousand locomotives and 150,000 cars.

The destruction of property caused by the German in-
vasions, especially in the devastated regions of France,
was so enormous that it was impossible to compute an in-
demnity. Therefore, Germany was required to make repara-
tions to the Allies on the grounds that she was solely
responsible for the war. A reparations committee, representing the Allies, was established to supervise and enforce the economic terms of the treaty. This commission was given oversight of Germany's system of taxation to compel her to provide the means to fulfill the economic terms. In computing the amount of reparations, it was agreed that Germany was to compensate the Allies for all damage done their civilian population during the war; for military pensions to the Allied soldiers; and for separate allowances made to the families of Allied soldiers. She was to pay Belgium's war debt to the Allies. The commission was empowered to determine Germany's liability in accordance with her capacity to pay, as well as the method, time, and conditions of payment.

The commission's report, made on May 1, 1921, provided for a possible aggregate of thirty billion dollars. This figure was arrived at on a replacement idea of rebuilding demolished cities, restoring factories, replacing all damaged property, as well as the indemnity required for loss of life and payments made to relatives of soldiers.

The treaty provided for the abolition of military conscription in Germany. The total strength of her army was not to exceed 100,000 men with 4,000 officers. She was


10 Schapiro, p. 742.
forbidden to possess any submarines, tanks, gas, naval and military aircraft, or up-to-date capital ships. There must be no fortifications constructed or maintained in a zone thirty miles wide on the right side of the Rhine, and none at all on the left. The fortifications on Helgoland were to be dismantled as well as those bordering on the Baltic. She must surrender all war materials in excess of certain limited quantities.

The Treaty of Versailles, as finally signed by Germany on June 28, 1919, imposed more severe terms than had any other treaty in modern history. It was calculated to reduce Germany to a second-rate nation and to ruin her economically. Four and one-half years of truceless war had embittered the Allies to such a degree that they put aside all plans for a moderate peace. Lloyd George said of the treaty: "Not a revengeful treaty, but just." 11

The Germany that emerged from the war was a smaller, a weaker, and a humbler Germany than the Empire of 1914. She had lost about 27,000 square miles of territory, in continental Europe alone, and all of her overseas possessions. Her army was insignificant and her navy was at the bottom of the sea, scuttled by her own hand as a gesture of protest against the injustice of the Treaty of Versailles. Her foreign investments were gone, and her foreign trade

11 Hazen, p. 727.
and merchant marine were almost gone. Her natural resources were reduced seriously by her territorial losses, particularly of Lorraine and the Saar.

The provisions of the Treaty of Versailles played a large part in shaping German opinion against their own government. Already tottering as a result of its untimely birth, the shame and disgrace brought upon it by the signing of the treaty were nearly sufficient to cause it to collapse. It made no difference to the German people that the Weimar government had no choice but to do as the Allies asked. This fact could not erase the war guilt clause. Having to admit that they alone were responsible for the war was so unjust in the eyes of the average German that it holds an equal place with the shock of the reparations, disarmament, and territorial provisions of the treaty. The people of Germany were staggered. The treaty brought about a moral degradation that cut to the quick the highly developed sentiment of nationalism, and impaired the integrity of the entire nation.

The effect of the Allied policy in forcing the Treaty of Versailles upon Germany was to stimulate the growth of that aggressive nationalism that is the backbone of Nazism. In enforcing the provisions of the treaty, the Allies forced the German government to become an obedient, if reluctant, tool in their hands. German people saw only that
their government was acting against them, and began to lose faith in the principles of democracy.

To ask any nation to sign a blank check for thirty billion dollars would be enough to cause a panic, but to ask a nation whose resources had been drained by a long and expensive war would be to invite disaster. There was nothing Germany could do to defend herself. She had very little with which to produce what was demanded of her. She had lost control of her transportation system, her exports, her imports, and her merchant marine. The Allies crippled Germany's efforts at rehabilitation further by the imposition of tariffs and the removal of customs between Germany and the Saar, Alsace-Lorraine, and Poland.12

The occupation of the Rhur Valley placed German finances in such a precarious position that it was soon followed by a complete devaluation of the mark. This collapse of the mark served to cause the Allies to revise their attitude toward German economics, awakening them at last to the realization that Germany's ability to pay rested upon her internal prosperity.13

The softening of the attitude of the Allies in regard to reparations and Germany's ability to pay was sufficient to enable the hard-pressed Weimar Republic to survive. A

12 Dwight L. Dumond, Roosevelt to Roosevelt, pp. 237-238.
13 G. D. H. Cole and Margaret Cole, The Intelligent Man's Review of Europe To-day, p. 266.
major revolution was threatening, and the Allies acted in preservation of self-interest. New provisions of indemnity payments were drawn up. These provisions, known as the Dawes plan, resulted in the stabilization of German money and brought about a gradual return of prosperity. American and British business men were again eager to invest in German enterprises, and began pouring gold into the expanding German industries. But it was too late to prevent political disruption.

The Treaty of Versailles, made with the intention of meting out justice to an erring nation, acted as a boomerang on the very people who conceived it. No nation can be expected to live through the economic experience forced on Germany by the treaty without receiving scars that never heal. The Allies hoped to weaken Germany beyond all hope of recovery. What they really did was to inflame nationalism. It is the spirit of a nation that counts, and instead of weakening this spirit, the treaty had the effect of stimulating German exertions. "Germany is to be feared more as a bound country than as a free country."14

14 Florinsky, p. 35.
CHAPTER IV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NAZI
POLITICAL PARTY

After the war, groups sprang up all over Germany. Some of these were political in nature with no avowed purpose. Others were military, being composed of soldiers who failed to disband at the close of the war. This latter group continued their organization for the supposed purpose of maintaining order. Just what kind of order is not clear. They acted at times under orders from the Weimar Republic in putting down communist uprisings. At other times they were found to be opposed to the governmental forces in what amounted in reality to civil war. These various military organizations were very active the first year after the war before the republic strong enough to put them down.¹

The most immediate danger to the newly founded republic was not the Junker conspiracies but the numerous "volunteer corps" of reactionary ex-soldiers. These Freikorps were possessed of a strong socialistic feeling and might have

¹Hugo Eberlain, "German Fascist Organizations," Living Age. CCCXIX (November, 1923), 170.
been able to precipitate real revolution had not the bulk of the German Imperial Army remained loyal to the republic and helped to disband them. They remained, however, as secret organizations and served to protect the numerous political parties that grew up with them and whose membership included many of them.

