**Adolf Hitler (right-wing ruler)**

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| **Origins and rise (1918-1933)** |
| Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated on November 9, 1918. A new Socialist government under the leadership of Friedrich Ebert signed the armistice to end the war in November 1918 and, in January 1919, a new democratic constitution was drawn up in Weimar. Friedrich Ebert – socialist leader who took over government in November 1918 after the Kaiser abdicated. As elected president of the Weimar Republic from February 1919, he faced political instability, the humiliation of the TOV, economic problems resulting from the war, the invasion of the Ruhr and hyperinflation. Many Germans were shocked an armistice was signed; they believed their country would be victorious. Nationalists claimed the German army had been ‘stabbed in the back’ by politicians who made peace when the army could have fought on. Treaty of Versailles (June 1919) caused anger in Germany. * Germany lost 13% of its territory
* Germany lost all of its colonies
* Germany was demobilized (100,000 troops)
* The Rhineland was demilitarized
* A strip of land was given to Poland thus dividing East Prussia from the rest of Germany
* Germans were forced to accept war guilt (Article 231)
* Germans had to pay reparations
* Self-determination was applied to other parts of Europe but many ethnic Germans were living outside of Germany and Anschluss (union with Austria) was forbidden.

The constitution caused problems since the voting system was based on proportional representation. Coalition governments with multiple parties made it difficult for a party to gain a majority. The constitution also gave considerable power to the president. Under Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution, the president had the power to rule by decree in an emergency. The second president of the Weimar Republic (Paul von Hindenburg) would use Article 48 to pass measures. Notably, the emergency decree, ‘For the Protection of People and State’. (Next pg.) Communism posed a threat to the Weimar Republic. The Spartacus League, an extreme left-wing socialist movement, attempted to overthrow the Weimar Republic in January 1919. The right-wing conservative elite was also hostile towards the Weimar Republic. Hitler’s Beer Hall Putsch of November 1923 tried to overthrow the Weimar Republic. The Ruhr Crisis was in 1923. Since the Weimar Republic told the Ruhr workers not to work but paid them, there was severe hyperinflation. The Weimar Republic was relatively stable from 1924-1929. When the Great Depression hit in 1929, the Nazi Party gained popularity. THE NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers Party) * Founded in 1919 by Anton Drexler
* Hitler had been working as an army informant, ‘spying’ on political groups. In September 1919 Hitler investigated Drexler’s party. Hitler was attracted by the NSDAP’s philosophy and so he decided to join.
* Hitler gave the party its new name (Nazi Party). By July 1921, he became the party’s chairman.
* In 1921, the SA (Sturmabteilung), a paramilitary force was created. Also in 1921, the *Volkischer Beobachter* (*People’s Observer*) was established as a Nazi newspaper.
* Nazi Party attracted ex-soldiers, members of the Freikorps, conservative lower middle-class workers, civil servants, and students fired with desire for political change.
* THE BEER HALL PUTSCH – November 8th 1923 Hitler and other Nazis interrupted a political meeting in a Munich beer hall, then led a march on Berlin to establish a new government. Hitler escaped arrest but was found and arrested on November 11th.
* Hitler was convicted of high treason. He was sentenced to 5 years but only served 9 months at Landsberg Fortress. While in prison, Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle).
* The SS (Schutzstaffel) was set up in 1925-26 as Hitler’s personal bodyguard.
* May 1928 elections to Reichstag - the Nazis won only 12 seats (2.6% of vote)

According to Ian Kershaw, “But on 24 October 1929, Wall Street crashed. The crisis Hitler needed was about to envelop Germany.” * In 1932, German unemployment was at 6 million! 1/3 of all Germans found themselves with no regular wages. This was fuel for extremist parties, such as the Nazis and Communists who mocked the government’s inaction and made wild promises that they held the key to future prosperity.
* September 1930 elections to Reichstag – the Nazis won 107 seats.
* In March 1932 there was a presidential election. Hitler won 30.2% of the votes and forced a second vote. In April 1932 he had increased his share of the vote to 36.7% but he lost to von Hindenburg.
* July 1932 elections to Reichstag – the Nazis won 230 seats and became the largest German party in the Reichstag (although not a majority).
* November 1932 elections to Reichstag – the Nazis won 196 seats (seemed their popularity had declined). \* The other political parties refused to work together which was to the Nazis’ advantage.
* Hindenburg mistakenly thought he could control Hitler and would make the Nazi Party happy by making Hitler chancellor on January 30th 1933.
* Hitler called for immediate elections and mounted a massive propaganda campaign.
* THE REICHSTAG FIRE – February 27th 1933 Started by Nazis and blamed on Communists causing anti-Communist hysteria. Hitler persuaded Hindenburg to issue an emergency decree, ‘For the Protection of People and State’ which gave the government power to search, arrest and censor. As a result of the emergency decree, the Nazis were able to remove opponents before the March elections to the Reichstag.
* March 5th 1933 elections to Reichstag – Nazis gained 43.9% of total votes cast.
* March 23rd 1933 the Enabling Act was passed. The Enabling Act allowed the chancellor (Hitler) to issue laws without consultation for a period of 4 years. The Enabling Act was the basis for Hitler’s dictatorship.
* July 14th 1933 Law Against the Founding of New Parties - With this law, all other political entities were disbanded or dissolved. Germany became a one-party dictatorship led by National Socialists, whom the law made the only legitimate political party in the country. MADE GERMANY A SINGLE-PARTY STATE!

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