

CHAPTER ONE

How Do We Explain the Rise of Nazism? Theory and Historiography

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What are the contexts for understanding the rise of Nazism? Immediately after 1945, Nazism's origins were sought straightforwardly in the far regions of the deeper German past: 'Nazi Germany [was] seen as the culmination of German history, the logical endpoint of a malign potential nurtured in that culture for centuries' (Caplan 2008, 4). This characterized most of the public commentary after the war's end, from the reportage and reflections of journalists and academics through the moralizing of critics and clergymen to the rhetoric of politicians and the popular common sense. Without some grappling with those deeper origins, it seemed, the disastrous turn in German history would never be explained. The Nazis were thought to have drawn upon beliefs deemed characteristic of German culture stretching back through the nineteenth century to the Lutheran Reformation, and even the Middle Ages. Only by relating Nazism's appeal to a set of deep-seated and pervasive dispositions – militarism, deference to authority, veneration of the state, weakness of liberalism – could it be rendered intelligible. If such traditions of thought set Germany sharply apart from the liberal-democratic West, then perhaps Nazi success could begin to make sense.

An origins narrative had already emerged from the war itself. A prime instance was A.J.P. Taylor's *Course of German History* (completed in September 1944), initially commissioned by Britain's Political Warfare Executive for the advice of the future occupying administration of Germany. Expanding an essay on the Weimar Republic into a full-scale account of what we now call the long nineteenth century, Taylor related German national character to the geopolitical determinism of

Germany's central European location: 'it was no more a mistake for the German people to end up with Hitler than it is an accident when a river flows into the sea' (Taylor 1961, vii). Likewise, having published as a medievalist in 1938, Geoffrey Barraclough produced three books in rapid succession after the war, each placing the twentieth century in the strongest possible relationship to earlier times (Barraclough 1938, 1946a, 1946b, 1950). In *The Roots of National Socialism, 1783–1933* (1941), to cite a third example, Rohan D'Olier Butler, a British civil servant and official historian, presented Nazism as merely the political climax of a long-seeded intellectual tradition. 'The exaltation of the heroic leader'; 'the racial myth'; antisemitism; 'the concept of the all-significant totalitarian state'; 'the community of the folk'; 'the full program of economic autarky'; 'the tradition of militarism'; the idea of 'the dynamic originality of German culture in contrast to the superficial civilization of the West'; 'the polemic against reason'; 'the supernatural mission of German culture'; 'living-space'; 'Pan-Germanism'; 'law as folk-law'; 'the abasement of the individual before the state' – each of these was taken to be distinctively German, descending by linear continuity from the late eighteenth century. As Butler put it: 'The Nazis said that might is right; Spengler said it; Bernhardt said it; Nietzsche said it; Treitschke had said as much; so had Haller before him; so had Novalis' (Butler 1941, 277–278).

This reflex of explanation marked the immediate post-war decades. *Because* Germany produced Nazism, ipso facto its history was singular, with peculiarities deeply embedded in the German past. Germany's 'path to modernity' had been distorted or stalled. The intellectual outlook of Germans broke radically from the West – not only from the Enlightenment and its values, but also in a romantic-nationalist counter-reaction against the French Revolution. If the deeper conditions for Germany's difference were found in earlier periods, from the Reformation and Thirty Years War to the rise of Brandenburg-Prussia, then the main crucible remained the nineteenth century. Wars against Napoleon; Stein–Hardenberg era; Holy Alliance and Metternichian reaction; failure of the 1848 revolutions; Bismarck's 'revolution from above' and policy of 'blood and iron'; creation of the unified Prusso-German state – these became the markers of Germany's divergence from Britain and France. 'Authoritarian', 'militarist', 'bureaucratic', 'Prussian' were the adjectives commonly in use. Well into the 1960s, this was the default understanding of Nazism's place in the longer arc of Germany's past. An imposing 1955 UNESCO anthology, *The Third Reich*, was one key reference point, William Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (1960) another (Vermeil 1955; Shirer 1960).¹

