

6.1 Peacemaking, 1919

• The armistice

FOCUS

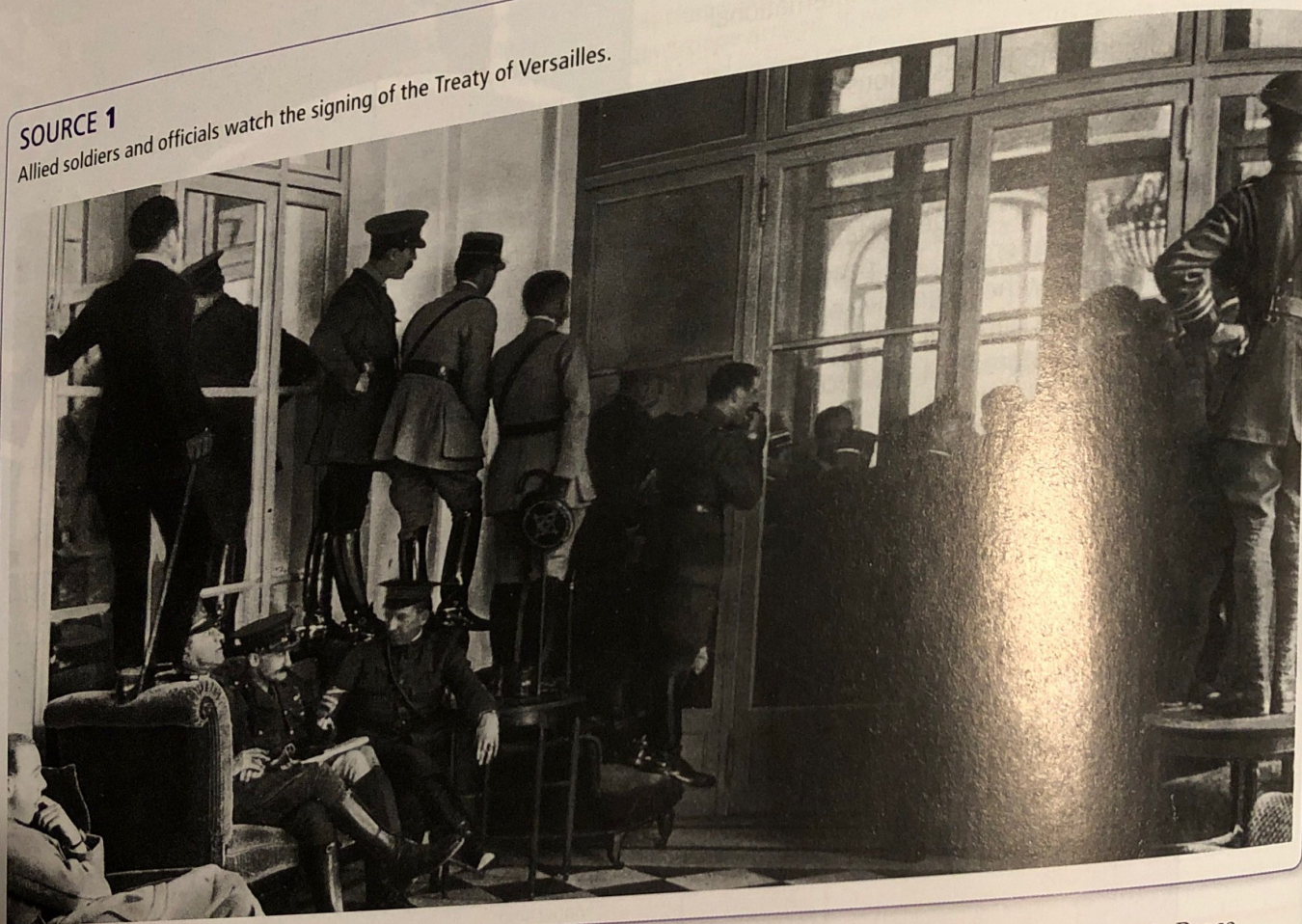
This section explores the peace settlement made at the end of the First World War. It explains how the leaders of the victorious countries came together to sort out how to deal with Germany and its allies. Germany had no say in the terms that the German representatives had to sign at Versailles.

In this section, you will be studying the following:

- The ARMISTICE and the aims of the Big Three.
- The nature and extent of the Versailles Settlement and the extent to which it satisfied the Big Three.
- The impact of the treaty and why Germans reacted so angrily towards it.

SOURCE 1

Allied soldiers and officials watch the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.



Source 1 was taken at the signing of the Treaty of Versailles at the Paris Peace Conference. It was a spectacular occasion and a momentous event. Months of hard negotiation, argument and compromise ended when the two German representatives who had been summoned to sign the Treaty did so on 28 June 1919.

When the treaty terms were announced the Germans complained that it was unfair. Many historians have criticised it since. To understand this, we need to look at the mood in 1919.

