THE GERMAN REVOLUTION OF 1933

SYNOPSIS

On August 19, 1934, the German people confirmed by plebiscite the fusion of the Reich Chancellorship and the Reich Presidency—in reality a fusion of civilian and military power in the person of Adolf Hitler. Reaching the Chancellorship in January 1933, through a mixture of legal political processes and backstage maneuvering, Hitler was able to consolidate his rule through the Enabling Act of March 24, 1933. Through coercive measures sanctioned by the Enabling Act, Hitler eliminated all vocal opposition. Upon President Hindenburg’s death on August 2, 1934, Hitler declared himself President, and a plebiscite reaffirmed the declaration.

BRIEF HISTORY OF EVENTS LEADING UP TO AND CULMINATING IN REVOLUTION

The history of the Weimar Republic can be divided into three phases: the birth and crisis period from 1919 to 1923, the period of stability from 1924 to 1929, and the disintegration era from 1930 to 1934.

Promulgated on August 11, 1919, the Weimar Constitution provided for a quasi-federal republic with a parliamentary type of government. Initially the new government was dependent upon center and left-of-center political groups. The first problem it faced was carrying out the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. This treaty deprived Germany of at least 11 percent of its productive capacity, demanded the payment of reparations without setting the exact figure, stipulated that Germany disarm, and, finally, placed on it the burden of guilt for the war. The provisions greatly angered the German people in general, and nationalists and the army in particular. The fact that it was the responsibility of the Weimar Government to fulfill Germany’s treaty obligations automatically focused on it the distrust of many Germans. Moreover, the fact that the victorious Allied armies never occupied Germany lent credence to the nationalists’ assertions that the German people had been “stabbed in the back” by Weimar officials.

Nationalist suspicion and hatred were further intensified by Communist activity. Because the Weimar Government was based on a left-of-center complex, many felt that it condoned communism. Exservicemen’s groups known as the Freikorps violently attacked Communist activities. This rightist violence against the Communists easily became translated into action against the government. The Kapp
Putsch of 1920 was an example of this. Although the rightist forces took over Berlin for 5 days, the Putsch failed because the army refused to join, considering it premature, and the working class countered with a general strike. There was a difference, however, between the treatment accorded to radical groups. On the one hand, the leftists received harsh sentences and little protection from the police. On the other hand, rightist violence, though directed against the regime, was not severely punished.

There were other events which caused trouble for the government. When reparations payments were finally set, the figure was so high that the government resigned. A new left-of-center and center coalition government agreed to the terms, which further incensed nationalist feeling. When in 1923 the French occupied the Ruhr in retaliation for nondelivery of certain reparations items, the government reacted with passive resistance. The threat of civil war arose as the French encouraged separatist movements. A tremendous inflation set in which wiped out the value of the mark and weakened and discouraged the lower-middle class.

The threats of civil war and socio-economic disintegration were arrested by the government of Gustav Stresemann. Another attempted uprising, Adolf Hitler’s “Munich beerhall” Putsch of 1923, was crushed when the army obeyed Stresemann’s orders. Stresemann introduced a new currency, and through this and other reforms stabilized the economy.

An era of prosperity and stability followed (1924–29). During this period, in which Stresemann was either Chancellor (1923–24) or Foreign Minister, internal as well as international conditions became more tranquil. Internally, the Stresemann period saw the growth of industry and an increase in general prosperity. Social welfare measures were greatly increased as the power of the moderate left grew.

In the field of foreign affairs, the period 1924–29 was marked by partial rapprochement with the Western powers. Up until 1924 Germany had been treated harshly by the victorious powers, especially France. The occupation of the Ruhr and the insistence on reparations payments had embittered many Germans. It was at least partly in reaction to this pressure that Germany concluded the Rapallo Treaty with Russia in 1922. This upset the Western powers because it signified that Germany was ready to follow an independent foreign policy and was able to play off the Soviet Union against the Western democracies. Though the treaty was ostensibly economic, the Germans were, at the same time, secretly discussing with the Soviet representatives the possibility of Russia’s aid in helping the Germans build up their
military forces in the fields which the Treaty of Versailles prohibited. The use of Russian territory for the training and development of German forces continued at least until 1930.

Under Stresemann Germany set about improving relations with the West. The Dawes Plan placed reparations payments on a more realistic basis and led to the evacuation of the Ruhr. The Locarno Pact established mutual guarantees of Germany's western borders and a quasirecognition of her eastern border. With admission to the League of Nations in 1926 and a permanent seat on its Council, Germany seemed to be on the way to becoming a satisfied power.

However, throughout the entire Stresemann period there were serious undercurrents countering the favorable trends. Hypernationalist groups like the Nazis and Alfred Hugenberg’s Nationalist Party opposed every attempt to carry out the Treaty of Versailles. On the left the Communists attacked the increased power of business. The dissatisfaction of the army with a “defensive” policy and the alienation of the lower-middle classes by the 1923 inflation were other factors of unrest. Lastly, the economic boom rested on a precarious basis, international short-term credits.

With the death of Stresemann in 1929, the last phase of the Weimar Republic began. The battle over the Young Plan, which was to be the final and definitive reparations settlement and which provided for payment to be spread over 59 years, helped Hitler’s party, in alliance with Hugenberg’s Nationalists, to move into national prominence. Actually the Young Plan carried with it a highly advantageous quid pro quo for Germany—Allied withdrawal from the Rhineland, 4 years ahead of the final date set by the Versailles Treaty. In March 1930, nationalist unrest, intensified by the 1929 depression and growing unemployment, forced the resignation of the Hermann Mueller Cabinet. President Hindenburg appointed Heinrich Bruening, who, after trying vainly to get the Reichstag to vote his budget, was forced to call for elections. In these elections the power of the radicals increased; the Nazis captured 18 percent of the Reichstag seats while the Communists won 13 percent. With the newly won support of the Social Democrats, however, Bruening was able to form a government.

Bruening remained in office until the end of May with the support of the Social Democrats and the Center in the Reichstag and the backing of President Hindenburg. The failure of his attempt to effect an Austro-German Customs Union, which was blocked by French and Italian opposition, greatly weakened his hand and strengthened the parties of the right.
Meanwhile, the power of the Nazis was growing. When Hindenburg’s term expired in 1932, Hitler audaciously announced his candidacy for the Presidency. Bruening persuaded the aged and increasingly senile Hindenburg to seek another term. He was elected, but Hitler demonstrated his strength by polling 40 percent of the vote.

For various reasons, Hindenburg’s confidence in Bruening had been dwindling, and in June 1932 a scheming army officer, Gen. Kurt von Schleicher, who had the support of the army and the confidence of Hindenburg, persuaded the President to remove Bruening and replace him with Franz von Papen. During Papen’s regime, which lasted 6 months, there were two Reichstag elections, one in July, the other in November. In the July elections, the Nazi Party obtained 230 seats out of 608. However, the November elections saw a significant decline in the Nazi popular vote, which was nearly 2 million less than in July, and in the party’s Reichstag representation, which dropped to 196 seats. The Nazis were still much the largest party, however.

Papen was unable to obtain a parliamentary majority or put together a workable coalition, and Schleicher, tiring of his protege, persuaded Hindenburg to drop Papen and name Schleicher Chancellor. He assumed office on December 2, 1932, but was equally unsuccessful in lining up a majority in the Reichstag. Hitler decided that his time had come. He convinced the aged President that he could succeed where Papen and Schleicher had failed, and on January 30, 1933, Hindenburg appointed him Chancellor. He had come to office legally, through the pressure exercised by his parliamentary plurality and the inability of the moderate parties to cooperate in support of a moderate cabinet.

From 1933 until August 1934 Hitler expanded his power into dictatorship. He had been given the Chancellorship on the promise that he would be able to form a coalition. However, the Center Party refused to cooperate, and Hitler called for an election, to be held in March of 1933. Hitler, as head of government, employed both official and unofficial instruments in coercing the German public. Although during the campaign many normal electioneering rights were denied the opposition parties, the actual voting was free. The most spectacular event during the campaign was the burning of the Reichstag. It was blamed on the Communists, but many historians feel that the Nazis were responsible for the fire—an effort to provide justification for future terrorism against all political opposition and minority groups.