There was a stronger socio-political version of this deep-historical account. Until the new start after 1945, it ran, the ground had yet to be laid for a viable German liberalism, whether via constitutional restraints on royal and aristocratic power, the growth of parliamentary government and civil liberties, or the political culture of an active and responsible citizenry. In contrast with Britain and France, where liberalism wrested power from monarchy and aristocracy through violent revolution, liberalism in Germany lacked comparable success. Germany's tragedy, Max Weber liked to say, was that, unlike the Stuarts and Bourbons, no Hohenzollern had ever had his head chopped off: standing before a decisive breakthrough in the 1848 Revolution (Taylor's 'turning-point' where German

history ‘failed to turn’), German liberals failed the test (Taylor 1961, 69). Weber explained this sociologically: neither as forthrightly liberal nor indeed as fully ‘bourgeois’ as its British counterparts, the German bourgeoisie proved incapable of developing the political culture that Germany’s ‘modernizing’ capitalist economy required. In his concise rendition of Weber’s views, Anthony Giddens (1972, 16–17) puts it like this: ‘in Germany, the liberal bourgeoisie did not engineer a “successful” revolution. Germany achieved political unification as a consequence of Bismarck’s promotion of an aggressively expansionist policy; and industrialization was effected within a social structure in which power still devolved upon traditionally established elite groups.’

In failing to conquer the past, Germany became vulnerable to the future: with the authoritarianism of ‘pre-industrial traditions’ still intact, the conflicts of a rapidly ‘modernizing’ society became harder to absorb. When that same authoritarianism outlasted even the German Revolution of 1918–1919, the old elites felt disastrously empowered in undermining Weimar’s new democratic order. In Edgar Feuchtwanger’s words (1973, 21), ‘the very class which should have been the buttress of liberalism and stability [the educated bourgeoisie] became a prey to extremism’, supporting democracy’s right-wing enemies instead. German liberalism’s apparent weakness was derived from a sociology of deference and accommodation (a so-called feudalization of the bourgeoisie), which bolstered the precedence of pre-industrial elites. The failed Revolution of 1848 became the pivotal event – or non-event – for the longer term future. No one put this more clearly than Theodor Hamerow (1966, vii), the classic historian of German unification: ‘The penalty for the mistakes of 1848 was paid not in 1849, but in 1918, in 1933, and in 1945.’

Through the 1960s, for Marxists and liberals alike, this perspective proved remarkably resilient. No less disparaging than Weber, Karl Marx bequeathed an indictment of the German bourgeoisie to later generations of adherents, from the pre-1914 SPD (Social Democratic Party) to the Weimar Republic’s wider left-wing intelligentsia.² It was shared by an assortment of younger historians open to Marxism – a disconnected network of talented outsiders fleeing Nazism in the 1930s, including Eckart Kehr, Hans Rosenberg, Georg W.F. Hallgarten, Alfred Vagts, Gustav Mayer, and Veit Valentin – who were later adopted by the critical West German historians discussed below.³ Post-1945 Marxist philosophers and sociologists took the same view of German bourgeois deficiencies, from Georg Lukács (1980, excerpted 1966) to Leo Kofler (1979) and Ernst Bloch (2009). ‘Just as England is the eternally “finished” country in Europe’, Kofler pronounced (1979, 537, 739), ‘so Germany is the one eternally stuck halfway.’ And: ‘The historical chain of failures on the part of the bourgeoisie in Germany is the cause of “Prussianism” pure and simple.’ Isaac Deutscher (1972, 169) was especially blunt:

since the Reformation the tragedy of Germany [is] that it has not advanced with the times, and that Germany has never fought through its own revolution. The French had their great revolution. The English carried theirs through in the seventeenth century and then experienced a long process of reform, democratization, and progress. Germany has in many respects remained fixed in the sixteenth century and at the catastrophe of the Thirty Years War. Every revolution has failed.⁴