It was in such a seething turmoil of political and military intrigue that Nazism was born. It began in an organization known as the German Workers' Party, founded by Anton Drexler in January, 1919. It had a very inauspicious beginning when compared with the mother organization of Fascism in Italy. Mussolini was a leader with a national reputation in the Fascist movement even before the World War. In addition the Fascist groups comprising the party he headed had developed in a more or less spontaneous manner all over the country. Compare this with the unknown leadership of Anton Drexler over a single group of disgruntled economic reformers, Anti-Semites, and National Socialists, who liked to sit and drink beer while gossiping over the internal conditions of Germany. A rather lowly beginning for an organization that today has the whole world wide-eyed with fear!

The German Workers' Party had no platform or aims, no plans or programs. It was merely a debating society. Since

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2Florinsky, p. 37.
it discredited nationalism, it was joined by a great many intellectuals. These members made stump speeches on the street corners, denouncing the republic and its attempts at reorganization and restoration. They served merely to add to the general chaos. This party, whose headquarters was a beer hall in Munich, Bavaria, was not alone. Scattered throughout the land were many others and all of them were just as devoid of purpose.

If the German Workers' Party is to be classified at all, it would be as a political organization. Its sole purpose was the discussion of the "stab in the back" by which they agreed Germany had been betrayed in the war. Into this organization came an unknown Austrian paper-hanger named Hitler, and through him it became not a gossipy, maudlin, debating society, but the tool by which all of Germany was aroused to destroy every vestige of democracy existing under the Weimar Republic.

When Hitler joined the party, all he had was a burning ambition to become a leader in German politics. Whatever latent powers of leadership he possessed had been buried under a mediocre career as a paper-hanger and as a soldier in the World War. He was a corporal in the army of the republic at the time he joined the party in July, 1919. The membership was only twenty-eight when he joined, though he was listed as the seventh active member.
He helped to formulate a definite plan of organization. Through his influence the name was changed in January, 1920, to National Socialist German Workers' Party, and a regular party platform was drafted by Gottfried Feder in the same year. This platform advocated (1) the abolition of all unearned incomes; (2) the confiscation of war profits; (3) the nationalization of trusts; (4) profit-sharing in large concerns; (5) expansion of the old-age pension system; (6) public ownership of department stores; (7) expropriation of land for public purposes; (8) elimination of land rent; (9) treating as foreigners all those who were not of German blood; (10) all such persons forbidden to hold office or to work for newspapers; (11) deport all non-German people who entered Germany since August 2, 1914; (12) the interests of all before the interests of one; (13) the repudiation of the thesis of German war guilt; (14) the refusal to make further reparation payments; (15) a drastic revision of the Treaty of Versailles; (16) the erasure of the Polish corridor so as to reunite Germany and East Prussia; (17) the return of former German colonies; (18) the long-desired union with Austria; and (19) the right of Germany to rearm. It can be seen from these aims that the general fundamental program was extreme nationalism; intense anti-Semitism, and

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3Anonymous, Germany: Twilight or New Dawn?, p. 95.
vague economic measures called socialism. Another thing to notice is that the program was designed so that some part of it would appeal to each division of the social structure.

By 1921 Hitler's superior qualities as a leader had come to light. Largely through his efforts, the organization recruited thousands of members. Qualities of leadership alone were not responsible for the growth of the party. Hitler was able to secure the large sums of money necessary to carry on his publicity campaign. The bulk of this money was raised through the Reichswehr. Through his former associations in the army (he had resigned from the service in 1920) Hitler was able to interest the military authorities in his program. This august body of traitors were greatly interested in the establishment of a nationalistic movement. The republic tolerated this treason because it needed the support of the military to maintain order.

The funds Hitler obtained were used to establish a newspaper, the *Voelkische Beobachter*, which was used to disseminate the propaganda by which the membership was increased. Paid workers carried placards through the streets. Badges were given to members in good standing. A uniform was adopted, and upon achieving certain ratings a member was allowed to wear it. These methods and showmanship had
a great appeal to the lower classes, and they supported
the party by donating money when it was not possible for
them to become active members.

As early as 1921, fighting units of the party were
organized. These units, known as the Storm Troopers, took
part in various riots resulting from strikes, and also
served to protect the organization from the loyal part of
the regular army. Hitler never had any trouble with the
police because of his contacts with the Bavarian govern-
ment through Von Roehm, a member of the Reichswehr.

Hitler had become the leader of the party largely be-
cause of his clever speech-making. He painted gruesome
pictures of the famine that threatened to engulf all of
Germany. He described the government as a group of crim-
ninals. When the occupation of the Ruhr took place as a re-
sult of the failure to make reparation payments on time,
Hitler decided to prove his leadership through his fight-
ing as well as speaking ability. During the chaos result-
ing from the occupation, he attempted to take over the
government of Bavaria.

Munich, in Bavaria, was the scene of the first attempt
of the Nazis to seize control. Since the party was or-
organized there and had a part of its membership among the
lesser governmental officials, it was a logical move.
Munich was already the spearhead of the intrigues against
the Bavarian government. Preparations for the "putsch"
began early in the fall of 1923. There is no doubt that the officials of the republic had been warned of the possibility of an attempted military coup by the German Workers' Party, but there was no determined effort by the government to curtail the activities of the party. Gustav Stresemann, chancellor of the republic at this time, was resolute in putting down Marxist radicalism that threatened property rights, and he used troops to oust a Socialist-Communist coalitions cabinet in Saxony on the grounds that it was plotting to establish a Soviet republic. But against the plotting of the reactionary German Workers' Party he did nothing.

Bavarian Premier Von Kahr, Police Lieutenant Von Seisser, Reichshehr General Von Lossaw, with the support of sundry Freikorps leaders and adventurous soldiers, were obscurely concocting treason, whether concerned with Bavarian secession, a monarchist restoration, or a blow against the republic in Berlin was not too clear even to themselves. They needed a crowd-compeller to win mass support. Here is where Hitler and his party joined forces with the Nationalists. Each group had in mind overthrowing the government; however, each had a different motive. Hitler wanted to clear out the "Jewish-Marxist pigsty in Berlin" with Munich as the starting point.4

4Schuman, Germany Since 1918, p. 36.
The Nationalist group was immediately absorbed by the organization under the leadership of Hitler, who sought to force a showdown of power in Bavaria. Not too enthusiastic regarding a putsch against the government, Kahr, Lassow, and General Ludendorff were forced to proclaim the "national revolution." Hitler forced them at the point of a gun during a Nationalist rally on the night of November 9, 1923. The promise to take part in the revolution was withdrawn the next morning, so when the "national socialists" began the uprising, they were joined by only a few of the Nationalists, including Ludendorff.