The election, however, did not give the Nazi Party an absolute majority. Hitler was dependent on a coalition with the Nationalists. This did not satisfy him; neither was he willing to accept the restric-
tions of cabinet government. However, he still wanted to maintain the facade of legality. He found the answer in the Enabling Act proposed in March 1933. This was a constitutional amendment empowering the Chancellor to rule by decree without consulting the Reichstag or the President for 4 years. To get the bill passed, Hitler had to win a two-thirds majority in the Reichstag. His first step was to eliminate the 81 Communist deputies. Then, by conciliating the Nationalists and the Center he succeeded in getting the two-thirds majority, with only the Social Democrats in opposition, and his rule in civil matters was established without legal restraints.

However, Hitler still had to deal with the decentralizing forces of the Federal States, the trade unions, and the political parties, as well as the power of the army, which under the Weimar Constitution owed its allegiance to the President. Hitler abolished the state legislatures and concentrated all power in the Reich Government. He suppressed the unions and incorporated them in a Nazi “Labor Front.” He dissolved all political parties except his own. There remained the control of the army. Hitler placated the army by eliminating the radical element from the command of the S.A. in the purges of June 1934. Upon the death of Hindenburg in August 1934, he declared himself President. On August 19, 1934, the German people, by an enormous majority (89.93 percent), affirmed the union of the Chancellorship and the Presidency in the person of Hitler. The revolution had been successful; Hitler was now Head of State, Head of Government, and Supreme Commander in Chief of the Army.

THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE REVOLUTION

DESCRIPTION OF COUNTRY

Physical characteristics

Germany is situated in the center of Europe with France, Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands on her western frontier; Denmark and the Baltic Sea on her northern boundary; Switzerland, Austria, and Czechoslovakia on her southern boundary; and Poland on her east. From 1919 to 1939 East Prussia was separated from the rest of Germany by the Polish Corridor, and touched the Baltic state, Lithuania, on the northeast. A consequence of Germany’s geographical position is that the extent of German territory usually depends
upon political considerations.\textsuperscript{a} The Germany of the Weimar Republic had been deprived of 13 percent of its European territory and all of its colonies by the Treaty of Versailles.\textsuperscript{1} It had an area of 180,934 square miles.

Germany can be divided into four regions: (1) the northern plains; (2) the mid-German hills; (3) southern Germany with the Main, Neckar, Swabian, Franconian Jura, and Danube basins, and the Bavarian Alps; and (4) the Rhine valley.

**The people**

Aside from the Jewish minority, the ethnic groups in Germany tend to follow geographical lines. In northwestern Germany the physical characteristics of the people are predominantly Nordic. "East of the

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\textsuperscript{a} The Versailles Treaty had, in fact, left Germany without clearly definable boundaries to the east and west, and without a clearly definable conception of what really constituted Germany.
Elbe Nordic features become less common and less pronounced. . . .” In the south the population is essentially Eurasiatc (Alpine). There is also much mixture of the Alpine and Nordic types. In the eastern areas there is some mixture of Slav types.

Aside from Yiddish and certain archaic forms like Frisian, Pomernian, and Wendish, the German language is common to the entire country.

The population of Germany in 1933 was 66,027,000, with a density of 370 per square mile. Over 43 percent of the population lived in towns of over 20,000. Some of the chief cities were Berlin, Breslau, Dresden, Duesseldorf, Essen, Frankfurt-am-Main, Cologne, Leipzig, Munich, Nuremberg, and Stuttgart.

Communications

The communication system was generally good. By the end of 1937 Germany had 33,878 miles of railroad lines in operation, more than any other European country except the Soviet Union. The inland waterways were among the most highly developed in Europe. The Rhine, the Elbe, and the Oder all follow courses favorable to industry. Berlin, Hamburg, Stettin, and the cities of southwest Germany were served by waterways. Although railways, rivers, and canals formed the principal means of transportation, the roads were beginning to become important, although it was not until the Nazi period that an extensive road development program was undertaken. Germany’s substantial international shipping was dependent upon Baltic and North Sea ports. Lastly, the Weimar Republic saw the beginning of air travel.

Natural resources

Germany has only moderately fertile soil, which means that constant labor is required to maintain output. In 1927 there were over 28 million acres of forest land. Fisheries are predominantly confined to the Baltic Sea, although there is some inland freshwater fishing. Germany has large resources of coal, lignite, iron, and mineral salts. Of somewhat lesser significance are lead ore, zinc ore, bauxite, pyrites, and magnesite.
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

Economic system

The two major economic developments under the Weimar Republic were the growth in governmental control and the increase in the size of both labor and business organizations.

The economic system became increasingly controlled by governmental action. Banks were set up by the Reich Government as well as by Land (State) governments. The railroads, which previously had been operated by the State governments, were now centrally controlled by the Federal Government. There was also increased governmental spending in the field of social welfare.\(^{11}\)

Other characteristics of the economy were increased monopolization of business and unionization of labor. The reorganization of industries after World War I resulted in the growth of powerful trusts while trade unions were active in almost all industries.\(^{12}\)

The economy was primarily industrial. The most important industries were steel and iron, coal, textiles, electrical supplies, chemicals and dyes, and precision and optical instruments.\(^{13}\) Germany imported foodstuffs, raw materials, and semimanufactured goods like wool, cotton, rubber, copper, and dairy products; it exported manufactured articles such as machinery, textiles, and chemical wares.\(^{14}\) In terms of the balance of trade, the years from 1930 to 1933 showed a sizable surplus of exports for the first time since the war.\(^{15}\)

In terms of monetary structure, the German economy’s ability to expand and even to maintain itself rested on its ability to acquire credit. Most of the loans secured were essentially international short-term credits over which Germany had little control. The whole structure, therefore, was precarious.\(^{16}\)

Class structure

The Weimar Republic saw a definite change in the ruling elite. While the army still maintained most of its influence, the Prussian aristocracy lost its official status and was replaced by the wealthy businessman and the bureaucrat. The lower class also began to have representatives in official circles, though this trend was more apparent in the State governments than in the Federal Government.

In spite of the increased power of the lower classes, there was little change in the class structure of society. No far-reaching land reform was undertaken, though there was some agitation for it in the 1930’s.

\(^{b}\) Singular form of Laender.
However, the distribution of wealth greatly affected the class structure during this period. The inflation of 1921–23 had pauperized many of the middle class, especially those on fixed incomes. The inflation did not affect—to any large extent—the position of the aristocratic landowners, big business, and organized labor, but it did alienate the middle class.

The increased educational opportunities provided a basis for increased social mobility. However, this factor was countered by the inflation of 1923, from which the middle class never recovered sufficiently to resume its traditional role of investor and entrepreneur. This fact, coupled with the growing class consciousness of the workers and capitalist-militarist bureaucratic groups, meant that the social mobility was not as great as could be expected. The middle class was no longer an independent source of social power, and the increased antagonism evident in the relationship between workers on the one hand and the capitalist-militarist-bureaucratic grouping on the other hand decreased the mobility of classes even more.

**Literacy and education**

Germany has always emphasized education. The Weimar Constitution affirmed this policy by stipulating that all children should go to school until they were 18 years old. The complex system of schooling provided vocational as well as academic training. Given this emphasis on education, literacy was high.

**Major religions and religious institutions**

By 1933 the Roman Catholics, found mostly in Bavaria, Rhenish Prussia, and Westphalia, numbered over 21 million, while the Evangelical Protestant Church, located primarily in the north, had over 40 million. During the Weimar period both religious groups emphasized the social functions of religions. The Catholics were particularly influential in politics through their support of the Center Party, an important moderating force in Weimar politics.

The right of the state to control religion still existed in Weimar Germany. The State governments maintained their ultimate control over the Protestant churches.
GOVERNMENT AND THE RULING ELITE

Description of form of government

The Weimar Constitution, adopted August 11, 1919, established a complex system resting upon a federal structure, popular sovereignty, and a delicate balance between the executive and legislative branches.

