

The Weimar Republic 1918-1933

The Treaty of Versailles

Aim: To understand the terms and effects of the treaty
To understand the reasons for German resentment of the treaty

The Armistice

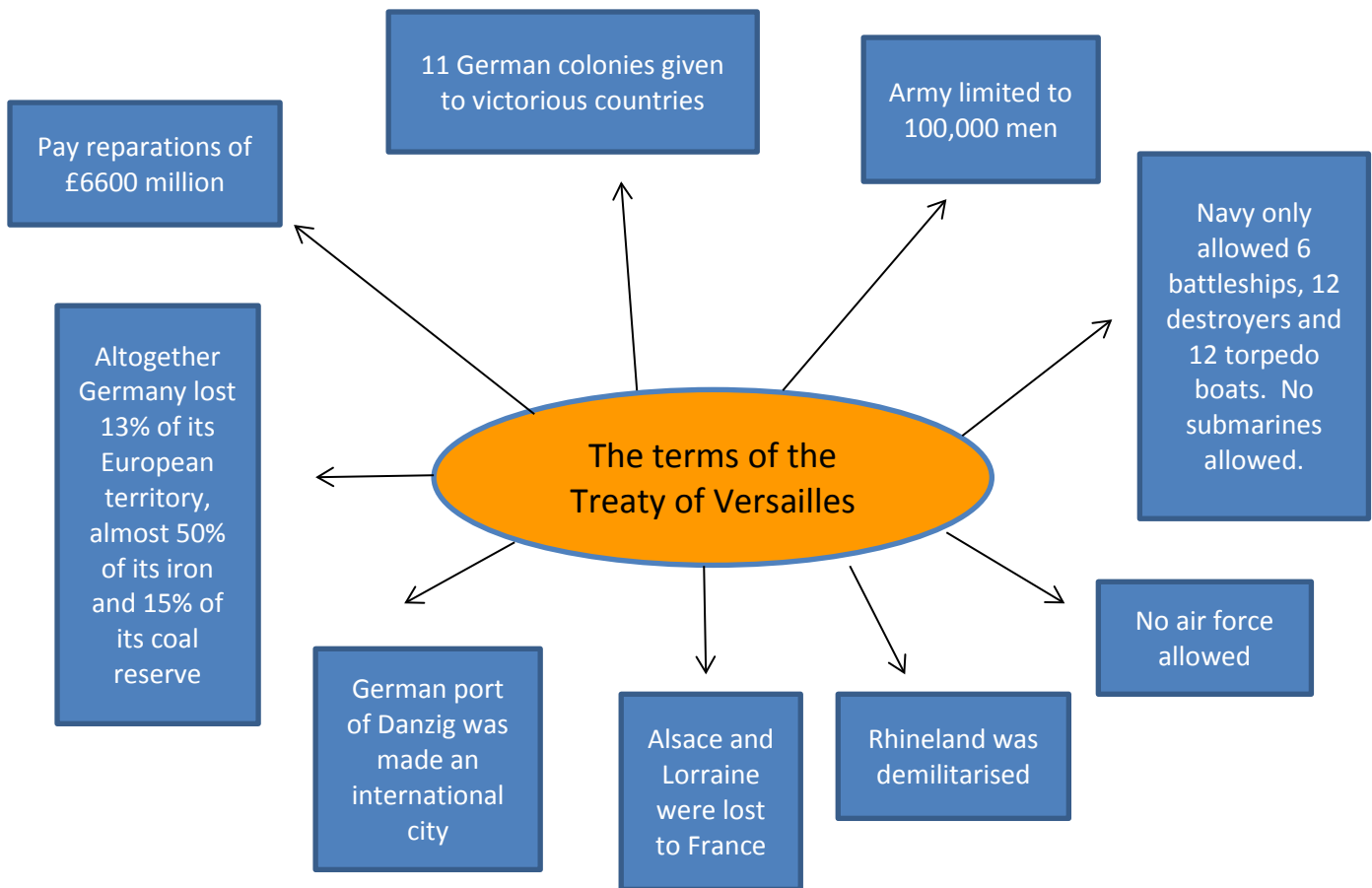
- 9th November 1918 Kaiser abdicated.
- 11th November armistice was signed – an agreement to stop fighting.
- Allied leaders drew up the peace treaty.
- Germany were given 15 days to respond.
- Germany had to accept blame for the start of the war, pay reparations and agree to reductions in armed forces and land.