By the early 1970s, two prevailing versions had coalesced.⁵ On the one hand, a strong typification of the ‘German case’ for purposes of comparison – as an authoritarian syndrome of pre-industrial traditions and arrested liberalism – became central to social science literatures on political development, especially when dealing directly with fascism and its origins: why were Germany and Italy hospitable to fascism, and not Britain or France? Classic exemplars included Alexander Gerschenkron (1943, 1962), Ralf Dahrendorf (1967), and above all Barrington Moore, Jr (1966).⁶ While valorizing the bourgeoisie very differently, orthodox Marxist-Leninist historiography in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) produced accounts quite congruent.⁷ Key historians (Krieger 1957; Walker 1971) extended the argument towards the patterning of social life and deep-rooted cultural traits, covering everything from family structure and child-rearing practices to cultures of provincialism and what Fritz Stern (1972) called ‘vulgar idealism’, or unpolitical veneration of *Kultur*, *Bildung*, and the cultivated life. The imprint of two essays by Talcott Parsons from the 1940s (1964a, 1964b) was unmistakable.⁸ German history acquired a meta-narrative of marked divergence from political development in Britain, France, and United States.

‘Germany’ stood for the authoritarian path of modern political development – for ‘dictatorship’ as against ‘democracy’, in Moore’s famous typology, for misdevelopment and failed modernization, for illiberalism and what went wrong. Nazism’s possibility became inscribed in this stark contrast between ‘Germany’ and ‘the West’ – in the disjunction between economic modernity and political backwardness, or the grand contradiction of a dynamic economy housed inside an unreformed political framework. The persistence in Germany of ‘authoritarian and anti-democratic structures in state and society’ prevented democratizing change, enabling pre-industrial elites to entrench their dominance (Bracher 1969, 1339).⁹ Lacking the consensus-building mechanisms of a modern parliamentary system, permanent structural instability undermined the German polity. Elites became used to fabricating and exploiting political crises, right up to the wager on Nazism in 1933. The Nazis’ success presupposed this continuity of pre-industrial and authoritarian attitudes at the polity’s centre, linked to a powerful bloc of dominant socio-economic interests consistently obstructing any liberalizing change.

Meanwhile, on the other hand, a new West German grouping of social-science historians shaped an especially strong thesis of German exceptionalism or the *Sonderweg* (‘special path’). From the early 1970s, Hans-Ulrich Wehler anchored Nazism’s origins to the deep sociology of German backwardness outlined above. He located Germany’s peculiar authoritarianism inside the core structures of the pre-1914 imperial state – monarchy, army, aristocratic privilege, Prussian predominance, more ambivalently the bureaucracy, in general the institutionally secured primacy of pre-industrial elites – whose recalcitrance always impeded reform. In the political system, this obstructionism required a ruling cluster of interests – the ‘alliance of iron and rye’, or the political bloc of heavy industry and big agriculture originally forged by Bismarck in the 1870s. The resulting politics described a space where over the longer term Nazism could succeed: ‘The fatal consequences of the government politics through which the political predominance of the pre-industrial elites was to be preserved in the period of high industrialization were

revealed quite clearly between 1914 and 1929, when these structures came apart. By that time, the politics had helped create the dangerous conditions which smoothed the way for National Socialism' (Wehler 1988, 269). The practitioners of that politics held back the growth of liberal-democratic institutions before 1914, while surviving the 1918 Revolution to fight another day. They destabilized the Weimar Republic and helped decisively in hoisting the Nazis into power.

Nazi success came only contingently from capitalism's immediate crisis after 1929, in other words. Far more crucial were these 'historical handicaps from the time of the authoritarian state' (Winkler 1983). If Germany alone produced fascism out of the world economic crisis, this came from a deeper lying backwardness: 'Prussian militarism ... Junker cliques ... statolatry of clergy and professoriat ... preponderance of heavy industry in the political decision-making process' (Wehler 1983, 53). Nazism came from a blockage of modernization: 'In Germany it was not "bourgeois dominance" based in successful industrial capitalism that tipped over into fascism', Wehler insisted, but precisely its opposite, 'a deficit of civility [*Bürgerlichkeit*], of bourgeois parliamentarism, and of firmly anchored bourgeois political culture that opened the way to the abyss' (Wehler 1983, 53). Germany's *Sonderweg* consisted in these structures of backwardness and misdevelopment:

The reasons why democracy was liquidated in Germany in the course of the world economic crisis and not in the other developed societies have less to do with the course of the crisis itself than with the different pre-industrial histories of these countries. The conditions for the rise of fascism have at least as much to do with feudalism and absolutism as with capitalism. (Winkler 1978, 83)

Or, in Jürgen Kocka's version (Kocka 1980, 11): 'Whoever does not want to talk about pre-industrial, pre-capitalist, and pre-bourgeois traditions should keep quiet about fascism.'¹⁰

Two other lines of thought intersected with these views. Each also went back to the 1920s and 1930s. The *first* line of inquiry connects closely with the structural argument about development and backwardness. In Barrington Moore's rendition (1966), the societal dominance of different types of modernizing coalitions, based on specific configurations of landowning and urban-bourgeois social interests and their links to popular forces ('lord and peasant in the making of the modern world'), explained contrary developmental trajectories of 'dictatorship' versus 'democracy'. In this comparative framework, Germany's vulnerability to Nazism came from patterns of partial, uneven, and failed modernization leaving pre-industrial elites intact and throwing unreformed political institutions and 'traditional' social structures into contradiction with the 'modern' economy. The resulting tensions then impacted intermediate strata between dominant classes and workers, namely, the lower middle class or petty bourgeoisie. German industrialization was especially disruptive for two broad sectors of population – small-scale traditional owners and producers known as the *Mittelstand*, and new categories of white-collar officialdom and employees proliferating inside the industrial economy or the 'new *Mittelstand*'. Research into the social support for fascist movements has consistently emphasized exactly these groups: a large 'traditional' sector of agricultural

smallholding, handicrafts, carting, shopkeeping, and other small-scale trading; and the 'modern' white-collar sector of salaried employees, lower grade civil servants, junior managerial and technical personnel, teachers, clerical workers, and lower professions. In its multiple dimensions (structural, material, cultural, psychological), the complicated ambivalence of these groupings towards the modernizing process left them prey to protest movements of the radical right like Nazism.¹¹

Critics already saw fascist support like this in the 1920s. For liberal historian Luigi Salvatorelli (1923), it expressed 'the class struggle of the petty bourgeoisie, squeezed between capitalism and the proletariat, as the third party between the two conflicting sides' (Roberts 1980, 337). Historians and sociologists, non-Marxists and Marxists alike, shared this view. Under pressure of an extreme socio-economic crisis, with left-wing insurgencies threatening the political order, both Nazis and Italian fascists found ready reservoirs of mass support in the social anger of the lower middle class. Atomization and insecurity had also become endemic to this group's experience of modern urban living under capitalism: absent social solidarities or a collective culture comparable to the labour movement's associational world, those circumstances dramatically worsened under the Depression, exposing them to the Nazis' authoritarian-populist appeal. Key sociologies of the 1950s reinforced this analysis. Nazism was 'a manifestation of the risks inherent in mass society, demonstrating that [the latter] could be the nursery of irrational ideologies, demagoguery, and totalitarianism, as well as democracy and pluralism' (Caplan 2008, 5).¹² Within this framework, the lower middle class were structural casualties of modernization. Losers in the march of technological progress and in 'extreme revolt against the modern industrial world', they sought refuge in rhetorics of 'utopian anti-modernism' (Turner 1975, 133–134). Perhaps the sharpest formula for the resulting politics, with its ascription of Nazi support, was Seymour Martin Lipset's 'extremism of the middle' or 'radicalism of the center'.¹³

A *second* classic line of inquiry concerned Nazism's relationship to German capitalism. If the main lineage was Marxist, going back to the 1930s, an interest in Nazi links to powerful interests of the economy remained much wider.¹⁴ By the 1970s, the driving question was less the sensational 'Who paid Hitler?' (Thyssen 1941) than a more searching analysis of the Nazis' role in resolving the political crisis of 1930–1933 in a manner congenial to ruling interests in the economy. Research focused on the operative alignments across capital's various factions and industry's associated political thinking, whether as corporately organized lobbying or via the parties. The intricacies of industry's political manoeuvring and varying impact on government could then be better assessed.¹⁵ An approach developed for pre-1914 political history, focused on the heavy industrial–agrarian alliance and its blocking of reform, was now projected forward into the Weimar years, often by the same historians. Locating anti-democratic rigidities in this continuity of ruling elites, the new work presented Weimar politics as the adversarial representation of organized interests.¹⁶ That politics was again placed in a wider social field, mobilizing old and new *Mittelstand* as described above (e.g. Winkler 1974). This decisively boosted interest in social history, fixing attention on the interrelations among economy, politics, and social structure.