The putsch was a failure. When Hitler began the parade into Munich, his followers were dispersed by the police and troops at the Odeonplatz, and sixteen were slain. Kahr and his colleagues made peace with Berlin, since they had taken no active part in the putsch. Hitler was arrested and in April, 1924, was sentenced to five years in Landsberg prison.

This unsuccessful "Beer Hall" Putsch would seem to be the death knell of National Socialism, and possibly would have been had Hitler been kept in prison. He served only nine months of his five-year term, and was able to continue his plans of organizations. It was while in prison that Hitler wrote Mein Kampf, the book that has become the bible of the Nazis. This book served as an amazing propaganda in recruiting members to the cause.
The putsch of Munich was but one incident of a year of despair. During 1924 there was a decided increase in the power of the Nationalists. Extremism was beginning to decline, as shown by the fact that Nationalists were replacing Socialists in the cabinet. The slow swing to the right was unmistakable, but Hitler refused to swerve from his purpose.

Propaganda of the National Socialist group was turning up throughout Germany. Leaflets, placards, youth organizations, speeches of agitation against the government, continued almost unabated. The Reichswehr no longer was able to help Hitler. They had been put down all over Germany by Stresemann. There was no one but Hitler to lead the fight for his party.

The adoption of the Dawes plan regarding reparations made Hitler's job more difficult. Through this plan American gold was pouring into Germany and prosperity was returning. Membership in the organization began to dwindle. Workers no longer found it so desirable now that jobs were available. Nazism feeds on poverty. However, Hitler was undaunted, and through hard work was able to continue his organization. He found that he had a nucleus of about four thousand members around which to build his party. A man by the name of Goebbels, today one of Germany's important leaders, was active in helping Hitler to disseminate his
literature, and in speech-making and various other forms of propaganda. 5

Between the years of 1925 and 1928 these two leaders of the Nazis set up a vast system of Storm Troopers. Perhaps they were preparing for a day when once more, through a show of force, the "revolution" might be proclaimed. These troops were at first a shabby lot, but as time went on, they were joined by a better class of younger men attracted by the uniform and an adventurous spirit. Money was obtained in many ways for the support of these groups, much of it from the subscriptions of the party's wealthier members. Too, those industrialists who feared the growth of communism contributed to Nazism in the belief that Nazism was less to be feared than was communism.

The National Socialist Party was not idle politically. In March, 1924, in a bloc with the German People's Party, they won thirty-two seats in the Reichstag elections. Since Hitler's trial for participation in the "Beer Hall" Putsch was going on at the time, there is no doubt that the publicity it gained helped in the success of the party. Until 1928 there was no great political success attending the party's efforts. But Hitler was planning carefully.

His paper, Volkische Beobachter, was instrumental in keeping the progress of the National Socialists before the
people. All the wavering policies and outright mistakes of the republic were kept before the eyes of the populace. Workers were warned of the economic royalists and urged to come into the fold for protection. Small merchants and tradespeople were warned of the governmental subsidizing of large industries.

From time to time changes in the policy of the Nazis were announced, though for the most part they were merely retractions of the old program. In May, 1926, it was declared: "The fundamental principles and fundamental ideas of this program cannot be altered; but methods by which they are carried out will change with changing times." Since the organization of the Storm Troopers (Sturm Abteilung) was begun at the time by Captain Ernest Von Roehm, it is possible that Hitler had already planned a program of force. These Storm Troopers, attracted by hate of the Versailles Treaty and an opportunity to fight the enemies of the "true" Germany, formed a nucleus about which the "changing" program was built.

In April, 1928, an interpretation of the program was made by Hitler in a way that left no doubt that the program itself was of secondary importance. He said at this time that "the party bases its policy on the right of private property," and that the provision in the party program,

\[6\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 41.}\]
"expropriation of land without compensation," referred only to land unlawfully acquired or not used in the public interest, and was directed primarily against Jewish speculators in land. This explanation, or interpretation, went a long way toward reconciling landed proprietors to the National Socialist Party.7

From this simple interpretation it is seen that Hitler was willing to change the program in whatever way necessary in order to secure members and protection against dissolution by the government. There were few real leaders in the party. Besides a few royalists and industrialists who secretly supported the organization, Nazism was made up of unemployed and poorly paid, discontented workers.

Despite the return of a degree of prosperity, the Reichstag elections of May, 1928, showed the voting strength of the Nazis at 800,000 -- sufficient to seat twelve deputies in the lower house. This failed to daunt Hitler's courage. Even the failure in 1929 to block the Young plan of reparations by a coalition with the German Nationalist Party, failed to daunt the indomitable spirit of the man. He would not quit trying. Then, in the fall of 1929, came the dawn of the great world-wide economic depression. And in this depression Hitler found one of his greatest tools.

7Abel, p. 41.
CHAPTER V

THE GERMAN ECONOMIC SITUATION FROM 1929 TO 1933

AS A FACTOR IN SPREADING NAZISM

That economic impoverishment breeds political intolerance is a truism. It has also become a truism to say that public fanaticism reflects private unhappiness. The unhappiness of the German people was real enough by 1930. The Great Depression affected different classes in different ways and produced differing consequences, but there was no class that was not severely affected by the economic situation.¹

The German middle class sank helplessly and passively into the morass of poverty. Increasing numbers of workers joined the Communist Party and dreamed anew of the revolution to come. Some were won over by the revolutionary rhetoric of Nazi orators. The majority, however, clung to the Social Democratic Party, and the trade unions. Amid the afflictions of joblessness and semi-starvation, they lost both the will and the means to fight either for socialism or for the preservation of political democracy.

¹Schuman, Germany Since 1918, p. 47.
The German middle class was not so much in desperate need from a material standpoint as corresponding groups in Great Britain and the United States, but its consciousness of suffering was greater. Its members were not reduced to starvation, but were just resentful enough to give vent to effective expression of its bitterness. The outlook was not promising. The years of prosperity they had enjoyed had caused them to look forward to eventual entrance into the aristocracy of money. Gone was the fertile field of speculation in foods and manufactured goods. Security, in its established social position, had come to mean less than the possibility of advancement in society.

Of the middle class, the Kleinburger tum made up of shop-keepers, professional people, and small proprietors, was hardest hit by the depression, psychologically if not materially. It found itself for the second time in a decade confronted with bankruptcy, possible inflation, and a lowered scale of living. Many of them were unemployed, a number which swelled from 1,906,000 (monthly average) in 1929 to 4,565,000 (monthly average) in 1931. Since the index of industrial production fell from 100.4 in 1927 to 58.5 in 1932, profits were bound to decrease. The feeling that they were being forced down to the level of

\[2\] Frederick Lewis Schuman, The Nazi Dictatorship, p. 107.
\[3\] Ibid., p. 104.
\[4\] Ibid.
the working class was a more vital concern than the actual material loss. Material deprivation was less galling than the ubiquitous sense of social degradation.  