The Diktat

- Germans were bitterly opposed to the treaty and asked for changes.
- The treaty was a Diktat – they were not invited to the negotiations and the treaty was imposed upon them.
- They had to accept because of their military collapse, and economic and political turmoil.
- 28th June 1919 German delegation signed the treaty.
- This weakened the new government from the start.

Vengeance, German nation! Today in the hall of mirrors at Versailles, a disgraceful treaty is being signed. Never forget it! On that spot ... German honour is being dragged to its grave. There will be revenge for the shame of 1919.
Deutsche Zeitung, a German newspaper, 28 June 1919





Why was the Treaty of Versailles Unpopular?

- German people did not believe their army had been defeated.
- They said the army had been betrayed by politicians in Berlin. Stabbed in the back (Dolchstoß)
- Politicians who signed the treaty were blamed for its harsh terms. They were known as the 'November criminals'.

Lasting Effects of the Treaty

- It weakened the popularity of the Weimar Republic.
- It caused lasting political protest.
- It harmed Germany's economy.

The Weimar Constitution

Aim: To understand how a new constitution was agreed
To understand the terms of the constitution
To understand the weakness of the constitution

The Terms of the Constitution

1. Constitution was democratic and the system of checks and balances ensured power was shared out.
2. Local government was run by 18 regions of Germany.
3. Central government was given more power.
4. 2 Houses of government Reichstag and Reichsrat.
5. The **Reichstag** controlled taxation.
 - Members of the Reichstag elected every 4 years.
 - All men and women over 20 could vote in a secret ballot.
 - Proportional representation was used. Number of seats =
 - percentage of vote.
6. **Reichsrat** could delay laws unless overruled by 2/3 majority in Reichstag.
7. **Chancellor** was head of government.
 - He chose ministers and ruled the country.
 - To pass laws he needed majority in the Reichstag.
8. **President** was head of state, directly elected by the people every 7 years.
 - Took no part in day to day government.
 - He was powerful.
 - He chose the chancellor.
 - He could dismiss the Reichstag.
 - He could call new elections.
 - He could take control of the army.
 - Under **Article 48**, the president could suspend constitution and pass laws by decree.

Ebert was the first president. He gained support of powerful groups.

1. Promised General Groener there would be no reform of the army.
2. He told the industrialists' leader Stinnes that there would be no nationalisation of business.
3. Promised Trade Unionist leader, Legien there would be a maximum 8 hour working day.

Weakness of the constitution

1. Proportional Representation encouraged lots of small parties. It was difficult for one party to get a majority so governments had to be coalitions. This led to weak governments.
2. President had too much power due to Article 48.
3. Army generals were the same men who had fought for the Kaiser and wanted to see him return.
4. Judges were the same men who had served under the Kaiser and were sympathetic with those against the Republic.

Economic and Political Problems Faced by the Weimar Government

Aim: To understand the problems faced by the new Weimar Government

The French occupation of the Ruhr

1. In 1922 government announced they would not be able to pay the reparations and asked for more time.
2. Britain said yes, France said no.
3. January 1923, France and Belgium sent troops into the Ruhr (area of German industry).
4. It was a disaster for Germany.
 - German workers used passive resistance and refused to work.
 - German economy slowed up.

Hyperinflation

1. Reparation payments encouraged government to print more money.
2. Printing more money led to price rises.
3. German Mark became worthless.
4. People's savings became worthless (middle classes especially).
5. Workers were paid twice a day.
6. People on fixed incomes (pensioners) suffered badly.
7. Prices rose faster than incomes which meant many people were unable to afford basics such as food and fuel.

Some groups tried to overthrow the government by force.