By the early 1980s, impressive scholarship accumulated around Nazism as a movement. Local and regional studies were a main focus, with pioneering monographs by William Sheridan Allen (1984) on Northeim and Jeremy Noakes (1971) on the surrounding area of Lower Saxony; in West Germany itself, Martin Broszat (Director of the Munich Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 1972–1989) presided over the Bavaria Project, with six volumes (1977–1983) on that region's ordinary life in the Nazi era.¹⁷ Just as important were systematic sociologies of the Nazi Party (NSDAP) and its electorate, equivalent work on the SA (*Sturmabteilung*, Stormtroopers), the beginnings of research on the youth and women's auxiliaries, analyses of the movement's varying strength across localities of different types, and accounts of its appeal to varying social groups and constituencies. After Dietrich Orlow's solid organizational history of the NSDAP (1969, 1973), Michael Kater dissected the social character of its rank-and-file membership and leaders (1983), with similar studies following on the SA (Jamin 1984; Bessel 1984; Fischer 1983; Reiche 1986). Thomas Childers (1983), Richard Hamilton (1982), and Jürgen Falter (1991) analysed the Nazi electorate. A cross-section through this scholarship appeared in a volume edited by Childers (1986) on the diversity of mobilizations helping compose the Nazi Party's overall constituency.

These literatures continue expanding our knowledge of Nazism as a movement. Among regional and city-based studies, Anthony McElligott on Altona (1998), Claus-Christian Szejnmann on Saxony (1999), Oded Heilbrunner on southern Baden (1998), and Pamela Swett on Berlin (2004) especially stand out. Yet interest has mainly shifted elsewhere – either to the regime years of the Third Reich itself and especially the period of the war, emphasizing the racial state and Holocaust, or else away from Nazism altogether to other aspects of Weimar. For histories of the Nazi *movement*, we seem to have reached provisional equilibrium. Two monographs showing this best are Peter Fritzsche's *Rehearsals for Fascism* (1990) and Rudy Koshar's study of Marburg (1986): each showed the party's local strengths growing not in the vacuum of cultural despair and social atomization, but precisely from the solidities of bourgeois sociality and political cohesion. Shifting focus from both the Depression's economic privations and nationalist anger about Versailles, Fritzsche embeds Nazism's distinctiveness in a larger story of patriotic concentration: 'The twenty-year period beginning in 1914 was characterized by the steady advance of a broad populist revolution that was animated by war, drew strength from the Revolution of 1918, menaced the Weimar Republic, and finally culminated in the rise of the Nazis' (Fritzsche 1998, jacket description). A new Right learned how to appropriate and redeploy the potentials of the democratic breach of 1918: 'Better than anyone else, the Nazis twisted together ideas from the political Left and Right, crossing nationalism with social reform, antisemitism with democracy, fear of the future with hope for a new beginning. This radical rebelliousness destroyed old authoritarian structures as much as it attacked liberal principles' (Fritzsche 1998, jacket description).