The working class, or proletariat, was faced with a serious unemployment situation. Industrial production began to fall off and with it the need of manpower. Reduction in volume of trade, decrease in export surplus, decrease in public savings, slackening in production, constant decline of prices, decrease in gold reserves, an alarming budget deficit, all had a hand in the general situation affecting the working class as well as other groups in Germany.

Strikes were numerous in the large factories, and in transportation systems of the large cities. In spite of the attempts of labor unions to keep up a uniformly high wage, workers' wages were lowered and with it came a lowering of the standard of living. The industrial proletariat suffered from unemployment and wage reductions, but they suffered no psychological ill effect. Having risen only a little way above the poverty line, they fell back toward it acquiescently.

The peasantry was hard-hit by the depression. There were a few well-to-do peasants, but for the most part the peasant was debt-ridden. Completely loyal to, and dominated

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5Ibid., p. 105.

6Schuman, Germany Since 1918, p. 53.
by, the Junker class, the peasant fared badly in the years following 1929. Mortgages could not be paid and their land was taken over by the urban bankers. Foodstuffs they raised could not be sold except at a very low price because there was no money with which to buy. They could receive no help from the Junker class, for the republic had ceased to subsidize them because of the acute shortage of money.

Poverty and even hunger was enveloping the peasantry. Even during the prosperous years of 1924-1928, there had been many who were not able to make a decent living from the land, not because of the lack of industry, but because of the distribution of the land and the lack of fertile soil. The peasant, so long a lover of the soil, was being uprooted.

Off and on for about a century the Junkers had lived on state support. They had come to take it for granted that, in one way or another, by tariffs or direct subventions, the state would guarantee them a living "according to their station." Despite the heroic use of fertilizers, they were unable to produce grain at the world price. But since they represented the former ruling class and since one of their number, Paul Von Hindenburg, was president of the republic, and since they knew what they wanted, they actually contributed to the impoverishment of
the government. The depression put an end to the fantastic tariffs they were able to secure, and roused in them a fear of revolution.

The industrialists were in much the same position as the Junkers. Both were threatened with loss of wealth and position. In the face of economic distress they became more reactionary and anti-republican than ever. They were too shrewd to try to revitalize the empty hope of monarchical restoration. They found ready at hand, among the purchasable petty bourgeoisie demagogues of discontent, more adequate instruments to serve their purpose and allay their fears. In an alliance against labor, the Junkers and the industrialists began to look for political support to offset the strength of labor unions. They found this support in the National Socialist Party.7

Nazism, like other forms of political extremism, is a product of economic and social disintegration. The depression furnished this disintegration. As a political philosophy, Nazism is most attractive to those who lack reserves of wealth. It finds moneyed support among the insecure, such as landed aristocrats, investment bankers, and heavy industrialists, who are always the first victims of deflation in the upper strata of society. It finds a mass following among the middle class, who are ever aspiring

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7 Ibid., p. 55.
to a position in the plutocracy and are ever poised precariously between the forces of organized labor and monopolistic labor. As a mass movement of discontent, Nazism is a product of the insecurities of the middle class and peasantry, which in periods of stress responds favorably to anti-capitalistic and anti-proletarian slogans.

The combined forces of the Junkers and the industrialists had no belief in the doctrines of the National Socialist Party. Some way had to be devised by which they could save their vast holdings. They could not turn to the labor unions, for this group stood firmly behind the Social Democratic Party. The National Socialist Party was the only mass of people to whom the Junkers could turn for support, being, as they were, unalterably opposed to the "Marxism" that the workers stood for. In the alliance with Hitler, the Junkers hoped to secure sufficient political support to continue ravaging the treasury to support their vast holdings. The union seemed to the capitalists to offer an opportunity, not only to grab the biggest handful of public funds and reduce wages, but to eliminate the influence of organized labor from the state.8

The picture is now complete, and the stage is set for the active political growth of Nazism. The peasant had

8Edgar A. Mowrer, Germany Puts the Clock Back, p. 138.
been aroused with the crumbling of his meager assets and was casting about for some means of succor. The middle class were sufficiently impoverished to fear that they were losing their place in society. The Junkers, though possessing sufficient reserves of wealth to weather a severe economic strain, were afraid that a revolution might lose for them their great estates. The industrialists were faced with the possibility of losing their vast holdings through a wide-spread revolution or a proletarian uprising, or through a collapse of all industry by failure to secure proper trade agreements through the foreign office of the republic. Labor was faced with the serious problem of unemployment and actual hunger.

All of the groups in Germany with the exception of labor were ready for just the type of political philosophy handed out by the National Socialist Party. Labor was well organized and was fully behind the Social Democratic Party, through which it hoped to hold the advantages of collective bargaining, unemployment insurance, and wage scales that had been gained through long years of struggling.

Of all the groups in Germany, the middle class and the peasantry were the most interested in the actual doctrines and platforms of the Nazi Party as set forth in an earlier chapter. The Junkers and the industrialists had no belief in these doctrines -- in fact, they were afraid of them.
They were reassured by the party that the anti-aristocratic and anti-capitalistic slogans were but bait to win the masses, and that the landed estates would not be divided among the peasants. The peasant had nothing to lose, and the middle class hoped to gain much. Only labor, the proletariat, held out to the last against the force of political disintegration, and as unemployment steadily decreased, even this last stronghold of democracy began to give way. Strangely enough the growth of Nazism paralleled the growth of unemployment.
CHAPTER VI

HITLER IN POWER

Adolf Hitler was born in the Austrian border town of Brannenau-am-ina on April 20, 1889. He was the only son of a third marriage of a petty Austrian customs official who in turn had been the illegitimate son of one Maria Schicklgruber and had taken the name of his supposed father only late in life.\(^1\) The early years of Adolf were uneventful. His family was poor, and apparently not well liked. Frau Hitler (nee Klara Ploetz) was of uncertain ancestry, possibly Czechish. Herr Hitler had been christened Alois. His surname, a contraction of Hittler, suggests the origins of the family in the small peasantry.\(^2\)

The young Adolf aspired toward refined bourgeois pursuits of art and architecture, but lacked sufficient talent to achieve success in these directions. Too, his father objected. Left an orphan at fifteen, he lived with relatives until he was seventeen, when he went to Vienna to study painting. Not having sufficient education and

\(^1\)Schuman, Germany Since 1918, p. 48.