The aims of the peacemakers in 1919

When the leaders of Britain (Lloyd George), France (Clemenceau) and the USA (Wilson) arrived in Paris in January 1919 to draw up a treaty, they were already under pressure to deal severely with Germany. The people of the victorious countries, particularly in France and Britain, felt strongly that Germany was responsible for the war and should be punished.

There was also a strong feeling that Germany should pay for all the damage and destruction caused by the war. Apart from the USA, all of the countries that had fought in the war were exhausted. Their economies and their industries were in a bad state. Millions of young men had been killed or injured on both sides. Total British and French casualties, killed or injured, probably amounted to over 9 million. Ordinary civilians had faced shortages of food and medicine. Villages and towns in large areas of Belgium and France had been devastated. Illness and disease was commonplace.

As soon as the Paris Peace Conference began, there was disagreement about what the Conference was aiming to do:

- Some felt that the aim was to punish Germany.
- Others felt that the aim was to cripple Germany so that it could not start another war.
- Many felt that the point of the Conference was to reward the winning countries.
- Others believed that the aim of the Conference should be to establish a just and lasting peace.

President Wilson (USA)

Wilson has often been seen as an IDEALIST whose aim was to build a better and more peaceful world from the ruins of the Great War. This is partially true, but Wilson was not a politician who could be pushed around. He refused to cancel the debts owed to the USA by Britain and its Allies so that he could put pressure on them to accept his ideas. Wilson did believe that Germany should be punished. However, he also believed that the treaty with Germany should not be too harsh. His view was that if Germany was treated harshly, some day it would recover and want revenge. Wilson's main aim was to strengthen DEMOCRACY in the defeated nation so that its people would not let its leaders cause another war.

He believed that nations should co-operate to achieve world peace. In January 1918 he published his Fourteen Points to help achieve this. The most important for Wilson was the fourteenth. In this he proposed the setting up of an international body called the LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

He also believed in SELF-DETERMINATION (the idea that nations should rule themselves rather than be ruled by others). He wanted the different peoples of eastern Europe (for example, Poles, Czechs and Slovaks) to rule themselves rather than be part of Austria-Hungary's empire.

THE FOURTEEN POINTS

- 1 No secret treaties.
- 2 Free access to the seas in peacetime or wartime.
- 3 Free trade between countries.
- 4 All countries to work towards DISARMAMENT.
- 5 Colonies to have a say in their own future.
- 6 German troops to leave Russia.
- 7 Independence for Belgium.
- 8 France to regain Alsace-Lorraine.
- 9 Frontier between Austria and Italy to be adjusted.
- 10 SELF-DETERMINATION for the peoples of eastern Europe (i.e. they should rule themselves).
- 11 Serbia to have access to the sea.
- 12 Self-determination for the people in the Turkish Empire.
- 13 Poland to become an independent state with access to the sea.
- 14 League of Nations to be set up.

FACTFILE

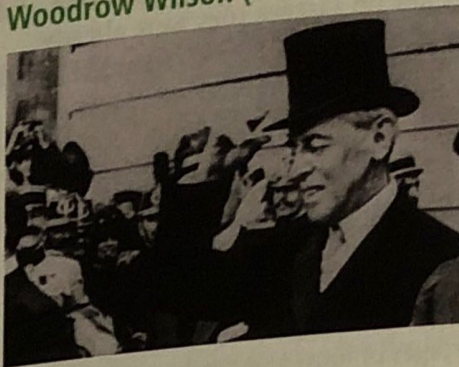
The Paris Peace Conference, 1919–20

- The Conference took place in the Palace of Versailles (a short distance from Paris).
- Thirty-two nations were supposed to be represented, but no one from the defeated countries was invited.
- Five treaties were drawn up at the Conference. The main one was the Treaty of Versailles which dealt with Germany. The other treaties dealt with Germany's allies.
- The important decisions on Germany's fate were taken by the 'Big Three': Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Wilson.
- The Big Three were supported by many diplomats and expert advisers, but they often ignored their advice.
- The Big Three got on badly from the start and relations between them got worse throughout the Conference.

SOURCE 2

President Wilson in 1918.

Sometimes people call me an idealist. Well that is the way I know I am an American ... America is the only idealist nation in the world.

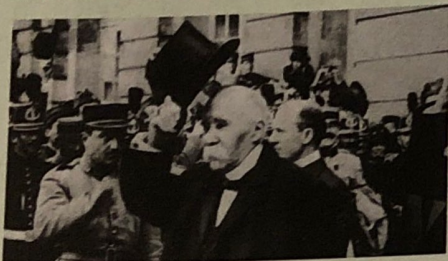
PROFILE**Woodrow Wilson (President of the USA)****Background**

- Born in 1856.
- Became a university professor.
- First entered politics in 1910.
- Became president in 1912 and was re-elected in 1916.

