

History 342 (McCole): Germany since 1871

Reading Questions for Peter Fritzsche, *Germans Into Nazis* (continued)

“January 1933”

1. “The National Socialists tapped into a more generic ‘national socialist’ consensus that extended well beyond Hitler’s party and his electorate...Between 1928 and 1933 millions of Germans joined a vast political insurrection that seemed to come from nowhere, a drama which utterly confounded seasoned observers” (pp. 148, 150). Can we regard this as Fritzsche’s thesis statement in this chapter? How would you put it in your own words? As you read, notice how he makes the case for his position.
2. Fritzsche starts the chapter with a dramatic account of a struggle to control the streets and “public space” (146) in February 1933. What factors contributed to the Nazis’ success in doing so? Does this qualify his claims about a populist insurrection?
3. “In the public mind, two standard explanations [for the wide appeal of the Nazis’ positions] seem to stand out: the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles and the hard economics of the Great Depression” (151). What is Fritzsche’s view of these explanations? What evidence does he point to in order to support his view? Are you convinced? (see 151-160).
4. “The makings of a ‘national socialist’ insurrection were already apparent before the Great Depression lifted the fortunes of the National Socialists” (161). Examine how Fritzsche uses the 1925 presidential election and the rise of splinter parties later in the 1920s to make his case. Again, are you convinced?
5. “In the late 1920s German middle-class neighborhoods were at the center of a full-fledged populist insurrection” (197). How does Fritzsche argue for this claim? What does he mean when he says that the Nazis “very effectively portrayed political choices in utopian terms” (195)?
6. Notice how Fritzsche claims that anti-semitism did not play much of a role in the Nazis’ appeal (208ff). What do you make of this claim and of his argument for it? Is he arguing that anti-semitism wasn’t very prevalent among non-Jewish Germans?