\(^2\)Schuman, The Nazi Dictatorship, p. 6.
talent, he was not allowed entrance in the art schools and was forced to earn a living by doing odd jobs and painting picture post cards. All he could find in the way of a permanent job was as a helper in the building-trade occupation.

The life of hatred, begun when just a child, found added fuel during the years in Vienna, when he was forced to work as a common laborer with common laborers. He felt that he was above such things. He, a German, looked down on by Germans, and not accepted as an Austrian by the Austrians! By 1909 he was working steadily doing drawings and water colors. He was even poorer than before, but his time was his own.

In 1912, Hitler moved to Munich, where he eked out a precarious living by painting picture post cards until the World War began. Accepted as a volunteer in the Bavarian army, Hitler fought with sufficient patriotism and courage to win the Iron Cross and the rank of a Corporal. These years, according to Mein Kampf, were the most glorious and joyous of his life.

The growth of the Nazi Party under the direction of Adolf Hitler has been described in an early chapter down to the year 1928, when the party secured twelve seats in the Reichstag. The story of the growth of the National Socialist Party from that year down to the time when Hitler assumed full control of the destiny of the German people is
marked by a steady rise in membership after the economic crisis in 1929.

On March 27, 1930, Chancellor Müller and the other Social Democrats in the cabinet resigned because of irreconcilable differences with the German People’s Party over the question of how money was to be raised to meet the deficits of the unemployment insurance fund. On March 28 Heinrich Bruning, Centrist leader, became head of a new cabinet. He was a whole-hearted liberal, yet he was unwittingly to pave the way for the destruction of German democracy through the issuance of emergency decrees as provided under Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution. This situation was brought about when the Reichstag refused to pass his legislation raising taxes. Bruning dissolved the parliament and ordered new legislation when a vote to cancel the decrees was passed 236 to 221.

In the election held on September 14, 1930, the Nazis increased their representation from twelve to 107 deputies and became the second strongest political party in the land. The national reaction was swinging toward Nazi extremism. When the Reichstag convened in October, 1930, the Nazis took their seats in a rowdy demonstration. They demanded abrogation of the Young plan and the Treaty of Versailles and a national war of liberation. The Socialists, in alarm, decided to support Bruning in his issuance of
new decrees in an attempt to meet adequately the demands of the situation.3

The multiplicity of political parties was proving to be the undoing of German democracy. Only a coalition cabinet could remain in power, and the views of the parties were so divergent that no unity of action could be maintained.

Brüning was forced to attempt the salvation of German democracy by undemocratic means; that is, by continuing to rule by decrees. He could do nothing else in the face of the little support offered him by the members of the Reichstag. The Social Democrats and the labor unions were all the support left to Brüning in his fight against political radicalism as expressed by the growing Nazi and Communist groups.

The powerful Communist Party, dependent upon Moscow for guidance, was not able to organize a proletarian revolution, nor willing to support the Social Democrats in a liberal movement against reaction. The two political organs of the proletariat, the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party, remained bitter enemies to the end. These inner feuds tended to paralyze the efforts of the proletariat in any effective attempt to prevent the rise of reactionary elements directed toward the democracy.4

3Schuman, Germany Since 1918, p. 52.
4Ibid., p. 54.
In local elections throughout the country the National Socialists were having new successes. By early 1931 their dues-paying members totaled more than 700,000. These new victories in local elections helped center the attention of the populace on the growth of the party and on its doctrines. Hitler's propaganda machinery, developed to a high degree, and subsidized by money from the industrialists, was bringing more and more members into the party. The effectiveness of the Nazi voting strength was increased by the Storm Troopers, a Nazi military group, used to intimidate voters through rioting on election days.

Hindenburg, now eighty years old, accepted the renomination for the presidency in February, 1932. The Social Democrats and Nationalists were solidly behind him. Reluctant to become a candidate, Hindenburg was persuaded to enter the campaign through the insistence of his secretary, Otto Meissner, his son Oskar, and his friend Franz Von Papen.

Hitler hurriedly acquired German citizenship (he was still legally an Austrian) and decided to oppose Hindenburg in the election. Bruning, the Social Democrats, the trade unions, and all defenders of democracy rallied to the support of Hindenburg. In the balloting of March 13, 1932, Hitler secured 11,340,000 votes, as compared to the 6,400,000 for the Nazi Reichstag list in 1930. This vote
shows the rapid growth of the Nazi strength. Hindenburg received 18,650,000 votes, or 49.6 per cent of the total, lacking four-tenths per cent of a majority. A second election was held on April 10, and Hindenburg received 19,360,000 votes to 13,400,000 for Hitler. In this second election the bulk of the Nationalist vote changed to Hitler, and a portion of the Communist vote went to Hindenburg.

Three days after the elections Hindenburg signed Bruning's decree for the dissolution of the Nazi Storm Troops.5 These Troopers had provoked disorders throughout the country on the election days, resorting to gangster methods against their opponents. These methods included outright coercion in the balloting.

The dissolution of the Storm Troopers was not the first attempt of the republic to curb the activities of the Nazis. In March, 1931, Bruning had forbidden mass meetings and the wearing of uniforms, and abolished the freedom of the press. In October, 1931, Bruning issued a decree closing all meeting places in Germany that were customarily used by the Nazis, including homes of Storm Troopers and public restaurants. But the Nazis were not to be downed.

In the Diet elections of April, 1932, the Nazi Party showed enormous gains in voting strength. They became the

5Abel, p. 96.
largest single party in Prussia, Wurttemburg, Hamburg, and Anhalt, and the second largest party in Bavaria. Despite these gains, when the Reichstag convened on May 9, 1932, Bruning retained a majority of 287 to 257.

On May 29, 1932, the president asked Bruning to resign, seven weeks after the chancellor had helped to secure Hindenburg's re-election. On the following day the Bruning cabinet delivered its collective resignation. It was the last cabinet in the Reich to rule with the support of a freely elected parliamentary majority.⁶

The political intrigue behind the dismissal of Bruning as chancellor is responsible for the ascension of Hitler to power. At the aristocratic Herren Klub in Berlin, the plot had its inception. Here the blue-blooded gentry gathered to assail the "reactionary" policies of Bruning, and to plan to restore to power those "fit to rule," that is, the militarists, the Junkers, and the industrialists.