Fritzsche's first book (1990) came at the apex of the intensely accumulating social history of the rise of the Nazis, just as his later synthesis (1998) stands for a remarkably solid consensus about the Nazi regime's breadth of popular legitimacy. While sanctioned coercively by the violence of 1933–1934 and still needing

elaborate ideological work, the new regime presumed a reliable reservoir of popular conformity and acquiescence.¹⁸ Here, Fritzsche explains Nazism's success by *moving away* from the movement itself to examine the far broader coalescence of right-wing patriotism around avowedly anti-democratic and authoritarian goals. In appealing to the German right's hyper-nationalism and anti-socialist hatreds, the Nazis 'gave sharp political definitions to imprecisely held affinities and frustrated expectations' (Fritzsche 2008b, 71). They built on 'a vaguely "national-socialist" consensus' (lower case) that was already apparent by 1924–1925, while adding their own 'compelling vision of the nation as a solidaristic racial entity that had little in common with the deferential hierarchies of the Second Reich' (Fritzsche 2008b, 72). As Fritzsche argues, 'their program was consistent with the transformation of the political landscape in Germany since 1918, and they effectively expressed the basic "national" and "social" inclinations of the majority of Protestant voters':

Much as local elites such as landowners, merchants, and clergymen worked with the National Socialists and in due course legitimized them, Nazi success rested on a broader populist uprising that had challenged and undercut the power of conservatives throughout the 1920s. Thus the National Socialist seizure of power in 1933 was the triumph of a 'right-wing Jacobinism' in which a variety of working-class and middle-class groups sought a political voice and policies of change in the name of the German nation. (Fritzsche 2008b, 71, 72)¹⁹

With Fritzsche's work we can think differently about Nazi sociology. As Nazi members and voters came disproportionately from those categories, evidence still supports the 'petty bourgeois thesis'. But more striking was the heterogeneous breadth. In contrast with the parties of the left, the NSDAP continuously grew its social appeal: in 1928–1932, combined SPD-KPD votes fell from 40.4% to 35.9%, contracting around an historic working-class core even as half the wage-dependent population cast their votes elsewhere. If the left found it ever harder to break through the 'sociological, ideological, religious, and, not least, sex barriers' defining the 'historic working class' in Germany, then the Nazis broadened their base in multiple directions (Mason 1993, 52).²⁰ They proved adept at tapping popular hopes and resentments, promising all and nothing in the same breath. However cynical and opportunist (often it was neither), this eclecticism was a major accomplishment. In rallying such disparate support before 1933, the NSDAP was a popular political formation without precedent in the German polity. It not only subsumed the right's long-standing organizational fragmentation. It also united a broadly based ensemble of subordinate classes, centred on the Protestant peasantry and petty bourgeoisie (old and new), reaching deep into the wage-earning population.²¹ It did so on the terrain of ideology.

This return to the salience of Nazi ideology, after the long hiatus of social history's dominance, decisively shifted the historiographical ground. Fritzsche's reading of Nazi political success is an especially strong indication. So, too, is the continuing impact of *The Racial State* (Burleigh and Wippermann 1991), along with seminal writings of Detlev Peukert (1993) and the arrival of gender history

into the discussion (Bridenthal, Grossmann, and Kaplan 1984), which together focused attention on eugenicist and biopolitical thinking, biological politics, and the ‘scientification of the social’, not only in the Third Reich itself but also for the Weimar antecedents. New scholarship on the ‘SS state’ reaches back to the 1920s in the same way, most powerfully in Michael Wildt’s work (2009). While more obliquely related to the rise of Nazism, work on ‘political religion’ illuminates how its appeal was shaped (Steigmann-Gall 2003; Bärsch 1998). Each of these areas requires attention once we accept Fritzsche’s case for the wider coalescence of a ‘vaguely “national-socialist” consensus.’ Finally, the oeuvre of Tim Mason (1995a, 1995b), though mostly concentrated on the ‘regime’ rather than the ‘movement’, remains a rich source of challenging questions, especially with respect to gender and the pre-1933 dynamics between Nazism and the working class.

