

The Year of Crisis 1923

From 1922 onwards the NSDAP expanded its reach ever further. Mussolini's Fascist 'March on Rome', after which he had come to power, served as a model for Hitler. Hitler organised a 'Train to Coburg' where more than 1,500 SA men broke up a demonstration held by socialists. The first rumours of a putsch by Hitler emerged in November 1922.

In 1923 hyperinflation, caused by a dire economic crisis, brought great hardship and affliction. Hitler used the suffering of the German people for his propaganda.

When the trade unions gathered on Oberwiesenfeld airfield in Munich on 1 May 1923, Hitler headed an attack on the rally together with 800 Nazis and 15 lorries, armed with machine guns and hand grenades. The group of Nazi thugs grew to 5,000 on the spot. To prevent a bloodbath, the *Reichswehr* disarmed the SA fighters.

Unemployment exploded in Bavaria:

October 1922:

1,000 unemployed

December 1923:

356,000 unemployed

Bavaria under new leadership

For the Bavarian government, 'Red Berlin' was responsible for the crisis. A strong political leader was sought in Bavaria as a result. It was decided to appoint a State Commissioner General: Gustav von Kahr. Kahr pursued a patriotic, national political agenda. His expulsion of almost 200 immigrant Jewish families who had settled in Munich before World War I was generally applauded. As a result of this development, Hitler saw a great prospects of success for his putsch plans, although he had given Kahr his word of honour not to undertake anything of the sort.

By autumn 1923 the NSDAP had about 55,000 members with 175 local groups throughout Bavaria.

On 8 November 1923 he saw his big moment had come. At 6 p.m. his armed troops – the SA regiment 'Munich' – stood ready for action outside the 'Bürgerbräukeller' beer hall in their uniforms and with their steel helmets.



© Anselm Magnus Hirschhäuser

Inflation at its peak: In May a bread roll cost 100 marks, in November 10 billion.

The government of the German *Reich* tried to combat the extreme economic crisis of 1923 by printing huge amounts of money. The result: hyperinflation.

Paper money became almost worthless, people calculated prices in bundles instead of notes. The shortage of money took a hold on social life in Munich as well: the Oktoberfest was cancelled and Hellabrunn Zoo was closed permanently.

“For heaven’s sake, why does the man have to scream his head off the whole time.”

General Ulrich Wille on Hitler's speech: 'On the situation in Germany', Zurich, August 1923