When Bruning suggested that the large estates of East Germany might be divided to aid the jobless and so relieve a situation that was becoming desperate, the cry was raised that "Agrarian Bolshevism" was impending. Such was always the cry when it appeared that the Junker class was faced with the loss of privileges and the cessation of governmental subsidies. It was no hard task for Von Papen,

⁶George N. Schuster, Strong Man Rules, p. 272.
Meissner, and Oskar Hindenburg to persuade the aged presi-
dent that Bruning must go.

The new cabinet formed on May 31, 1932, was headed by
Von Papen, with Schleicher as Minister of Defense, and
other gentlemen of the Herren Klub in other posts. Since
none of these men were party leaders, Hindenburg dissolved
the Reichstag on June 3, on the grounds that it no longer
represented the people. The new elections were to be held
on July 31, 1932.

Hindenburg had conferred with Hitler and had promised
to lift the ban on Storm Troops in return for Nazi sup-
port in the cabinet. The ban was lifted on June 15, and
the Nazi Storm Troopers were permitted to reappear and to
resume their bloody assaults on Socialists and Communists.
But Hitler disclaimed any intention of supporting Von Papen
in the new cabinet and launched a stupendous campaign for
the Reichstag elections.

The next step in Hitler's rise to power was made by
Von Papen. On July 20, in the name of law and order, Hin-
denburg suspended civil liberties in Prussia and authorized
Papen to remove the Prussian ministers from office and to
act in their stead. This move was made on the pretext
that order was not being maintained. The Social Democratic
leaders in Prussia yielded in order to prevent bloodshed.
There was no rioting, no general strike, no Socialist-
Communist collaboration to resist the Junker usurpation.
With so many unemployed, and all leadership paralyzed, the economic and political organizations could do nothing. This method of destroying opposition was not lost on Hitler.

Whether the economic situation was growing worse, or Hitler's propaganda machine stronger, the July 31, 1932, Reichstag election resulted in a landslide for Hitler. It is likely that Von Papen's act of June 5, 1932, in cutting unemployment appropriations by 500,000 marks and reducing the dole by twenty per cent had some bearing on Nazi growth. It is true that this high point of Nazi strength, prior to the abolition of free elections, coincided with the low point of the depression in Germany.7

The Nazis elected 230 deputies; the Social Democrats, 133; the Communists, eighty-nine; and the Centrum, seventy-five. The State Party and the German People's Party almost disappeared. Because of this large number of parties with an appreciable following, there could be no support for a cabinet or for any coalition unless Papen could strike a bargain with Hitler and the Centrum. But Hitler refused to take any part in a government unless he were made the chancellor. This, Hindenburg would not do. The resulting deadlock infuriated the Nazis. Gregor Strasser, Josef Göebbels, Hermann Göring, Ernest Roehm, and the other party colleagues of Hitler were thirsting for power.

7Schuman, Germany Since 1918, p. 57.
The Junker cabinet decided to carry on without parliamentary support. Hermann Göring was elected president of the Reichstag and led the opposition in that body against Von Papen. In a vote of confidence on September 12, the Reichstag voted against Papen 513 to thirty-two, and was immediately dissolved, the new elections to be held November 6, 1932.

By the time of the November 6 elections, there had begun that slight business recovery that marked the beginning of a world-wide economic upswing from the depths of depression. This recovery in the field of material things caused the decline of Nazi voting strength so that only 196 Nazi deputies were returned out of the former 230 seats held. This decline serves to support the contention that Nazism can be identified with economic distress. Since the Social Democrats also lost (133 to 121), and the Communists gained (from eighty-nine to 100), and the Nationalists showed a large gain, it can be seen that the two million votes lost by the Nazis were not supporting the traditionally democratic Social Democratic Party. This lack of political stability tended to make Hitler's assumption of power easier than anticipated, even though he had lost some direct support.

By the end of 1932 Hitler and Goebbels were desperate. The party treasury was empty, and the Nazi tide was ebbing
fast, even though liberalism was making no headway and the Social Democratic cabinet still had no support. The Hitler movement might well have disintegrated within another six months. It had not gained power by winning a majority of the electorate. It could not gain power in such fashion even though its opponents were hopelessly divided and paralyzed between the Socialists and the Communists. Hitler had no desire to win power by a putsch. He had not forgotten the prison term that had resulted from the Munich Putsch of 1923. There was only one method by which the Nazis could get into power — by striking a bargain with the aristocratic reactionaries.

After the elections of November, 1932, all attempts of Von Papen to form a parliamentary coalition failed, and Schleicher persuaded Hindenburg to ask Papen to resign. On December 2, Hindenburg gave Schleicher the chancellorship. Schleicher sought to split the Nazis by winning Gregor Strasser's left-wing Socialists away from Hitler. He could, he believed, count on the support of the Reichswehr (German military groups). By promising to increase unemployment appropriations, he schemed to secure the support of the trades unions.

Schleicher was able to get the Allies to agree "in principle" to German arms equality. This diplomatic victory was a blow against the Nazis, for the arms equality question was one of the chief planks in the Nazi platform.
Schleicher succeeded in creating a semblance of unity in
the parliament and might have been able to break down the
morale of the Nazi leaders as well as followers.

Von Papen, however, had assumed the role formerly
played by Schleicher -- that of master conspirator -- and
was attempting to put himself back into power as chanc-
celler. This intrigue was to be the final step necessary
to put Hitler into power.8

Von Papen planned to "use" Hitler against Schleicher,
and then to "tame" the Austrian fanatic or dispose of him.
To this end he invited Hitler to Cologne to the home of
Baron Von Schröder, a friend of Fritz Thyssen, who had al-
ready subsidized the Nazis heavily. On January 4, 1933, a
bargain was struck. Thyssen and other industrialists were
to donate four million marks to the Nazi treasury. A new
cabinet was to be created with Hitler as chancellor, and
Von Papen as vice-chancellor, the rest of the cabinet to
be non-Nazi. Hitler's power could thus be held in check,
and, so Von Papen reasoned, Hitler would be ultimately
forced out of the government.9

Hindenburg was old and a tool in the hands of the
inner circle, so the problem of converting him to this
scheme was not hard. There was already a considerable

8George Norlin, Hitlerism: Why and Whither, p. 5.
9Wertheimer, p. 17.
amount of opposition to Schleicher among the Junker class because he refused to levy new tariffs on foodstuffs, and a scandal was threatening regarding the misuse of government funds by the East Prussian Junkers.

A parliamentary commission had discovered that public funds amounting to millions of marks for the advancement and aid of agriculture had been squandered or gambled away by the Junkers of East Prussia. This scandal was on the point of public exposure. On January 20, 1933, Hindenburg asked Schleicher to suppress the commission investigating the affair. Schleicher replied that he could not lawfully do so. The Nazi and Nationalist press was assailing him unmercifully. On January 28, Hindenburg asked Schleicher to refuse a request of the Reichstag for a statement on the findings of the commission. Schleicher said he could not refuse unless the Reichstag were dissolved. Hindenburg then asked for his resignation.

