

Important Historical Concepts

IMPORTANT HISTORICAL EVENTS, CONCEPTS, PEOPLE (1914-1933)

Brest Litvosk Treaty=Signed Between Germany and Russia in 1917 as the Communist Revolution destroys Russian Monarchy and signs Peace Treaty with Germany (extremely harsh treaty which takes away much land from the Russians, such as Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, parts of the Ukraine and causes a great deal of hatred between Germans and Russians which continues into World War II).

Sailor revolt in Kiel towards end of World War I=Desire for soldiers and workers to join forces in creating a communist type government. Tired of dying on the battle fields of Europe without hope of victory; mistrust toward the German military high command who kept the truth of how close defeat was from the Germans until the very end.

Spartacists, such as Rose Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht who believed in the Russian Revolution and wanted to establish a communist type government in Germany; they were idealists who believed in the concept of sharing the wealth of a nation among all its people; they believed in peace; they were initially opposed to entering World War I; these two leaders were brutally assassinated by the Freicorp (see ahead) in the name of the Democratic Weimar Republic. Tragically, the Spartacists also used violence to try to gain control. Their assassination by the so-called Democratic Government who used the Freicorp—the very enemies of the democracy they were pretending to defend is the epitome of irony.

The Lost Generation: those who were soldiers during First World War whose war experience marked their lives forever.

Freicorp=Disenchanted, depressed, ashamed World War I soldiers who return home without hope; they band together into a para military organization which hopes for a reemergence of a strong military German power under one strong leader; Great Irony—they are used by the Weimar Republic to fight communist uprisings in Germany, although they are themselves enemies of the Weimar Republic.

Stab in the Back Theory: Those Democratic leaders who signed the Versailles Peace Treaty and helped create the Weimar Republic were viewed by the Nazis and many Germans as traitors.

Beer Hall Putsch of 1923 vs. Soviet-Style Republic in Bavaria

Hitler's unsuccessful attempt to gain control of Weimar government's military in Munich and march to Berlin to take over the government under his leadership.

Hitler's Trial=Greater tolerance for political movements and parties which were ultra conservative (i.e. desire to return to a strong leader) than leftist, communist, soviet style

movements and parties with theoretical belief in giving more rights to the people in order to control their political and economic destiny.

Walther Rathenau: Foreign Minister in Weimar Republic who was of Jewish origin and who was assassinated in 1921=example of the powerful influence which conservative, anti-democratic, anti-Weimar Republic attitude had on the German population. Freicorp or Freicorp sympathizers did the killing.

Versailles Peace Treaty referred to by the Germans as a Diktat=Dictated to Germany without negotiations; signed in Versailles where the German Kaiser was crowned after the Germans defeated the French in 1871=meant to cause great disgrace to the Germans.

The Guilt Clause

Weimar Republic: Democratic governor forced on Germany by victorious powers; the Kaiser is forced to abdicate, escapes to Holland) the upper level military commanders such as Hindenburg and Ludendorff, who tried to hide German defeat from the fighting soldiers at the front until the very last moment, are not allowed to participate in peace negotiations or in signing the Versailles Treaty and in establishing a Democratic Republic, with elected officials (this is part of President Wilson's 14 points) the hatred of the Versailles Treaty and the Weimar Republic is directed at the Democratic political leaders who signed the treaty.

Weimar Constitution:

Article 48: Similar philosophy to: enabling law of 1933. Article 48 grants the president of the republic a term of 7 years and the ability to disband parliament and call for Marshall Law if violence becomes uncontrollable; it is an example of the general mistrust which most Germans had for a Democratic government, their comfort level remained with a strong leader=the Fhrer principle demonstrated so clearly in the enabling act.

The Enabling Act grants Hitler dictatorial powers in the face of political unrest and the ability to do away with Democratic principles=get rid of parliament and free elections and decisions by political consensus.

General Hindenberg, former World War hero becomes President of the Weimar Republic.

Political parties and frequent elections (e.g., Communists, National Socialists People's Party (Nazi Party) Democratic, Catholic Center, German Nationalist Party, German People's Party).

Nazi Party platform vs. Spartacists (Communist) Party platform (major elements).

Violence in the streets=political parties such as the communist and Nazi Party take to the streets=violence as a means of gaining support.

Economic conditions: Inflation in post World War Germany (especially critical in 1923 with the occupation of the Ruhr Valley=industrial center of Germany; French troops occupy the area as German miners strike to protest reparation costs.

1929 Stock Market Crash: If world economy had retained stability, would Hitler have come to power?????

The Golden Twenties=mid to late 1920's economy gets better, strong leadership under conservative, but democratically inclined Prime Minister, Stressemann; the Dawes Plan reduces German war payments to allies, encourages investments of foreign companies in German industry; various non-aggression pacts signed guaranteeing the integrity of national borders; Germany joins League of Nations.

Reichtag Fire (1933)

Book burning by University Students ("where they burn books, they will eventually burn people," a prophetic statement made by a poet in the 19th century).

Concept of Gleichschaltung (synchronization of German Society according to Nazi Principles).

Concept of Volk and Volksgemeinschaft=a classless society.

Assimilation of Jews in Germany (vs. Jews in Eastern Europe).

Remember German Jews fought bravely in World War I; they had great pride in being Germans who happened to be of the Jewish Faith; many received the Iron Cross for bravery in World War 1 combat yet their was the so-called Jew count conducted to see whether Jews really fought bravely for Germany; statistical evidence revealed that in proportion to their numbers as many German Jews died for fighting for Germany in World War 1 than the non-Jewish population.

Things to remember after 1933 which had tremendous influence of the life of the German Jews:

Nuremberg Racial Laws of 1935=example of so-called rational anti-Semitism; Jews are legally separated from the rest of German society—no inter-racial marriages or liaison; loss of citizenship, loss of ability to be civil servants who work for the government such as lawyers and justices; German Jews eventually banned from practicing medicine in German hospitals, professors of Jewish faith lose their positions, etc.

Eventually leads to violence sponsored by the Nazi regime culminating in the Crystal Night Massacres of November 9, 10, 1938.