Mason’s classic essay, ‘The Primacy of Politics: Politics and Economics in National Socialist Germany’ (1966), written at the very outset of serious scholarship, brings us to a final point: in the rise of Nazism the crisis of 1929–1933 remains ultimately decisive (Mason 1995a, 53–76). Structurally speaking, the context was longer. The fragility of parliamentary process went back to the conjuncture of war and revolution in 1917–1923, with the left’s unprecedented gains (reformist and revolutionary) and earlier radicalizing of the right. As Fritzsche reminds us, by the mid-1920s the disunity of the latter and its damaged popular credibility opened the space for still more radical speculations. The crisis of 1918–1919 was resolved via public accommodations for labour: unions acquired new corporative legitimacy; socialists gained commanding local government presence; the SPD acquired central space on the national stage, with still greater militancy on the communist left. For the right, parliamentary methods seemed to have exhausted their potential by 1929–1930, securing neither the political representation of dominant classes in the state nor sufficient mobilizing of consent in elections. This was how Nazism prospered: the political cohesion of the dominant classes and their leading economic fractions could no longer be organized successfully inside existing parliamentary negotiations and party government, while the popular legitimacy of the same constitutional framework passed simultaneously into crisis. These destructively intersecting crises destabilized national politics with ever-increasing intensity after March 1930, opening a space where exceptional remedies could be taken seriously. By the summer of 1932 at the latest, the Nazis were the credible mass movement making an ‘extra-systemic solution’ feasible. In what remains the most incisive formulation, this is how David Abraham (1986, 277) described the resulting dilemma:

Could no bourgeois political force organize the political unity of the dominant economic fractions out of the diversity and fractiousness of their economic interests? Was no political unity possible and no mass political support available within the Republic, despite the single-mindedness of the dominant classes’ anti-socialism? Were the maintenance of capitalist economic relations and political democracy so antithetical in *this* conjuncture that abandonment and undermining of the Republic were self-evident necessities for the dominant classes?²²

In *this* Weimar crisis, adjustments within the given constitutional arrangements looked increasingly untenable. More radical options beyond those boundaries were available.

By his patient unscrambling of ‘politics and economics’, Tim Mason enabled the more subtle and satisfying treatment of Nazism’s relationship to the crisis of German capitalism as it persisted into the 1930s. As Fritzsche and others have shown, Nazism’s rise presumed an earlier crisis in the *political* stabilities of Weimar democracy, requiring primary attention to a broader right-wing coalescence of the years 1918–1925. That process in its turn was shaped by the impact of the wartime conjuncture and its revolutionary denouement. Neither can be understood without searching ideological analysis. Each will require careful assessment of earlier developments before 1914. But reaching ever further back into the nineteenth century (even beyond), in contrast, is less likely to help and may easily confuse. The best understanding of the rise of Nazism will involve keeping these two problems in tension: what were the conditions of possibility for Nazism’s successful emergence as a complex political formation in the years 1925–1933? And: what kind of crisis brought it to power? If the first question has now been exhaustively treated, on foundations solidly assembled in the 1970s and 1980s, then the second remains frozen on that very same ground. To make the rise of Nazism really intelligible, it is in the early 1930s – with the immediate fascism-producing crisis – that future research should begin.

Notes

- 1 Half a century later, Shirer’s book remains a bestseller.
- 2 In 1848, the German bourgeoisie was ‘inclined from the outset to treachery against the people and compromise with the crowned representatives of the old society ... making a bargaining-counter of its own wishes, without initiative, without faith in itself, without faith in the people, without a world-historical function; an accursed old man, who found himself compelled to lead and mislead the first youthful impulses of a robust people in his own senile interests – sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything ...’ (Marx 1973, 192–194).
- 3 Mainly marginalized by the German academic establishment of the 1920s, these individuals received variable recognition in exile. Their works were systematically republished in the 1960s and 1970s at Hans-Ulrich Wehler’s instigation. See Wehler (1980). Most influential was Hans Rosenberg, who taught in the United States at Brooklyn College and University of California, Berkeley. See especially Rosenberg (1958).
- 4 See also Poulantzas (1973, 168–184); Grebing (1974).
- 5 For comprehensive critique, see Blackburn and Eley (1984).
- 6 The nine collaborative volumes of *Studies in Political Development* sponsored by the US SSRC Committee on Comparative Politics and published by Princeton University Press (1963–1978) was a prime source for the interpretive syndrome. Veblen (1966) was another idiosyncratic but influential version.
- 7 See Bleiber (1977), along with Richard J. Evans’s review in *Social History* (1979); also Poulantzas (1973, 1974).
- 8 Also Dahrendorf (1967, 404): ‘The social basis of German authoritarianism, thus of the resistance of German society to modernity and liberalism, consisted in a structural syndrome that held people to social ties in which they had found themselves without their doing and that prevented them from full participation.’