Left wing opposition – Spartacist Revolt

1. January 1919 communist leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht inspired 100,000 communists to seize power of important buildings in Berlin and the Baltic ports.
2. Within weeks the revolts had been crushed by regular troops and the Freikorps (ex-soldiers who had refused to return their arms).
3. The leaders were assassinated and several thousand supporters were arrested or killed.

Right wing opposition – Kapp Putsch

1. Nationalists wanted to see a strong government that would make Germany great again.
2. March 1920 Dr Wolfgang Kapp, an extreme nationalist and a group of Freikorps seized power in Berlin.
3. Government urged workers to strike. Within hours supplies of water, coal and gas stopped.
4. After 4 days Kapp fled. He was caught and put in prison, where he later died.

The Stresemann Era – 1924-1929

- August 1923 – President Ebert appointed a new government under Chancellor Gustav Stresemann.
- From 1924-1929 he was Foreign Secretary.
- He worked successfully with Britain, France and the USA to improve Germany's economic and international position.
- He was supported by moderate parties on the left and right and was able to pass measures in the Reichstag.

Economic Policies

Dawes Plan – 1924

- Agreement to reduce Germany's reparations payments.
- Reichsbank to be reorganised.
- USA to give loans to German industry to help economic recovery.
- As the allies began to feel reassured they would get their reparations the French agreed to leave the Ruhr.

US Loans – Over the next 6 years US companies and banks gave \$3000 million to Germany to help pay reparations and boost businesses.

In 1923 Stresemann set up a new State owned bank, the **Rentenbank**, which issued a new currency – the **Rentenmark**. This bank note was printed in limited supply and backed by land so it had real value and was trusted. Later in 1924 a new national bank, the Reichsbank was given control of currency and renamed it the Reichsmark. German money was now trusted at home and abroad.

Young Plan 1929 – A new plan of repayments for Germany which reduced the amount and time to pay. Reparations were reduced from £6.6 billion to £2 billion. Germany was given 59 years to pay.

- This made it possible to lower taxes.
- This released spending power which boosted German industry and employment.
- Hitler claimed this passed on 'paying the penalty to the unborn'.

Success

- Germany's economy improved.
- Industrial output doubled, fuelled by US loans.
- Imports/exports increased.
- Employment went up.
- Government income from taxation increased.
- Germans were reassured.
- Germany's international standing improved.
- Stresemann kept the support of moderate parties on the left and right.

Failures

- The extreme parties hated the fact Germany was still agreeing to pay reparations.
- The fragile recovery depended on American loans.
- US moneylenders could demand rapid repayment.
- There was still unemployment (1.3million) and small firms struggled.
- October 1929 – Stresemann died of a heart attack. The loss of his expertise was a severe blow.
- October 1929 – Wall Street Crash and Great Depression.

Foreign Policy

The Locarno Treaties – 1925

Stresemann wanted to improve relations with France/Belgium to restore German international prestige, gain cooperation in reducing parts of the Versailles Treaty e.g. reparations.

He realised France needed to feel secure. This treaty was signed with Britain, France, Belgium, Italy and agreed to keep existing borders with Belgium and France. In return:

- The allied troops left the Rhine land.
- France promised peace with Germany.
- The powers agreed to open talks about German membership of the League of Nations.
- War became less likely.
- Germany was treated as an equal.
- In 1926 Stresemann was given the Nobel Peace Prize.

But:

- There was resentment that the Versailles borders had been confirmed.

The League of Nations

In September 1926 Germany was given a permanent seat on the Council. This confirmed Germany's return to being a 'great power' and gave prestige to Stresemann.

- Some parties in Germany saw the League as a hated symbol of Versailles.

Kellog – Briand Pact – 1928

- Signed with 64 other nations.
- Agreed to keep armies for self-defence and solve international disputes by peaceful means.
- As a result of Stresemann's policies France withdrew from the Ruhr, Allied powers left the Rhineland 5 years earlier than scheduled.

Political Stability

1924-1929 there was greater political stability in Germany. No party ever won a majority of seats in the Reichstag but the moderate Social Democrats always won the most votes. Extremist groups won less votes. Stresemann became very popular and also President Hindenburg was respected.