The federal provisions stipulated that the decisive jurisdictions were given to the central government (Reich). Except for “police and internal administration, justice, and education,” the Reich maintained complete legislative authority. Moreover, the Constitution prescribed the internal structure of the governments of the Laender (i.e., states). It required that all Laender governments be republican, with identical election systems. Not even “territorial sovereignty was left to the Laender, since their state boundaries could be changed by constitutional amendments, even against their will (Art. 18).”

The role of the Laender was further set forth in provisions pertaining to the enforcement of federal supremacy, arbitration between the Reich and the Laender, and finally, the Federal Council or Reichsrat.

Federal authority over the states was enforced in two ways. As executive agents of the Reich, Land authorities were subject to far-reaching supervision by the Reich. “If the Land failed to comply with a justified request of the Reich, or if the issue was controversial, the matter was referred to a decision of the Constitutional Tribunal (Art. 19, Par. 1).” If the State “stubbornly refused to comply with the decision of the Constitutional Tribunal” or “failed in the fulfillment of its constitutional duties of maintaining orderly processes of government,” the Reich Government, “after having exhausted all means of peaceful persuasion, could resort to the ultima ratio of applying coercion against the recalcitrant Land by the process of sanctions.”

The other two mechanisms determining the relationship between the federal unit and the central government, the Constitutional Tribunal and the Federal Council, attempted to establish some degree of equity and representation. The Constitutional Tribunal had jurisdiction over disputes within the States, between States and between the Federal Government and the member States, as well as the impeachment of the Reich President, Chancellor, and Ministers. The Federal Council or Reichsrat was originally designed to represent Land interests in the Reich Government. However, because the States did not have serious objections to government action, and because they had little power to check the Reichsrat, the organ soon became administrative.

Aside from the fact that the Weimar Constitution established a definite relationship between the Land and the Reich, the Constitu-
tion created, for the first time in Germany, a government based on popular sovereignty. The degree of popular sovereignty was extensive.

The force of popular sovereignty was represented in three institutions. First, the Constitution provided for legislation by initiative and referendum. It was hoped that this would promote democratic legislation, but instead it introduced a degree of irresponsibility in the political process. Secondly, the concept of popular sovereignty dominated the structure of the Reichstag or national parliament. A system of proportional representation was instituted whereby “each 60,000 voters elected one candidate from lists submitted by the parties.” This system, based on the democratic assumption that each vote should have meaning, led to a party structure which, as will be seen, undermined responsible and moderate party leadership. The last institution in which the concept of popular sovereignty was operative was the Presidency. By providing for his election by universal suffrage, the Constitution sought to give the President a separate source of power that would enable him to follow the will of the people.

The last important feature of the Weimar Constitution was the delicate balance between the executive and legislative powers. The balance was based on a complex relationship primarily because the executive function was divided between the President and the Chancellor. Given the traditional strand of monarchism in Germany, it was only natural that a strong executive should emerge. While the President had control during normal times over the military, all material decisions regarding civil matters were to be left up to the Cabinet. The Cabinet, which derived its power from the Reichstag, was to control the President in all of his actions. However, this control was limited by two factors. First of all, because the President was elected by popular suffrage he had great prestige and hence could influence the Reichstag by appealing over the heads of the Cabinet or could bypass the Reichstag entirely and appeal to the people. Secondly, the President, not the Chancellor, could dissolve the government and the parliament. He could do this regardless of whether or not the parliament supported the Cabinet by claiming that the parliament did not represent the will of the people.

All of these factors made the relationship between the legislature and the executive ambiguous. It became particularly delicate during times of crisis. Article 48 of the Constitution gave the President emergency powers, with the stipulation that the measures taken should be temporary and should not infringe on the Constitution. However, the power granted by Article 48 was quite extensive, sanctioning the abro-
The only legal requirement on the right of the President was the countersignature of the Chancellor. This gave the President an unusual amount of power during a crisis period. As will be seen, this represented a serious danger to the Constitution.

In summary, the Weimar Constitution clearly established a unified Germany with a quasi-satisfactory federal arrangement. However, the extreme degree of popular support called for by the Constitution made the government dependent upon stable political conditions. This dependence was increased by the ambiguous relationship between the executive and the legislative branches of the government, since a high degree of cooperation between the parties and between the Cabinet and the President was needed to make the government work.

Description of political process

At the outset of the Republic, 331 out of the 423 seats in the assembly were middle-of-the-road parties supporting the Republic. There were, however, groups on the left as well as the right which challenged the existence of the Republic. As the history of the Republic unfolded, it was evident that these opponents would grow in strength. This was due primarily to the fact that the parties tended to solidify in their views and in their leadership. Because of the unusual system of elections, the party became more important than the individual politician. The result was an increase in the strength of party organizations. This helped the radical parties, since the most moderate parties did not possess the desire or the will to create a militant party organization. Hence, in the following analysis of the party politics of the Weimar Republic, it must be kept in mind that the tendency toward strong party organization, inherent in election laws, favored radical groups.

The political parties and power groups supporting the government represented the moderates of all classes. One of the most influential and stable parties was the Catholic Party. “It cut through all layers of the population, embracing Westphalian and Silesian aristocrats as well as the bulk of the peasants in Southern Germany, the Rhineland, and the Catholic parts of Prussia, in addition to the small Catholic bourgeoisie and the Catholic trade unions.” The Social Democratic Party, moderately Socialistic, also supported the Republic. While not particularly powerful on the national scene, this party had considerable power in many Laender, especially in the largest, Prussia. The German People’s Party, which consisted of the conservative wing of the Liberals, supported the government, especially during the rule of Dr. Stresemann, their chief representative. It was a class party without mass basis, consisting mainly of big businessmen, industrial leaders, members of the propertied middle class, and the Protestant clergy.
Lastly, there was the German Democratic Party, which represented the remnants of the old Liberal Party. Once the party of the middle class, this party increasingly lacked support in the Weimar Republic due to the disaffection of the middle class. In spite of this, a large number of the German intellectuals supported this party and it was represented in every cabinet from 1918 to 1931. While these parties represented the majority of the German population at the beginning of the Republic, they did not increase their power, primarily because they neglected mass techniques and were bankrupt of effective, militant leadership.

Hostile to the Republic and seeking to undermine it were parties of the radical right and left. The German National People’s Party was made up of Prussian conservatives. “They drew their voting strength from the old ruling classes around the army and the civil service,” as well as from those who feared the inroads of socialism. Moreover, this party had a natural source of strength in the general German dissatisfaction over the Treaty of Versailles. At the opposite political pole were the Communists. The potential threat which they represented to the Republic served the National Socialist cause by spreading fear throughout the propertied classes. Lastly, the Bavarian Catholic Party, monarchist in outlook, opposed the Republic up to 1924. After that, however, it became a branch of the pro-Republic Catholic Center.

The National Socialist Party was in a sense an amalgam of many radical groups. The hypernationalism of Ernst Roehm was combined with the social reformism of the Strassers. The Nazis courted the industrial elite, the middle classes, and the masses. Given the difficulty of maintaining the allegiance of these diverse groupings, Hitler’s techniques became all-important, for they covered up the inconsistencies in the party program. However, because his party did appeal to radicals of almost any sort, it became the center of the forces arrayed against the Weimar Republic. In fact, this desire to replace the Republic seemed to be the one cohesive factor in the National Socialist movement.

