

GROUP ACTIVITY: UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE

VERSAILLES PEACE TREATY

TIME MAGAZINE INCLUDED THE VERSAILLES PEACE TREATY AMONG A LIST OF THE 100 WORST BLUNDERS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

BELOW IS A SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE VERSAILLES PEACE TREATY ENDING WORLD WAR I.

IN GROUPS, DETERMINE WHICH OF THE TERMS WERE MOST HATED BY THE GERMANS AND WOULD LATER BE USED BY HITLER IN GAINING SUPPORT OF THE GERMAN PEOPLE FOR THE NAZI PARTY AND AGAINST THE DEMOCRATIC WEIMAR REPUBLIC

WRITE AT LEAST ONE REASON FOR THREE HATED ASPECTS OF THE TREATY, MAKING REFERENCE TO WHY HITLER FOUND PROPAGANDA VALUE IN USING THE TREATY TO TURN GERMANS AGAINST THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC WHOSE POLITICIANS HAD TO SIGN THE TREATY AND TO BRING MANY GERMANS ON THE SIDE OF THE NAZI PARTY

NOTE: THE ORDER OF THE TERMS OF THE TREATY LISTED BELOW DOES NOT REFLECT THE PRIORITY ORDER OF IMPORTANCE

- East Prussia was separated from the rest of Germany by the creation of a so-called **Polish Corridor**; (see map in *Handouts book*) Poland was given the areas of Posen and West Prussia: the city of Danzig where many Germans and Poles lived was declared a “free city.” Germans no longer had direct access to the North Sea.
- The German **Army was reduced to 100,000 men** and prohibited from having planes and tanks; the Navy was reduced to little more than a token force and forbidden to build submarines or vessels over 10,000 tons. The General Staff (high ranking career officers who determined war policy) was outlawed.
- The **Rhine** was to be occupied by French and Belgium troops
- **Alsace-Lorraine** (capitol city: Strassbourg) was to be given back to the French (remember: the territory was taken away from the French and incorporated into the German Reich after the French defeat in 1870/71
- A portion of Schleswig returned to Denmark which had been lost in Germany’s war against Denmark in 1864
- Germany was forced to give up control of most of its colonies

- Separation of the Saar region from Germany whose mines the French would exploit.
- **Occupation of the Rhineland** by French and Belgium troops

lost control of important industrial areas = a major part of its iron ore and a substantial part of its coal = immense assets needed to keep Germany an industrial and military strong country (Note: the **Ruhr**, Germany's major industrial area, (e.g., city of Essen where Krupp steel industries had been built) The Ruhr, with its coals mines, was occupied by French troops in 1923 when German coal miners went on strike)

- **Article #231:** declared that Germany **alone** should take full moral responsibility for the outbreak of World War I and for the ultimate devastation of land and property and of the immense loss of human life caused by World War I. This part of the treaty is referred to as **The Guilt Clause**
- **Reparations:** Germany had **to pay** for its war of aggression. Germany, for example, was condemned to various immediate deliveries to the victorious countries—ships, locomotives, cables—from its already war ruined stock pile. **Money**—huge sums—was to be paid to the victors. The original amount assessed—had it been paid in full—would have taken Germany well into the 1980's to be achieved.

LIST THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF THE TREATY AND WHY/HOW THEY WERE EMPLOYED BY HITLER LATER