In 1929 Stresemann died of a heart attack. This was a severe blow to the Weimar Republic.

Stresemann had started to stabilise the Weimar Republic:

- He had reduced reparations, improved the currency, restarted economic stability.
- Improved Germany's relations with the US, France and world community.
- Regained the support of moderate parties.

Hitler and the growth of the Nazi party 1918-1933

The Early Nazi Party

Aim: To understand how Hitler's early career shaped his views on the Jews
To understand how the Nazi party developed in the early years

Hitler's career before 1919

- Born in Austria 1889.
- Left school at 16 and moved to Vienna to become a painter.
- Between 1909 and 1914 lived on the streets.
- He developed his hatred of Jews because
 - anti-semitism was widespread in Vienna
 - he was envious of wealthy Jews and blamed them for his problems.
- 1914 Hitler joined the army and won the Iron Cross.
- He did not accept the armistice, he felt betrayed by the politicians.
- Hitler was working for the intelligence services of the army in Munich when he was asked to investigate the DAP.

The Nazi Party 1919-1923

- 1919 Hitler joined the party.
- 1920 Hitler changed the name of the party.
- 1921 Hitler became leader.
- He organised the SA who were used to protect meetings and attack opponents.
- Hitler drew up a 25 point programme which said it would reverse the treaty, destroy communism and make Germany great. It also attacked the Jews.
- He attracted support from extreme nationalists and by 1922 membership was 3000.

The Munich Putsch 1923

- November 1923 Hitler tried to seize control of the Bavarian Government. Then he would seize Berlin. Hitler believed that people would join him to overthrow the Weimar Government.

Why did he carry out the Putsch?

- Weimar Republic unpopular due to occupation of the Ruhr and hyperinflation.
- 1922 Mussolini, Italian Fascist leader had seized power after a march on Rome.
- Hitler was convinced he would get popular support in Munich.

What happened?

- 8 November – Hitler forced members of the Bavarian Government to join him. Its leader, Von Kahr, alerted the police and the army.
- When they began to march Hitler was confronted and police opened fire killing 16 Nazis.
- Hitler and Ludendorff were arrested and charged with high treason. However it was clear Hitler's views had some support in Germany.
- Hitler received the minimum sentence.
- Hitler spent his sentence in a comfortable prison writing his memoirs (Mein Kampf).

The Lean Years 1924-1929

- Nazis won only 12 seats in 1928.
- Quarrels and disagreements took place whilst Hitler was in prison.

But there was progress

- Hitler had learnt from the mistakes of the Munich Putsch. He was going to achieve power through legal methods now.
- He reorganised the party to make it more efficient, setting up headquarters in Munich and branches of the party all over Germany.

Increased support 1929-1933

How Did the Depression Help Hitler?

- It caused a period of chaos.
- No government could take control and solve the economic problems.
- Unemployment was at 6 million by January 1932.
- Hitler promised these people work. He gained support in many parts of German society, including wealthy and powerful industrialists due to his powerful speeches.
- Goebbels realised the attraction of Hitler's speeches and used air travel to move Hitler around Germany.
- Frequent street battles between Communists and the police. The SA however gave the impression of discipline and order.

The Events of 1932 – January 1933

- July 1932 election was very violent. Nazis and Communists fought each other and 100 people were killed.
- The Nazis became the largest party in the Reichstag and Hitler demanded to be chancellor.
- Hindenburg refused and appointed von Papen, a conservative politician who had no party.
- To achieve his aims von Papen needed more support so he called for another election in November 1932. Nazis lost seats but were still the largest party.
- Von Papen did not increase his support and therefore could not pass any laws.
- In December 1932 Hindenburg replaced von Papen with von Schleicher but within a month he resigned.
- Hindenburg and von Papen decided to make Hitler chancellor. They believed they would be able to control him when in power.
- 30th January 1933 Hitler was made chancellor and von Papen vice chancellor.