- 9 Also Fraenkel (1964, 27): the key question was ‘why ... Germany has found it so difficult to understand the parliamentary system of government, to come to terms with it, and apply it successfully’.
- 10 Kocka was turning on its head a famous anti-capitalist aphorism of Max Horkheimer: ‘Whoever does not want to talk about fascism should keep quiet about capitalism.’
- 11 The classic statement of this view was Winkler (1972a); also Winkler (1976a, 1972b). More generally, Leppert-Fögen (1974).
- 12 See Riesman (1950), Arendt (1951), Nisbet (1953), Kornhauser (1959), Ortega y Gasset (1932), Lederer (1940), Neumann (1942). In general, Giner (1976), Halebsky (1976).
- 13 See Lipset (1963, 127–179), chapter 5, ‘Fascism’ – Left, Right, and Center’. Lipset uses neither of the cited phrases per se. He was also sceptical about the ‘mass society’ thesis (1963, 144).
- 14 Neumann (1942), Schweitzer (1964), Hallgarten (1955). The 1935 Comintern resolution defined fascism as ‘the open, terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist, and most imperialist elements of finance capital’. But for wider Marxist thinking, see Beetham (1984).
- 15 The case for Nazi reliance on big business, in line with the 1935 Comintern formula, was carried mainly by GDR historians, for example, Czichon (1967), a work easily discredited by its errors. A main critic was Henry Ashby Turner in key articles of 1968–1972, later folded into Turner (1985).
- 16 See Mommsen, Petzina, and Weisbrod (1974), the proceedings of a week-long conference in June 1973, with 57 contributions in a thousand pages.
- 17 Also Pridham (1973).
- 18 Fritzsche’s more recent book, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (2008a), further elaborates his argument.
- 19 ‘Right-wing Jacobinism’ was a concept borrowed from Eley (1986, 270).
- 20 Also Childers (1976), Fischer (1996), Mühlberger (2003), Szejnmann (1999, 205–239).
- 21 This distinction of the NSDAP – in finally becoming ‘the long-sought party of middle-class concentration’ going back to the 1890s (Childers 1983, 262) – coexisted with its character as a ‘people’s party’. Earlier debates over the latter now seem settled. See Mergel (2011, 434–435). More generally, Winkler (1976b), Falter (1990).
- 22 See also the penultimate section of Abraham’s final chapter, ‘Toward the Extra-Systemic Solution’ (1986, 302–308).

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Still the most vivid account of the rise of the Nazis in a single town. Originally published in 1965; revised and updated for the second 1984 edition.

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A watershed collection of path-breaking essays that established gender as a central category of historical analysis and understanding for Nazism.

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An excellent anthology of authoritative introductory essays.

Eley, Geoff. 2013. *Nazism as Fascism: Violence, Ideology, and the Ground of Consent in Germany, 1930–1945*. London: Routledge.

Interconnected interpretive essays that critically survey the historiography of Nazism to build arguments about the processes that made Germans into Nazis.

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A tour de force of general history that places the rise of the NSDAP and the seizure of power in the general social and political history of early twentieth-century Germany.

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A critical synthetic account that presents both a coherent narrative for the political history of the Weimar years and a strong argument about the bases of Nazi success.

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The best and most comprehensive of the critical guides to the interpretative debates shaping historical writing on the rise of Nazism and the character of the Third Reich.

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Empirically rich and analytically sophisticated essays by the premier social historian of Nazism of his generation.

Peukert, Detlev J.K. 1992. *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*. New York: Hill and Wang.

A brilliantly original set of commentaries on the Weimar Republic that set the agenda for the past several decades of historiography on the subject.

Wildt, Michael. 2009. *An Uncompromising Generation: The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

A vital study of the socio-cultural formation of the higher SS leadership in the political and ideological conflicts of the 1920s and 1930s.