In comparing the parties supporting the Republic to the parties opposing it, one finds that the most outstanding differences were in organization and technique. The supporters of the government had few strong leaders, no myths, no militant creed with which to attract mass support. The opposition found latent support in the masses. Their radicalism was exploited on the one hand by the Communists, on the other by Hitler, a man who could vocalize the resentment against the existing order and give it militancy.
Legal procedure for amending constitution or changing government institutions

The Weimar Constitution was unusual in that it provided that governmental institutions could be changed without constitutional amendment. The mechanism for amendment was somewhat unwieldy. Qualified majorities were required in both the Reichstag and the Federal Council: the passage of an amendment in the Reichstag necessitated the presence of two-thirds of the total membership, and required that two-thirds of those present voted in favor of the proposed amendment; in the Federal Council, two-thirds of the members had to vote in favor. In special cases an amendment could be initiated by one-tenth of the electorate; it then required a majority vote of the Reichstag or of the registered voters.\(^{35}\)

However, there was a simpler procedure. This involved passage of a statute which effectively circumvented the Constitution without, however, amending it. Such a “statute amending the Constitution” was passed “by way of the constitutional amendment procedure with the required majorities” and was not subject to judicial review.\(^ {36}\)

Aside from this, Article 48 was invoked to enable the President to replace a parliamentary cabinet with a presidential cabinet, i.e., a cabinet based on presidential rather than parliamentary consent. While some argued that this was illegal,\(^ {37}\) it seemed to be sanctioned under the power of the President to appoint the Cabinet and the authority given him through Article 48, and therefore represented some degree of constitutionality.\(^ {38}\)

Relationship to foreign powers

By 1930 Germany had reestablished itself in the family of great powers. In the Locarno Pact Germany accepted the western frontiers established by the Treaty of Versailles. In September 1926 Germany became a member of the League, with a permanent membership on the Council. In the east the situation was somewhat different. At Locarno Germany had made an effort to avoid an iron-clad guarantee of the eastern boundaries drawn at Versailles. Relations with Russia were formally cordial in terms of the Rapallo Treaty of 1922. Underneath this cordiality, there were ambiguous forces. On the one hand the army had been receiving Russian help in rebuilding its strength—not without the sanction of the republican government. On the other hand the Russians were directing the Communist Party in Germany in its efforts to destroy the Republic. In general, 1930 found Germany in relative peace with her neighbors.
The role of military and police powers

The German military occupied an ambiguous place in the life of the Weimar Republic. There were officers like Hindenburg, Gen. Kurt von Schleicher, and Gen. Wilhelm Groener, who supported the Republic mainly because they were in official positions. These men held great influence over the course of politics because they could speak for the army. Moreover, Hindenburg as President was the official as well as the symbolic head of the army. There were other officers, however, who secretly supported movements for the overthrow of the Republic on the grounds that it had betrayed German honor. Roehm, before becoming head of the S.A., was one of these. General Ludendorff had actually found himself the leader of a revolutionary Putsch in 1923.

The German Army was probably the most powerful force in politics. However, as long as Hindenburg remained President there was assurance that the Armed Forces would obey the Republic although many of the army men attempted to influence politics.

A word should be said here concerning the growth of paramilitary organizations like the S.S., the S.A., and the Communist “defense organization.” Hitler built up his irregular forces by enlisting young men and “dissatisfied” veterans. This situation reached the point where these groups, especially the S.A., actually threatened the army. When Hitler came to power he eliminated the aggressive elements in the S.A. in order to maintain the allegiance of the army to his government. These paramilitary organizations did much to coerce the people of Germany into supporting Hitler.

The activity of the police left something to be desired. Because of the federal structure, the Republic did not have complete control over the police organizations of the states. Moreover, the strength of the paramilitary organizations and the apathy of the police led to something like collapse of law and order in the later days of the Republic.

WEAKNESSES OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC-POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF THE PREREVOLUTIONARY REGIME

History of revolutions or governmental instabilities

From the unification of Germany in 1871 until the end of World War I, although the imperial government had enjoyed ostensibly a substantial degree of stability, actually many radical and antigovernment groups had been evolving. “The lines of cleavage which were perceptible in the Bismarck period became much more clearly defined in the reign of William II.” There were extreme leftist groups, like the
Revolutionary Socialists under Rosa Luxemburg, and extreme rightist
groups, like the Pan-German League.\footnote{41}

After World War I the Weimar Republic was subject from its begin-
nings to periods of extreme instability. Historians usually divide the
years of the Republic into three periods: (1) 1919–23; (2) 1924–29;
and (3) 1930–33.

The Republic was born when the fear of a leftwing takeover was
prevalent. The extreme Socialists revolted during the formative period,
but were crushed. However, after the Republic had been established,
Nationalist groups represented the most serious threat to the stability
of the regime. The Kapp Putsch was engineered in 1920 with the pas-
sive acquiescence of the German Army and with the active support of a
naval brigade headed by Captain Hermann Erhardt. The government
succeeded in quelling the revolt with the support of the workers who
through the efforts of the Social Democrats, staged a general strike.\footnote{42}

Shortly afterward, a Communist-led uprising in the Ruhr was quelled
by the army. The episode forced the resignation of the Cabinet, and
in subsequent elections the nationalist vote increased. The last upris-
ing of the period was the Munich Putsch of November 1923, instigated
by Hitler. His intention was to capture the Bavarian state government
with the forced support of the Prime Minister Gustav von Kahr and
Gen. von Lossow and then move on to Berlin. However, the Bavarian
Government refused to cooperate, even though it had been in almost
open revolt against the Reich Government. The insurrection was
crushed and Hitler was sentenced to jail for 5 years, but his sentence
was commuted to less than a year. This leniency toward the leader of
a treasonous conspiracy was representative of the manner in which
rightist revolutionaries were treated by the German Government.\footnote{43}

The period from 1924 to 1929 was relatively calm. Chancellor Stre-
semann, later Foreign Minister, maintained political stability while sat-
isfactory economic conditions modified public discontent. This was the
period, however, during which Hitler and other rightist leaders were
strengthening their organizations and perfecting their techniques.

With the death of Stresemann in 1929, Germany entered a period
of continual instability. Primarily because the election of 1930 had
reduced the power of the center, the process of forming cabinets was
extremely difficult. This difficulty tempted Hindenburg and Bruen-
ing to govern more or less without the Reichstag. Once Hindenburg
became the center of power, a new element of instability quite differ-
ent from parliamentary instability was introduced. The determining
factor now was who could influence the aging President and toward
what ends. Hence, this resulted in the complicated intrigues by which
Schleicher prevailed upon Hindenburg to replace Bruening with Papen, then maneuvered Papen out of the Chancellorship and himself into it, and in turn was supplanted by Hitler in a deal engineered by Papen.\textsuperscript{44}

Therefore, the Weimar Republic, save for a period of relative stability from 1924 to 1929, was subject to the constant fear of revolution and continually plagued by instability.

**Economic weaknesses**

From 1929 to 1933 the German economy underwent severe crises in almost every sphere.

In the field of agriculture the depression practically eliminated exports.\textsuperscript{45} This alienated the Prussian landowners, who were the chief commercial agriculturists. In spite of the animosity of these landowners to the Weimar Republic, they still received enormous subsidies from the government.\textsuperscript{46}

In the field of capital accumulation, which was essential to economic expansion, the German economy lost much of its foreign credits around 1930.\textsuperscript{47} This was due partly to the world depression and partly to the uncertainty of political life with the advent of the Nazis. In spite of the help extended by foreign countries in the form of debt moratoriums, German bank reserves dwindled.

Industrial exports contracted greatly as a result of the depression. The result was increased unemployment, which reached a peak in 1933 of over 6,000,000 (average unemployment for the years 1925–29 had been 1,200,000).\textsuperscript{48}

The Bruening government attempted to meet the crisis by a deflationary policy; that is, by cutting salaries, by reducing imports, and by contracting credit.\textsuperscript{49} This policy increased the animosity toward the government.

Thus, a Germany which had tremendous industrial capabilities suffered from monetary and fiscal insecurity as well as mass unemployment. The blame was placed in various quarters—on the Jews, on reparations payments, on the incompetence of the government. In actuality, much of the weakness of the German economy resulted from the instability of the international economic system.

**Social tensions**

A key to the degree of social tensions in Germany was the intensity of social hatred. Not only was the Jewish minority attacked but so were Communists and supporters of the Republic. Moreover, there
was an increasing polarization into the conservatives (capitalist-militarist-bureaucrat) and the working class. Underlying all of this was the decline of the middle class. This was partly due to the concentration of industrial power in large trusts and the solidification of the workers into a class-conscious movement. Moreover, as has been pointed out, the middle class was dealt a sharp blow by the inflation of 1923. Therefore it was unable to serve as a moderating force.