The Nazi Dictatorship

1933- 1939

The removal of opposition 1933-1934

Aim: To understand how Hitler used the Reichstag Fire to establish a dictatorship

The Reichstag Fire

- As soon as Hitler was elected chancellor he persuaded Hindenburg to hold another election, during this the Reichstag was burnt down.
- 27 February 1933, a Communist, Marinus van der Lubbe, was arrested for the fire.
- Hitler used this to his advantage:
 - Nazis blamed the Communist party.
 - Hitler persuaded Hindenburg to pass an emergency law restricting personal liberty.
 - Using this law thousands of communists were put in prison.
- Although the Nazis had increased their share of the vote they still did not have a majority. They were forced to join with 52 nationalist members to create a government.

The Enabling Act March 1933

- Hitler still did not have enough support for complete control of Germany.
- Enabling Act would give him power to pass laws for 4 years without the support of the Reichstag.
- But to pass the Enabling Act he would need two thirds majority support in the Reichstag. He did not have it so..
 - Hitler ordered SA to intimidate opposition
 - 81 Communists were expelled from the Reichstag
- Enabling Act was passed by 441 votes to 94.
- Hitler was given power to rule for 4 years without consulting the Reichstag.

Removal of Political Parties and Trade Unions

- July 1933, using the powers of the Enabling Act he outlawed all other parties and Germany became a one party state.
- 2 May 1933, Nazis broke into trade union offices all over the country and arrested thousands of trade union officials.
- Unions were banned and all workers became part of the German Labour Front.

The Night of the Long Knives

- Now that he had power, Hitler had to eliminate his rivals.
- Although Rohm (leader of SA) had helped Hitler achieve power, there were problems:
 - German army saw SA as a rival, Hitler needed the support of the army.
 - Some members of the SA wanted him to be more socialist, however Hitler knew he could not do this as it would alienate the party's important wealthy industrialist support.
 - Rohm was a threat to Hitler, people in the SA listened to him not Hitler.
- Hitler decided to make a deal with the generals of the German army. They promised to support him as commander-in-chief of the armed forces if Hitler disbanded the SA and began re-arming Germany.
- 30th June 1934, SS assassination squads murdered Hitler's potential SA rivals. Around 400 people were killed including Rohm.
- A month later Hindenburg died. The post of president and chancellor was combined and Hitler became commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Soldiers now swore allegiance to Hitler, who also now became known as 'der Fuhrer' (the leader).

The Nazis take control of society

The Police State

- The Gestapo (secret police) and the SS were in charge of enforcing Nazi policy, which included imprisoning people who openly criticised the Nazis.
- They used terror tactics to intimidate, arrest and kill any possible opponents.
- Enemies of the Nazis, such as liberals, communists and socialists, were often arrested and sent to concentration camps without trial.

Law Courts

- The legal system was controlled by the Nazis.
- There was no trial by jury.
- All judges were Nazis.

The Churches

- Christianity was a threat because it was very different from the beliefs of Nazism.
- A Nazi Reich church was set up to replace the Protestant church.
- Hitler made an agreement with the Catholic Church (the concordant July 1933). However this did not last and Catholic Church was persecuted and priests were arrested.

Censorship and Propaganda

- The Nazis believed in complete obedience and loyalty. One way they achieved this was through propaganda.
- Hitler made Goebbels minister of Enlightenment and Propaganda. His job was to spread Nazi ideas and make all Germans loyal to Hitler. He controlled all information that reached the German people.
- All newspapers were censored by the Government and allowed to print only stories favourable to the Nazis.
- Radio was controlled by the Nazis. Cheap radios were manufactured so most Germans could afford them.
- Nazis took control of the film industry. Film showed great German heroes.
- Goebbels organised mass rallies. They listened to Hitler, sang songs and watched sporting events.
- Nazis used sporting events to spread propaganda. The 1936 Berlin Olympic Games were used to highlight the superiority of the Aryan race.