Schleicher toyed with the idea of a putsch. Possibly with the support of the Reichswehr and the trade unions he could have succeeded. But the Socialist leaders would not hear of such a step and Schleicher lost his opportunity to save Germany.

On January 30, 1933, Hindenburg announced the appointment of Hitler as chancellor and Von Papen as vice-chancellor. Two other Nazis were admitted to the cabinet (a part of the scheme that Von Papen had not planned) -- Frick
as Minister of Interior and Göring as Minister without Portfolio. Even so, there were nine members of non-Nazi affiliation opposed to the three Nazi members. Such a distribution should have been able to curb the power or influence of Hitler, but Von Papen had schemed without full realization of the political genius of Adolf Hitler.

The appointment of Hitler caused great rejoicing throughout Germany. Great crowds flocked to Berlin on the day of his appointment. They felt that they were entering a new era.\textsuperscript{10} The Kleinburgertum and the peasantry were almost wholly in sympathy with the appointment. The proletariat scarcely counted as a political factor though they were opposed to Hitler. The capitalists welcomed the era that they felt would mark the end of labor unions and communism. The Junkers were not sure of Hitler's attitude toward their estates, but as long as they had the support of the Reichswehr they were not unduly alarmed.

\textsuperscript{10} Calvin B. Hoover, \textit{Germany Enters the Third Reich}, p. 100.
CHAPTER VII

THE NAZI REVOLUTION

Hitler's political goal after he became chancellor on January 30, 1933, was unlimited dictatorship for the National Socialist Party, of which he proposed to make himself undisputed master.¹ This required, first, victory in the March 5 elections ordered by Hindenburg when the Reichstag had been dissolved two days after Hitler became chancellor. It required, second, the assumption of dictatorial powers and the liquidation of all other party groups. It required, third, the restoration of discipline within the party and the checkmating of Nazi radicals who would be certain to clamor for "Socialism" and for measures against the Junkers and the industrialists. This latter provision was a necessity unless Hitler wished to put his party to a test against the aristocracy, a step he felt was not wise at the time.

The victory in the March 5 elections was to be brought about by a pose of moderation, conciliation, and national resurrection, accompanied by dramatization of the Communist

¹Schuman, Germany Since 1918, p. 63.

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bogey and rigorous crusading to save the nation from Bolshevism. Hitler's amazing propaganda agency headed by Gőebbels, with the aid of the Storm Troopers, attacked Socialist and even Centrist meetings. A reign of terror was instituted against critics of the Nazi Party. Despite the efforts of Gőebbels to frighten solid citizens into Nazism by the Communist bogey, it seemed for a time that the scheme would fail. The Communists offered no provocation at all.

Nazi ingenuity was equal to the occasion. On the evening of February 27, 1933, the Reichstag chamber in Berlin was destroyed by fire. A ragged Dutch boy was arrested and confessed to arson, though the fire was clearly of chemical-incendiary origin. Hitler and Gőebbels at once announced the fire as a Communist plot and a signal for a proletarian revolution. Hindenburg signed a decree issued by Chancellor Hitler that did away with that provision of the Weimar Constitution that guaranteed liberty of person, freedom of press and speech, right of assembly, the inviolability of dwellings and the sanctity of private property.\(^2\) Furthermore, the decree called for the death sentence or life imprisonment for particular crimes including high treason, poisoning, arson, and conspiracy against the government. Under these decrees, Communist

\(^2\)Herbert Kraus, *The Crisis of German Democracy*, p. 64.
and Socialist leaders were arrested and incarcerated in overflowing jails and new concentration camps. The Dutch boy was eventually convicted and beheaded for the burning of the Reichstag.

After the burning of the Reichstag the Communist Party was completely suppressed, and the Nazi terror became unrestrained. Despite this "Red" scare, the March 5 elections did not result in a clear majority for the Nazis. The Communists polled twelve per cent of the votes; the Socialists, eighteen per cent; the Centrum, fourteen per cent; the Nationalists, eight per cent; and the Nazis, forty-four per cent. The Nazis, with the support of the Nationalists, achieved a majority with fifty-two per cent. The Communists were not allowed to sit in the Reichstag, so the Nazis would have had a majority without the Nationalist support. Thus the first step of Hitler's program was fulfilled.

On March 23, 1933, the new Reichstag met in the Garrison Church in Potsdam and later in the Kroll Opera House in Berlin. After listening to a speech made by chancellor Hitler, the Reichstag virtually set aside the Weimar Constitution by passing the Enabling Act of March 24, 1933. This act, passed by a vote of 441 to ninety-four, gave the government practically unlimited power for four years. It provided that the cabinet could pass laws and appropriate money without parliamentary approval. Hitler declared
that the new powers constituted no threat, as they would not be used to disturb parliament, the presidency, states' rights, the churches, or trade unions. These assurances did not prevent his cabinet from passing a law on April 7, 1933, which provided for the unification of the states, and for Reich governors with extensive powers to be appointed to govern them. This flagrant abuse of the enabling act should have served as a warning of more extensive violations later. The second step in Hitler's program, that of assuming dictatorial powers, was partly completed with the passing of the Enabling Act.

On May 1, a labor demonstration was staged, and on May 2, all labor unions were suppressed, their leaders arrested, their papers banned, and their funds and property confiscated. The right to strike was abolished. The German employer was declared absolute in his authority. Social Democratic efforts to make peace were in vain. Those Social Democrat members of the Reichstag who were not in jail or exile, voted "confidence" in Hitler's policies on May 17. On June 22, the cabinet, under provisions of the Enabling Act, dissolved the Social Democratic Party. So effective had been the propaganda and political strategy of the Nazis that no resistance was offered to the suppression of the oldest and largest Socialist party.

The same fate now descended on all other parties. The Nationalists voluntarily dissolved when their leader, Hugenberg, was forced to resign from the cabinet. On July 4, 1933, all other parties in Germany were dissolved, and a cabinet decree asserted that the National Socialist Party was the only political party in Germany. Heavy penalties were provided for any one who might seek to maintain another political party or establish a new one. One-party dictatorship had replaced the January coalition and Hitler had circumvented his allies and outwitted his enemies. He had now only to purge his own party of any individual or group that might challenge his authority.