The decline of the middle class left two giant social antagonists, the workers and the conservatives. Oddly enough it was the more diverse group, the conservatives, who included military men, civil servants, industrialists, and many of the middle class, which was the more cohesive and militant. The working class, despite its common economic interests and social status, never developed the degree of militancy and cohesiveness that the conservatives achieved under National Socialism. A prime reason for this was the divisive influence of the conflict between Communists and Social Democrats. The Social Democrats spent as much time fighting the Communists as they did opposing the German conservatives. Nevertheless, Germany in the 1930’s was plagued with social tension arising out of the confrontation of two massive social groupings, the workers and the conservative classes. The Communists increased the tension by aggravating the conflict within the working classes.

In sum, Germany suffered from increased social tension as a result of the loss of moderating influences in the various classes. The middle class did not modify the nationalism, racism, and emotionalism of the groups which were supporting the Nazi movement. The working class became more radical as time went on, facilitating an increase in Communist strength. There was a heightening of radicalism on both the right and the left; the right, however, had an inherent advantage because it could play on German nationalism.

**Government recognition of and reaction to weaknesses**

Given the intensity of social tension, economic difficulty, and governmental weaknesses in the years immediately prior to Hitler’s ascendency, the governments of Bruening and Papen were well aware of the dangers but their policies were not always well chosen. Papen and Schleicher realized the power of the Nazis and sought to bring Hitler into the government in the hope that they could control him, since his party, though much the largest, did not have a majority in the Reichstag. Papen persuaded Hindenburg to appoint Hitler Chancellor on the grounds that Hitler would give the government the popular support it so desperately needed. Papen was to have the Vice-Chancellorship and the power of Hindenburg behind him. Moreover, the Nazis
were to have only three of eight Cabinet posts and none of the key Ministries. Hence, the government tried to make a last-second compromise to save the Republic by bringing Hitler into the Cabinet. From this point on, the real revolution began, for it was then that Hitler wrested power from those who had it and established his dictatorship.

**FORM AND CHARACTERISTICS OF REVOLUTION**

**ACTORS IN THE REVOLUTION**

The revolutionary leadership

*Official and unofficial social and political positions*

The leadership was made up primarily of persons from the middle or lower-middle classes and from the military, civil service, professional, and intellectual groups. Rudolf Hess, Ernst Roehm, Hermann Goering, and Gregor Strasser had all been army officers. Gottfried Feder, Alfred Rosenberg, Willy Ley, and Max Amann had been trained for professions like law and architecture. Dietrich Eckart, Hess, and Joseph Paul Goebbels can be classified as intellectuals. Heinrich Himmler and Julius Streicher had been school teachers; Wilhelm Frick had been a civil servant. Most of them had either never had a steady occupation, like Hess, Hitler, and Eckart, or had rejected their initial vocations, like Rosenberg, Streicher, Feder, Strasser, Himmler, Ley, and Roehm.\(^{51}\)

By far the most important leader was Adolf Hitler. It was he who developed the organization and kindled the spirit of the Nazi movement, and it was he who knew how to win the support of the masses. Hitler was actually not a German, but an Austrian who became a German citizen only during the final stages of his movement. Born in 1889 at Braunau-on-the-Inn, a town near the German border, where his father was a customs official, Hitler by 1908 found himself poor, friendless, untrained, and unemployed in Vienna. He went to Munich in 1913 and joined the Bavarian Army a year later. He rose to the rank of corporal, was twice wounded, and received the Iron Cross. In his disappointment over the defeat of the Central Powers, Hitler developed a fanatical nationalism and a resolve to avenge the indignities of the peace treaty.

After the war Hitler joined a group of six men called the Committee of the German Workers’ Party in Munich. Though there were other nationalist-socialist-type parties in various states, Hitler kept his group autonomous. By July 1921 Hitler was given unlimited power
over the party and was made its President. Between 1921 and 1924
he established many of the associations that formed the core of his
movement. Roehm, Hess, Goering, Feder, Eckart, Rosenberg, Hein-
rich Hoffmann, and Streicher all joined Hitler at this time.\textsuperscript{52}

The Munich \textit{Putsch} has been discussed earlier. Hitler was jailed for
his role in it, but he was released within a year. He utilized his impris-
onment time to put down the ideology and the program he had been
developing over the years in his \textit{Mein Kampf}, which was published in
1925. The failure of the \textit{Putsch}, which in normal times would have
meant the demise of Hitler’s party if not of Hitler himself, served only
as a temporary setback. Between 1929 and 1930 the party reached
national prominence by taking the lead in opposing the Young Plan.
Hitler succeeded in maintaining his leadership when the movement
became nationwide, and in January 1933 Hitler became Chancellor
of the \textit{Reich}.

\textbf{Political and ideological orientation}

The leaders of the National Socialist movement were agreed on
two points. First, all of them were nationalistic; they all wished to
see a resurgent Germany. Secondly, most of them were radicals who
wanted to make over the existing social and political order. Hitler
himself was the symbol of the political orientation of the entire move-
ment. His radicalism covered both ends of the political spectrum. His
hypernationalism led him to enlist the support of the rightist camp of
Hugenberg while his social reformism, particularly in his earlier years,
placed him very near the Socialists. Like Hitler, Roehm was a mili-
tant nationalist who opposed the Weimar Republic. Hjalmar Schacht,
although a militant nationalist, was not an early supporter of Hitler.
His background in banking did not allow him to embrace the radical
social reformism of the Nazi doctrine. There were, however, members
of the leadership who were Socialists as well as nationalists. Goebbels
and the Strasser brothers were constantly advocating the nationaliza-
tion of big business. Although their nationalism did not allow them to
become Communists, these three men held ideological positions that
were very close to the Communist camp.\textsuperscript{53}

\textbf{Goals and aspirations}

The goals and aspirations of the various members of the leadership
were not completely homogeneous. All wanted to see the Nazis take
over the German state. However, some, like the Strassers and Roehm,
wanted to see certain other objectives realized. Roehm wished to have
his beloved S.A. replace the German Army. Gregor Strasser wanted
to see the Nazis institute a system of socialization. There were other
motives operative on the Nazi leadership. Rosenberg wished to be pic-
tured as the “philosopher” of the movement, while others, like Eckart, Himmler, Amann, Hess, and Ley seemed to be going along for adventure and material reward.54

The revolutionary following

The revolutionary following can be divided into two groups: those who participated actively in the movement and those who lent financial and political support. Men from the younger generation of the middle and lower-middle classes, eager for adventure, joined the S.A. and the more selective S.S.4 This group, which grew to 400,000 before 1933, aided Hitler in his campaigns. The Germans who gave monetary and political support were from various groups. There were members of the lower and middle classes in both city and country who supported and voted for Hitler, members of the industrial class who aided him financially, and the army officers and civil servants who supported Hitler behind the scenes by exerting political pressure and acquiescing in his illegal techniques. Lastly, certain prominent political figures such as Schleicher and von Papen unwittingly aided Hitler in his rise to power by weakening the Weimar Government for their own political purposes.55

ORGANIZATION OF REVOLUTIONARY EFFORT

Internal organization

Though the Nazis called themselves a “party,” one should understand that it was not a party in a democratic sense. It was really a congeries of groups, both legal and illegal, organized on the basis of age, occupation, or sex, which wanted to overthrow the government.56 Together, the groups which worked for this purpose constituted the Nazi “Party”; hence, they were within an organizational framework. However, they can be studied separately if it is kept in mind that they were, at least in theory, under the control of Hitler and the “party.”