Nazi Domestic Policies 1933-1939

Young People

Education

- Teachers had to swear an oath of loyalty to Hitler and join the Nazi Teachers' League. They had to promote Nazi ideals in the classroom.
- Hitler wanted healthy, fit men and women so PE was given 15% of the time.
- Boys were prepared for the military.
- Girls were prepared for their roles as mothers and housewives. They had classes in needlework, domestic science and cooking.
- New subjects were introduced such as race studies, which put across Nazi ideas on race and population.
- Textbooks were rewritten to fit the Nazi view and Hitler's 'Mein Kampf' became a text students studied.

Hitler Youth

- All other youth organisations were banned and from 1936 membership of the Hitler Youth was compulsory. By 1939 there were 7 million members.
- At 10 boys joined the Deutsches Jungvolk (German Young People) until the age of 13 when they transferred to the Hitler Jugend (Hitler Youth) until the age of 18. They took part in athletics, hiking and camping and practiced marching and military skills.
- Girls at the age of 10 joined the Jungmadelbund (League of Young Girls) and at the age of 14 transferred to the Bund Deutscher Madel (League of German Girls). Girls had to be able to run 60 metres in 14 seconds, throw a ball 12 metres, complete a 2 hour march, swim 100 meters and know how to make a bed. They also learnt domestic skills to prepare them for motherhood and marriage.

Women

- Nazis believed in the traditional domestic role of women, which was to marry, have children and look after the home. (Kinder, Kuche, Kirche – children, kitchen, church).
- The Nazis reduced the number of women in employment. However, due to re-armament, more women were employed in the industry after 1937.
- Hitler wanted to increase the birth rate and encourage German women to marry and have children.
- The Law for the Encouragement of Marriage gave newly married couples a loan of 1000 Marks which was about 9 months average income. 800,000 newlyweds took up this offer. The loan was not simply paid back. The birth of one child meant that 25% of the loan did not have to be paid back. Two children meant that 50% of the loan need not be paid back. Four children meant that the entire loan was cleared.
- They believed in the traditional appearance of women, with long hair, no make-up and long skirts. Women were discouraged from drinking and smoking.

Employment

- Hitler had promised to remove unemployment. This was achieved by 1938 through a variety of policies.
- The Labour Service Corps was set up. From 1935, it was compulsory for all men aged between 18-25 to serve in the Corps for 6 months.
- Unemployed men were put to work building government-funded roads, motorways, houses, hospitals and schools.
- From 1935, all men aged 18-25 were compelled to do military service for two years.
- Re-armament provided thousands of jobs in arms factories.

The Standard of Living

- 'Strength Through Joy' movement organised leisure activities and cheap holidays.
- The people's car (Volkswagen) was produced which was cheap enough for workers to buy.
- Many new autobahns (motorways) were built in the 1930s by the unemployed.
- 'Beauty with Labour' tried to improve working conditions. They also improved pay, however some people debate whether they were better off.
- The Labour Front replaced trade unions. Workers were not allowed to leave their jobs without government permission and strikes were made illegal.
- The Volkswagen scheme was a swindle. People contributed 5 Marks per week, however by 1939 no one had a car and the money was never refunded.
- The Nazis never included Jews and women in their employment figures.

The Persecution of Minorities

- They persecuted members of other races and many other minority groups such as gypsies, homosexuals and mentally and physically disabled people.
- Gypsies were thought to be an inferior people. Five out of six Gypsies living in Germany in 1939 were killed by the Nazis.

The Treatment of Jews

- The Jews received the worst treatment.
- In 1933 Nazis organised a boycott of all Jewish businesses.
- Jewish children were intimidated at school and German children were taught that Jews were unclean and responsible for Germany's defeat in WW1.
- 1935 Nuremberg Laws
 - Jews could no longer be German citizens.
 - Marriages between Jews and Aryans were forbidden.
 - Jews had to wear a yellow star.
- Kristallnacht November 1938
 - A Polish Jew shot a German diplomat in Paris.
 - In response Hitler ordered an immediate attack on Jews and their property in Germany.
 - Between 9-10 November thousands of Jewish businesses were attacked and 200 Synagogues were burnt down.
 - Violence against Jews in Germany increased.
 - Himmler, head of the SS, began to plan the expansion of concentration camps.