The abdication of parliament and the destruction of parties paved the way for abandonment of legislation by representatives elected by the people. Unlimited executive power was substituted for legislative supremacy in states, provinces, districts, and cities. Democratic forms were not wholly repudiated, for the dictatorship claimed to be the purest form of democracy. On November 12, 1933, the electorate was asked to vote "yes" or "no" on the government's withdrawal from the League of Nations and the disarmament conference. This one-party voting was a farce. The propaganda ministry made it clear that all who failed to vote or who voted against the regime would be sent to concentration camps. As a result, the referendum as well as the Reichstag "lists" were adopted by a ninety-five per
cent favorable vote. Those critics with more patriotism than caution found themselves either executed or in concentration camps.

By 1934, Hitler's power was complete. Through executions and concentration camps he had purged his own party and was the acknowledged leader. Following Hindenburg's death on August 2, 1934, a referendum to express approval or disapproval of the decision to combine the presidency and the chancellorship was held and was approved by eighty-eight per cent of the voters. Hitler's domination of every phase of German life had been achieved. 4

In summing up the government of Germany and the power of Hitler, the writer knows of no better words than those written by Shepard Stone in one of the Headline Books:

Hitler is the supreme leader. He knows no equals, only subordinates. He is the master over the life and death of every German. He is Chancellor, Fuehrer, President, all in one. What he says, goes. There is a Reichstag with more than 300 deputies, but it has no power. There is only one party, the Nazi party, and its leader is Hitler. Laws are not debated. Hitler merely decrees them. He decides that taxes will be higher; that the army will be enlarged; that Germany will march into Austria. And whatever he decides is immediately done. For he is absolute ruler of 77,000,000 Germans.

Such is Hitler's power. Of course, it is obvious that one man cannot do everything; neither can 77,000,000 people always act as one. How, then, is Germany really ruled?

Germany is ruled through three agencies: The National Socialist Party, the state, and the armed forces. And Hitler is the head of all three. The Nazi party insists that it represents the German

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people and therefore cannot tolerate other parties. It is also above the state, and commands the state. Indeed, in Germany the state is reduced to an instrument of the party.\footnote{Stone, p. 42.}
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Since the Nazi Party grew rapidly after 1928, it is possible to assume that the economic depression that engulfed the world played a large part in its growth. The fact is that the growth of Nazism paralleled the depression. The people of Germany were in poverty. The peasant lost his land because he was unable to pay mortgages and taxes. Since this portion of the German nation really desired the reforms advocated by the Socialists, but hesitated to adopt communistic methods of achieving them, they welcomed the National Socialist movement.

The fact that the children of the World War period were now the youth of Germany gave impetus to the movement. These young people had lived through many hardships. They could see no justice in the Treaty of Versailles, since it was penalizing a generation that had played no part in the war. The republic could not hold their loyalty, since they were losing faith in a social and economic system that caused poverty in the midst of plenty. The mixture of brutality, racial pride, anti-Semitism, and romanticism proved
to be the concoction that the young Germany of the post-
war period was looking for.¹

Propaganda, the means by which Nazism was popularized,
was a very strong element in its growth. This propaganda
involved the skillful exploitation of German psychology.
German conditions were dramatized by well-trained agitators,
led by Josef Göebbels, who were schooled in the art of
arousing the people. The appeal to martyrdom was used as
the theme. The spreading of propaganda occupied the full
time of thousands of members of the party. Pictures,
verses, and caricatures depicting the confusion and cor-
ruption of German parliamentary democracy were placed in
packages of cigarettes, candy, stationery, and other
articles of consumption. Speakers denounced Semitism and
praised the Nazi program from street corners, movies, pul-
pits, over the radio, and from airplanes. The military
phase of Nazism was really propaganda, since the policy of
allowing members to play at being soldiers influenced many
people to join the movement.²

The principle of dynamic leadership was naturally an-
other item in the rise of Nazism. A legend was built up
around Hitler. The German people were looking for a leader

that the Weimar Republic had failed to produce in thirteen years. They were fascinated by Hitler's personality, by his passionate outbursts and pugnacious oratory in which he offered them balm for their injured pride. His strong will and dauntless courage led them to believe that he was their prophet, their special guiding star, their man of destiny.

Ideology is another factor, in which the idea of Geimenschaft is paramount. The appeal, "common good before personal advancement," produced a positive reaction in a downtrodden people. The development of a consciousness of the superiority of the German race was brought about by the vicious campaign against the Jews. The people were eager to believe that national health could be brought about by racial purity, and that inter-mixture of races would lead to social decay.

There are two other reasons for the rise of Nazism that have not received the support of many historians, but which are of sufficient importance to be mentioned. The first is that a psychological malady caused the rise of the lower middle class. This malady, described as acute paranoia, caused the lower classes to have hallucinations of grandeur and delusions of persecutions. This collective neurosis could be cured only by securing a scapegoat on which to place the blame for their many misfortunes. The
other reason is advanced by the Communists. They feel that the Nazi movement was originated and promoted by the big capitalist group who wished to preserve by violence the private ownership of means of production.\textsuperscript{3} According to this interpretation, Hitler, as well as the membership of the National Socialist Party, was the dupe of the moneyed class. This theory has some support because of the aid given the Nazis in the way of contributions and in the backing of Hitler’s efforts to become chancellor.

Dissatisfaction with the Weimar Republic, particularly because of the Treaty of Versailles, and continued dissatisfaction with the government because of its inability to restore order and prosperity, were responsible for the growth of Nazism. These are the two most powerful motives behind the movement.

In the way of a summary, the reasons for the rise of Nazism may be given under four general heads: (1) discontent with the existing social order brought about by economic prostration after the war, and the great depression, (2) ideology and the program for social transformation adopted by the Nazis, (3) the organizational and promotional techniques, and (4) the presence of dynamic leadership.\textsuperscript{4}

The government of Germany under the domination of Hitler has produced many radical changes. In reviewing these

\textsuperscript{3}Abel, p. 195.

\textsuperscript{4}Hamilton Fish Armstrong, \textit{Hitler’s Reich}, p. 22.
changes it will be noticed that there has been no appreciable change in the status of the Junker class. They were supreme in the Empire, and under the republic they lost little of their power. The Hitler government is dominated by them, though their power is hidden by a cloak of National Socialism. The lower middle class, the proletariat, and the peasant are really in a much worse condition than before. It is true that conditions under the republic were intolerable, due chiefly to the failure of the Allies to lend it a helping hand; but conditions today are even worse. That the people have not risen up against such tyranny is the result of a very strategic program of propaganda. Their attention has been diverted by a series of events calculated to prevent them from analyzing their true situation. The German people, through their blind allegiance, have placed their fate in Hitler's hands.
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