These organizations can be divided into three groups. The first was the legitimate political party, which was represented in the Reichstag and which gave Hitler political power through legal means. The second comprised the paramilitary organizations: the Sturm Abteilung (S.A.), or Storm Troopers, with its Nazi Motor Corps, and the Schutz Staffeln (S.S.), or Blackshirts. The third consisted of certain groups organized to contribute to the power of the party, such as the Hitler Youth, the Nazi Schoolchildren’s League, the Student’s League, the

4 The S.A., unlike the S.S., included a sizable number of thugs and social misfits.
Order of German Women, the Nazi Teachers’ Association, the Union of Nazi Lawyers, and the Union of Nazi Physicians.\textsuperscript{57}

The Nazi Party which included all of these organizations was subject to the will of Hitler. However, five other men who had a great deal of power were Roehm, Strasser, Goering, Goebbels, and Frick. To oversee the entire party and to prevent minor squabbles from becoming a source of division, Hitler devised the USCHLA in 1926. This was a committee for investigation and settlement and was advantageously used by Hitler to strengthen his control over the party.\textsuperscript{58}

The National Socialist Party divided the country into the district or \textit{Gau}, which were in turn subdivided into circles (\textit{Kreise}). Within each \textit{Kreis} were local groups (\textit{Ortsgruppe}), which in turn were divided into street cells and blocks. By 1929 there were 178,000 party members. A \textit{Gauleiter} was appointed to head each \textit{Gau}. He had control over all subordinate party members in his \textit{Gau}.\textsuperscript{59} Moreover, the \textit{Gauleiter} was personally appointed by Hitler and owed allegiance directly to him.

The paramilitary organizations, the S.A. and the S.S., were placed under the control of Roehm in 1931. The geographical units were the same for the S.A. as for the party itself. The S.A. organization was similar to that of the German Army, with a general staff and its own headquarters. In fact, Roehm had so much power that he challenged Hitler’s will on many occasions. Hitler’s inability to control the S.A. led him to eliminate the top S.A. leadership in June 1934. Although the S.S., under Himmler, was subject to the will of Roehm in the Nazi organizational scheme, it served, in reality, as a counter to the S.A. The S.S. was a smaller and a much better disciplined group than the S.A.\textsuperscript{60} It was the S.S. which carried out the liquidation of the Roehm leadership. Though on April 10, 1932, the S.A. and the S.S. were technically dissolved by the Bruening government with Hitler’s acquiescence the organization itself remained intact.\textsuperscript{61} There were close to 400,000 men in these two organizations by 1934.

The other Nazi organizations occupied an ambiguous place between the paramilitary organizations and the political parties. For example, the Hitler Youth, which was really a counter to the successive youth organizations of the \textit{Reich} and which in 1932 numbered over 100,000, was designed to promote Nazi propaganda and enlist support among young people.\textsuperscript{62} The other organizations were designed to organize and “educate” each group in German society. In addition, there were many separate departments, e.g., the Factory Cell Organization, the Economic Policy Department, the Propaganda Directorate under Goebbels, and the \textit{Reich} Press Officer.

\textsuperscript{57} Hitler acquiesced in the decision in order to pursue his policy of legality.
There were two important facts to note about the total Nazi organization. The first is that Hitler was the supreme commander, although men like Gregor Strasser held some grassroots power independent of Hitler. Secondly, the types of organization covered every field of German life. This made the transition to the Nazi state less difficult. Moreover, it gave important positions to men who felt they had no place in the society under the Republic.

**External organization**

There was some suspicion of outside help, perhaps French, when Hitler was a petty politician in Bavaria in 1923; however the amount was negligible. Yet the Nazi Party did organize groups which operated outside of German territory—seven external Gau areas, in Austria, Danzig, the Saar, and the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. These organizations assumed more importance after Hitler came to power, and became valuable tools of Nazi foreign policy.

**GOALS OF THE REVOLUTION**

**Concrete political aims of revolutionary leaders**

The Nazi movement aimed primarily at capturing the German state. Hitler hoped to replace the parliamentary system with strong leadership. This was what he called the “leadership principle”: he asserted that the German “race” could reach its fulfillment only through strong leadership. Another aim was the addition of more territory to Germany and simultaneously, a rectification of the “injustices” of the Treaty of Versailles. Germany must be united with Austria and must procure more “living space” for the German “race.”

There was some disagreement in the Nazi leadership over the proper political technique to be employed in reaching power. Hitler, having learned his lesson from the abortive Munich Putsch, decided that the only road to power was through legal methods. Roehm, who wanted an armed revolution, opposed him.

**Social and economic goals of leadership and following**

The Nazi movement had various social and economic goals. In the early period Hitler’s conception of the new social order was close to socialism. However, by 1930 Hitler was too dependent on the business elite to sponsor equalitarian social reform, and his conception of the new social order changed, in effect, to the corporate state. There must also be a social elite who directed the workings of society. Further, Hitler saw no reason to wipe out the existing industrial elite so long as
they cooperated. Other elites had to be added to insure the growth
of the German people. The plans of the Nazis were more concerned
with organization than with goals in the years preceding the takeover.

The positive program of the National Socialists was general to the
point of ambiguity. However, the negative sections of the platform
were forceful and specific. The Nazis’ intense hatred of the Jews, Com-
munists, and “republicans” was developed to a high degree. Hitler felt
that these groups were responsible for the decline of Germany, and
a great portion of the Nazi platform was concerned with them.

The entire Nazi leadership was agreed on the negative part of the
social program. However, there was a strong element led by Gregor
Strasser, who had labor ties, which advocated an equalitarian social
program and the nationalization of industry. This leftist group was
forcefully silenced by Hitler.

REVOLUTIONARY TECHNIQUES AND GOVERNMENT
COUNTERMEASURES

After 1924 Hitler’s revolutionary techniques can be classified in
two stages. The first stage was from 1924 until 1933 when he became
Chancellor. The overall strategy was to gain control of Germany
through constitutional means. The main instrument in this strategy
was the Nazi Party, and Hitler concentrated on building up its elec-
toral strength. The second stage, from January 1933 to August 1934,
showed the role of force and coercion elevated from a mere pro-
paganda tool to the prime instrument of strategy. After 1933 Hitler
eliminated all opposition through terrorist methods. Because of the
different roles of force in the two stages of Hitler’s rise, they will be
dealt with separately.

In the first stage the prime objective was to gain mass support for
the Nazi Party. The tactics employed were to play on the insecurity of
the masses, an insecurity which Hitler himself had helped to create.
His strategy was to increase that insecurity through terrorism, riots,
brawling, and disruption of the processes of law and order, while, at
the same time, convincing the German people that the Nazi move-
ment would offer the security and stability they longed for.

To create this feeling of insecurity was not a difficult task for Hit-
ler’s cohorts. Ever since the inception of the Republic, civil violence
had frequently plagued German life; Hitler merely increased the
civil disorder. Moreover, because the Communists were themselves
practicing terrorist tactics, Hitler could easily blame the violence on
them. The role of the S.A. was essential to this phase of Hitler’s strat-
egy. Hitler was able to recruit a force such as the S.A. because of the many unemployed men and “disposed” soldiers. He justified the existence of this paramilitary organization by claiming that it afforded protection to the National Socialist Party. This justification was partly valid; other German parties had the same type of organization.

However, in “protecting” the Nazis, the S.A. and later the S.S. created civil unrest. The S.A. would march through the city, four abreast, singing “When Jewish blood gushes from our knives, things will be better,” or songs like *Horst Wessel*, which glorified a dead S.A. man as a martyr. Five hundred marching Storm Troopers, who held no direct allegiance to the *Reich*, instilled fear in the minds of the onlookers. These marchers were not always peaceful. In the 1930 election, for instance, the S.A. marched into the working class section of Berlin, whereupon Communists opened fire. A pitched battle ensued and spread all over the city. In fact, wherever the Communists met, S.A. men could be found initiating a brawl.

Another S.A. technique for creating unrest was breaking up rival meetings. Sitting in the audience they harassed the speaker, or often beat up the speaker and dispersed the crowd.

Lastly, Hitler deliberately increased the insecurity of the masses by promoting the breakdown of law and order. The acts of violence of his paramilitary organizations were only one phase of this understanding of the legal process. Men sympathetic to the Nazis were placed in strategic positions of both the police force and judiciary, especially in the state government.

