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Weimar and the Rise of Hitler

A. J. Nicholls

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TO

MY PARENTS

Contents

<i>List of Plates and Maps</i>	viii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	x
<i>Preface</i>	xi
1 The Lost War	i
2 The German Revolution	10
3 The Foundations of the New Republic	26
4 The Republic makes Peace	52
5 1919–1922: Years of Crisis and Uncertainty	68
6 Hitler and Republican Instability	87
7 Ruhr Occupation and Inflation	102
8 Towards Recovery	114
9 The Semblance of Stability: 1924–1929	128
10 The End of the Republic	144
<i>Chronological Table</i>	173
<i>Bibliography</i>	179
<i>Index</i>	194

Plates and Maps

The cover pictures show Hitler rehearsing a speech before a mirror

PLATES

between pages 82 and 83

- 1*a* The New Government, 10 November 1918
- b* Friedrich Ebert
- 2 The aftermath of street fighting in Berlin 1919
- 3 Government troops and rebels meet in Berlin
- 4*a* Captain Ehrhardt
- b* Dr Josef Wirth
- c* Dr Gustav Stresemann
- 5 Field-Marshal Paul von Hindenburg reviewing troops with Defence Minister Gessler and General von Seeckt
- 6 Hitler and von Pfeffer, the S.A. leader
- 7 Dr Heinrich Brüning addressing a rally in the Presidential election
- 8*a* Franz von Papen and Otto Meissner
- b* General Kurt von Schleicher

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Bilderdienst; 7, Ullstein Bilderdienst; 8a, from *Satan in Top Hat*
by Tibor Koeves, Alliance Book Corporation, New York.

MAP

Germany after the Peace Settlement xiv

Abbreviations

BVP	<i>Bayerische Volkspartei</i> (Bavarian People's Party).
DDP	<i>Deutsche Demokratische Partei</i> (German Democratic Party).
DVP	<i>Deutsche Volkspartei</i> (German People's Party).
DNVP	<i>Deutschnationale Volkspartei</i> (German National People's Party – German Nationalists).
KPD	<i>Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands</i> (German Communist Party).
NSDAP	<i>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei</i> (National Socialist German Workers' Party – Nazis).
SPD	<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> (German Social Democratic Party – Majority Social Democrats).
USPD	<i>Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> (German Independent Social Democratic Party).

Preface

IN this book I have attempted to provide an introduction to the political history of the Weimar Republic. The failure of German democracy in the years after the First World War was of crucial importance, not only for Germany but for the world as a whole. It is necessary to understand the causes of this failure, and to avoid a natural tendency to over-simplify them. Very often they have been sought in the national character and historical development of the Germans, in the nature of Western capitalism, in the weaknesses of the Republican constitution or in the hypnotic power of Adolf Hitler. Some of these explanations are more respectable than others; none alone can begin to satisfy any serious enquiry.

One unforeseen by-product of Hitler's catastrophic war was the opening of German official records to historians. During the last two decades a great many valuable monographs have been published which throw light on the problems besetting the Weimar Republic. I have attempted to incorporate some of their findings into this book, but the need for compression precludes a detailed or definitive treatment. If I am able to stimulate the reader to delve more deeply into this fascinating and complicated subject I shall feel that my work has been justified.

My thanks are first of all due to my College for providing me with the facilities without which this book could not have been written. I should also like to acknowledge with gratitude the help I have received from Christopher Thorne and Miss Elizabeth Wiskemann. I am especially indebted to Sir John Wheeler-Bennett for his kindness in reading my manuscript and for his invaluable comments. I have

benefited greatly from discussions with my Oxford colleagues, especially Tim Mason, Jonathan Wright and Modris Eksteins. Needless to say, I am entirely responsible for the opinions expressed in the book and for any errors which it may contain.

I wish to acknowledge the care and accuracy of my typists, Miss D. Twamley and Miss E. Harrison, and finally I should like to thank my wife for her constant encouragement.

St. Antony's College
Oxford
March 1968

A. J. N.

Germany after the peace settlement