Hitler was able to carry on his tactics of violence and to gain the confidence of much of the public because he continually blamed the breakdown of law and order on the Communists. While the Nazis themselves were attacking newspapers of the opposition and breaking up political meetings, Hitler was proclaiming that the German state must be protected from the Communist threat and that—as in this July 1932 election—he should be given a free hand to do this.

While Hitler was successfully creating social and political chaos, he was also promoting hope, enthusiasm, and support for the party through Nazi organizations, propaganda, and mass rallies. Prime instruments in this were groups like the Nazi Lawyers, the Nazi Physicians, and Hitler Youth who gave a new loyalty to Germans alienated from their society. Moreover, these groups, which covered almost every element in German society, served as an important propaganda medium when they were mobilized during elections.
Hitler used propaganda both to create insecurity and to promote confidence in his party. Even during the period of economic and political stability, he told the masses that a breakdown was near.

When the depression came, Hitler seemed to be a prophet, offering the people hope. They wanted to hear that the evil around them was not permanent, that Germans could still attain a good life. By the clever use of myths and lies, Hitler gave them this assurance. He preached the concept that the Germans were a chosen race. The evils that had befallen Germany he blamed on devils in the body politic, certain groups which were depriving the Germans of their just due. He found two scapegoats—the Jews and the Communists. The Germans were ready to believe his accusations against the Communists because they had many times called for the overthrow of the Weimar regime. The charge that the Jews were conspiring for the “defeat” of the “German race” found credence because anti-Semitism was already deeply rooted in German minds. It was easy to identify the Jews with the Bolshevists.  

Hitler circulated his propaganda through various means: Like the other political parties, the Nazis had their own publications, their principal organ being the \textit{Voelkischer Beobachter (Racist Observer)}. They often distributed publications without charge. A constant stream of propaganda reached the various Nazi groups, which they in turn distributed. Election campaigns were also important transmitting devices. In the first presidential election in 1932, Hitler, Goebbels, and Strasser raced from town to town speaking to tremendous groups. Nazis “plastered the walls of the cities and towns with a million screeching colored posters, distributed 8 million pamphlets, and 12 million extra copies of their party newspapers, staged 3,000 meetings a day and, for the first time in a German election, made good use of films and gramaphone records. . . .”

Hitler’s special technique in gaining votes was the mass rally. Through these rallies he not only presented his views to thousands of people but also gave the masses an emotional release. The principal elements in these rallies were Hitler’s showmanship—he timed his speeches and actions perfectly; the use of physical effects—the S.A. and S.S. in full dress and the blare of trumpets when the Fuehrer walked in; and finally, the coordination of actions in mass—shouting, singing, saluting, and standing. While it is difficult to assess the effect of these performances in terms of actual votes, it is safe to guess that the emotionalism of the masses impressed the government and the opposition parties.
Once Hitler became Chancellor, his techniques shifted. Force became his primary reliance. He employed force openly, both in election campaigns and in changing the government of Germany. In the March 5, 1933, election he used the State-run radio stations to propagandize his campaign, suspended the operation of opposition presses, and broke up political meetings. He forced the police to cooperate with the S.A. and S.S., advising them to shoot if there were any “disturbances.” After the Enabling Act was passed, Hitler’s use of force became total. All opposition was crushed through the threat or the actual use of coercion.\(^ {76} \)

In both stages of the revolution, Hitler was able to hide behind the cloak of legality. Moreover, both stages were made possible by the lack of unity among his potential opponents and by the aid, both direct and indirect, of industry and the army. Aid from industry came after 1930.

Hitler did not court the business elite for financial help to the extent that he courted the masses for electoral help. He either addressed them individually or in small meetings arranged through the help of Goering, Himmler, Funk, and Dietrich. Hitler received sufficient financial aid from the industrialists—only a portion responded—because he promised them protection of their interests, economic prosperity, and, most important of all, the elimination of the Communist threat.

It is difficult to assess the amount of money given the Nazis by big business. In 1932 over 2,880,000 marks a day were needed to support the tremendous party organization. Although some money came in through the party itself—from the sale of newspapers, membership dues, and charges at mass rallies—it is safe to assume that the industrialists met a good part of the heavy party expenditures.

Given the important place of the army in German politics, it was necessary for Hitler to win its support. The technique he employed was a combination of an appeal to interest, emotionalism, and fear. He offered the army a vigorous foreign policy, a policy which would need military buildup. Emotionally, he appealed to the army’s nationalism. Also, he attempted to enlist the support of men whom he knew the army respected, such as Hindenburg and Blomberg. Lastly, perhaps unwittingly, he posed the threat of replacing the army with the S.A. Upon taking office, he frightened many of the officers by appealing directly to the rank-and-file soldier. However, he quickly quieted this fear by assuring the officers that “the army and navy would thenceforth be free to work entirely unhindered on training the development for the defense of the Reich.”\(^ {77} \) Hitler assumed complete official control
over the army in August 1934 when he became President, although he still felt it necessary to maintain its allegiance by the same tactics.

Hitler’s overall strategy of maintaining a veneer of legality limited the counteractions which the government could take. Because he could claim that his party was a legitimate political party, he made direct governmental intervention difficult. Still, both Federal and State governments did try to limit Nazi activity. In the first 6 months of 1930 the authorities attempted a number of prohibitions. Outdoor meetings and parades were forbidden in Prussia, a law for the “protection of the Republic” was passed by the Reichstag in March, and in June the Prussian authorities forbade the S.A. to wear uniforms (brown shirts). The S.A. responded by wearing white shirts.78

In April of 1932 the Bruening government issued an order disbanning the S.A. and S.S. which was carried out at least in form. However, by June 1932 the Papen regime was forced to lift the ban because Papen needed the political support of Hitler to maintain his Cabinet.79

Hence, the few attempts to limit Nazi activities and check the growth of the party met with failure. Besides the party’s and Hitler’s skill in maintaining an appearance of legality, the ambiguous attitude of the German Army toward the Weimar Republic, and the size of the S.A. and S.S. troops made any attempt to crush the Nazi movement almost impossible.

**MANNER IN WHICH CONTROL OF GOVERNMENT WAS TRANSFERRED TO REVOLUTIONARIES**

It took Hitler from January 30, 1933, when he became Chancellor, until August 19, 1934, when the plebescite affirmed his assumption of the Presidency, to gain complete control of Germany. The three important events in the process were his appointment as Chancellor, the passage of the Enabling Act, and his capture of the Presidency.

Hindenburg appointed Hitler Chancellor on the condition that he could form a coalition with a parliamentary majority. Many pressures were brought on Hindenburg to do this. Von Papen, acting out of his own interests, convinced Hindenburg that Hitler could be kept under control. Hitler himself reminded Hindenburg of his popular support and of the strength of the S.A. and S.S. Moreover, through a mixture of bribes and blackmail, Hitler convinced Hindenburg’s son Oskar that it was time for the Nazis to gain control. Therefore, on January 30, 1933, Hitler replaced Schleicher as Chancellor, with Papen becoming Vice-Chancellor. Only two other Nazis were in the Cabinet and they held inferior positions.80
After an unsuccessful attempt to form a majority coalition, Hitler dissolved the Reichstag and called for elections, which were set for March 5, 1933. The campaign saw the increased use of terror by the Nazis, capped by the burning of the Reichstag. However, Hitler failed to win an absolute majority; he depended on the votes of Hugenberg’s Nationalist Party. Now Hitler took his second great step toward complete control of Germany, the Enabling Act. After banning the Communist and cajoling other parties, Hitler had only the Social Democrats in opposition, and they were not strong enough to deprive him of the two-thirds majority he needed. This act provided Hitler with complete control over civil affairs with no legal restraints whatsoever.\(^81\)

The last phase of his takeover was the capture of the Presidency, for the President still officially held the allegiance of the army. Because Hindenburg was so popular with the army, Hitler had to wait until the old General died. Upon his death on August 2, 1934, Hitler immediately proclaimed himself President; Vice-Chancellor von Papen and five high ranking German officials signed the announcement. On August 19 Hitler called a plebiscite to affirm his new position. He was able to get Hindenburg’s son to tell the German people that the dead General would have approved. With 95.7 percent of the 45½ million eligible Germans voting, Hitler received affirmation from 89.93 percent. Four and one-fourth million voted “No” and 800,000 spoiled their ballots.\(^82\) The revolution completed, Hitler was now Head of State, Head of Government, and Supreme Commander in Chief of the Army.

THE EFFECTS OF THE REVOLUTION

CHANGES IN THE PERSONNEL AND INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT

Hitler consolidated the revolution by replacing the hostile personnel of certain institutions or by changing the institutions themselves. The Reich Government, which had ceased to be parliamentary government even before Hitler came to power, was now converted into a single-party government. Even the parties which were in the coalition were deprived of any voice in the decisionmaking.

The federal structure of the Weimar Republic was also abolished. Prussia was already under Goering’s control, and between March 5 and 16 the other Federal States passed under Nazi control. The Nazi Minister of the Interior sent men to replace the existing state officials. In early April Hitler appointed State governors, who were subordinate
to the Minister of the Interior. As Frick said, “The state governments from now on are merely administrative bodies of the Reich.”

Between April and July 1934 Hitler abolished all other political parties. The Communists had been suppressed previously. The Social Democrats made an attempt to appease Hitler, but he abolished the party on June 22. The middle-class parties—the Catholic Bavarian People’s Party—dissolved themselves. The German National Party, which had enabled Hitler to gain power, was taken over on June 21, and officially “dissolved itself” on June 29. In a decree on June 14 the Nazi Party declared itself the sole party in Germany.

The free trade unions, which had always opposed any hypernationalism, were eliminated. After a great mass demonstration on May 1, the Nazis occupied union headquarters on May 2, confiscated union funds, and arrested union leaders. The right of collective bargaining was also abolished.

Lastly, Hitler replaced men in certain key positions with Nazis or Nazi sympathizers. Dr. Schacht, an extreme Nationalist who had helped finance the Nazis, became once more president of the Reichsbank, replacing the conservative Dr. Hans Luther. Later Schacht became Minister of Economics.

Hitler’s “aides” were given semiautonomous control over the areas for which they were responsible except when it came to major policy lines. There were about 40 “national leaders,” or Reichsleitung, by the end of the Second World War, who held positions which corresponded to heads of Ministries and other state positions in the Weimar Republic. These positions were usually created on an ad hoc basis rather than on the basis of an overall plan. Most of the bureaucratic personnel, provided they were not Jewish or overt opponents, were retained in office.

MAJOR POLICY CHANGES

There were major policy changes in all spheres of German life. The government began an intense buildup of internal improvements which resulted in a rapid decrease in unemployment. Though private enterprise was subjected, initially, to only minor new controls, after 1937 Hitler increased control over business and over exports and imports. Socially, anti-Semitic and anti-Communist legislation was passed to eliminate the so-called “conspiracy” which Hitler said had plagued German life.

The greatest policy changes came in the field of international affairs. Some of the main German objections to the Treaty of Ver-
sailles were either a thing of the past, like reparations, or beyond Hitler’s control at the moment, like frontier changes. He therefore directed his attack on the military clause of the treaty. On March 7, 1936, he repudiated parts of both the Locarno and the Versailles treaties by remilitarizing the Rhineland area. By 1936 Hitler had started the development of German military might on the land, on the sea, and in the air. The policy of the treaty fulfillment which had been a political liability to all of the previous regimes was transformed by Hitler into the policy of revision.

LONG-RANGE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EFFECTS

When Hitler took power, Germany had more than 6,000,000 unemployed and was suffering from continual balance-of-payment difficulties. Hitler’s economic objectives were the buildup of German industry, internal improvements, and autarchy (self-sufficiency). Hitler built up a powerful industrial machine, and eliminated unemployment, but Germany was still dependent on the outside world for many needed raw materials.

Hitler wrought many changes in the social nature of Germany. Any deviation from the norms set by the Nazi regime was severely prosecuted. Not only did Hitler try to eliminate the “Jewish problem,” he also brought force to bear upon academic circles, Protestant and Catholic churches, and political and literary figures who did not back his regime. Moreover, German life was regulated from an early age through education and through such groups as the Hitler Youth. The purpose of the educational system and the various Nazi organizations was to indoctrinate Germans so that they could better serve the state. The normal processes of law and order disintegrated under the Nazi terror, in the end making the individual more dependent upon the state. Lastly, there was a partial class upheaval with the influx of a new elite. It was partial because many members of the old elite, especially those in industry, were allowed to retain their wealth if not their position.

OTHER EFFECTS

Hitler’s course of action in the international field led to war. Before the tide of battle had turned against him in 1943, Hitler had greatly increased the amount of land under German domination. Austria, Czechoslovakia, Upper Silesia, Posen, the Polish Corridor, Danzig, what corresponded to the old “Congress Poland,” the Benelux countries, two-thirds of France, all of Norway, Denmark, Ruma-
nia, Hungary, Slovakia, and a 600-mile-deep strip of Russia were at one time under German control, in the form of military rule, integration with Germany, or under agreements which gave Germany virtual control. However, Hitler was soon faced with a coalition of England, the U.S.S.R. and the United States which overpowered Germany and her allies. Hitler’s phenomenal initial success was canceled and post-World War II Germany found herself partitioned into Eastern and Western zones, and under military control. Furthermore, she had lost territory in the east that had belonged to her prior to Hitler’s expansionist drive.

In spite of Hitler’s totalitarian tactics and his spectacular successes there were, from 1938 to 1944, movements among the German elite to remove him from power, plus some anti-Hitler activity among the military. During the war, plans to dispose of Hitler were discussed in various groups, among varied types of people—ex-diplomats, ex-Ministers, lawyers, Catholic and Protestant clergy, and a number of high-ranking army officers. The famous attempt on Hitler’s life, led by Colonel Count von Stauffenberg, took place in 1944 at Wolfsschanze in East Prussia. Though badly shaken, Hitler survived an explosion set off not more than 6 feet away. All of these movements proved abortive, primarily due to the terroristic methods of the Gestapo which forced the opposition groups to operate in the strictest secrecy. This meant that there could be little chance for an organized, large-scale effort at counterrevolution.

Germany still feels the effects of Hitler’s revolution, both politically, in terms of the partition, and psychologically, in terms of the attempt to live down the German past.

NOTES

4. Ibid., p. 505.
5. Ibid., p. 435.
7. Ibid., p. 181.
8. Ibid., p. 224.
10. Ibid., p. 243.
11. Ibid., p. 2.
13. Ibid., p. 450.
19. Ibid., p. 409.
21. Ibid., p. 405.
22. Ibid., p. 405.
23. Ibid., p. 405.
25. Ibid., p. 410.
27. Ibid., p. 413.
29. Ibid., p. 397.
30. Ibid., p. 423.
31. Ibid., p. 422.
32. Ibid., pp. 422–424.
35. Ibid., p. 423.
36. Ibid., p. 433.
37. Ibid., p. 429.
41. Ibid., p. 204–205.
42. Ibid., p. 281.
47. Ibid., p. 11.
48. Ibid., p. 9.
49. Ibid., p. 10.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., pp. 42–56.
54. Ibid.
56. Ibid., p. 142.
57. Ibid., p. 109.
58. Ibid., p. 107.
59. Shirer, *The Third Reich*, p. 120.
61. Ibid., p. 168.
63. Ibid., p. 120.
73. Shirer, *The Third Reich*, p. 158.
78. Ibid., p. 208.
80. Ibid., p. 229.
81. Ibid., pp. 265–267.
82. Ibid., p. 134.
85. Ibid., p. 204.
88. Ibid., pp. 354–357.
89. Ibid., p. 359.
90. Ibid., pp. 402–404.

**RECOMMENDED READING**

**BOOKS:**


Brady, Robert A. *The Spirit and Structure of German Fascism*. New York: The Viking Press, 1937. Chapter I presents the background to the rise of national socialism. The rest of the book presents an acute analysis of the structure of the Fascist German state.