Character

An idealist, and a reformer. As president, he had campaigned against corruption in politics and business. However, he had a poor record with regard to the rights of African Americans. He concentrated on keeping the USA out of the war. Once the USA had joined the war, he drew up the Fourteen Points as the basis for ending the war fairly, so that future wars could be avoided. Once he made up his mind on an issue he was almost impossible to shift. This irritated Clemenceau and Lloyd George. So did the fact that Wilson felt the USA was morally superior to the European powers.

Many people in France and Britain did not agree with the ideas contained in Wilson's Fourteen Points. They seemed impractical. Take self-determination, for example. It would be very difficult to give the peoples of eastern Europe the chance to rule themselves because they were scattered across many countries. For example, 25 per cent of the population of the new state of Czechoslovakia were neither Czechs nor Slovaks. Some people were bound to end up being ruled by people from another group with different customs and a different language. Some historians have pointed out that, while Wilson talked a great deal about eastern and central Europe, he did not actually know very much about the area.

PROFILE**Georges Clemenceau (Prime Minister of France)****Background**

- Born in 1841 (he was aged 77 when the Paris Conference began).
- First entered French politics in 1871.
- Was Prime Minister from 1906 to 1909. From 1914 to 1917 he was very critical of the French war leaders. In November 1917 he was himself elected to lead France through the last years of the war.

Character

A hard, tough politician with a reputation for being uncompromising. He had seen his country invaded twice by the Germans, in 1870 and in 1914. He was determined not to allow such devastation ever again.

Georges Clemenceau (France)

France had suffered enormous damage to its land, industry, people – and self-confidence. Over two-thirds of the men who had served in the French army had been killed or injured. The war affected almost an entire generation. By comparison, Germany seemed to many French people as powerful and threatening as ever.

Ever since 1870, France had felt threatened by its increasingly powerful neighbour, Germany. The war increased this feeling. German land and industry had not been as badly damaged as France's. France's population (around 40 million) was in decline compared to Germany's (around 75 million). Clemenceau and other French leaders saw the treaty as an opportunity to cripple Germany so that it could not attack France again. The French President (Poincaré) even wanted Germany broken up into a collection of smaller states, but Clemenceau knew that the British and Americans would not agree to this. Clemenceau was a **REALIST** and knew he would probably be forced to compromise on some issues. However, he had to show he was aware of public opinion in France. He demanded a treaty that would weaken Germany as much as possible.

FIGURE 3

Proportion of forces killed or wounded.

	% dead	% wounded	% unhurt
Britain	12	27	59
France	14	53	29

SOURCE 4

Georges Clemenceau, speech at the Paris Peace Conference (16 June 1919).

The war which began on 1 August 1914, was the greatest crime against humanity and the freedom of peoples that any nation, calling itself civilised, has ever consciously committed. For many years the rulers of Germany, true to the Prussian tradition, strove for a position of dominance in Europe. They were not satisfied with that growing prosperity and influence to which Germany was entitled, and which all other nations were willing to accord her, in the society of free and equal peoples. They required that they should be able to dictate and tyrannize to a subservient Europe, as they dictated and tyrannized over a subservient Germany. Germany's responsibility, however, is not confined to having planned and started the war. She is no less responsible for the savage and inhuman manner in which it was conducted.

The conduct of Germany is almost unexampled in human history. The terrible responsibility which lies at her doors can be seen in the fact that not less than seven million dead lie buried in Europe, while more than twenty million others carry upon them the evidence of wounds and sufferings, because Germany saw fit to gratify her lust for tyranny by resort to war.

Justice, therefore, is the only possible basis for the settlement of the accounts of this terrible war.

THINK

- 1 In your own words, what were Clemenceau's arguments, as set out in Source 4?
- 2 What evidence do you have to support Clemenceau's claims?

David Lloyd George (Britain)

At the peace talks Lloyd George was often in the middle ground between Clemenceau and Wilson. He wanted Germany to be justly punished but not too harshly. He wanted Germany to lose its navy and its colonies because Britain thought they threatened the British Empire. However, like Wilson, he did not want Germany to seek revenge in the future and possibly start another war. He was also keen for Britain and Germany to begin trading with each other again. Before the war, Germany had been Britain's second largest trading partner. British people might not like it, but the fact was that trade with Germany meant jobs for them.

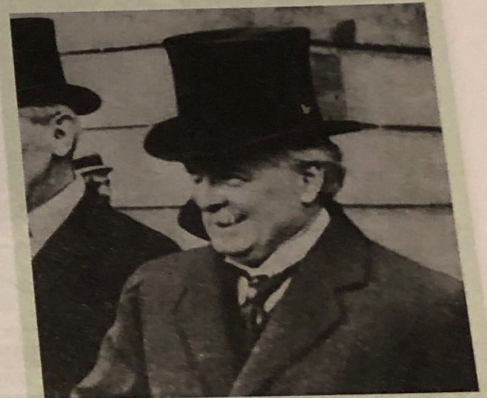
Like Clemenceau, Lloyd George had real problems with public pressures at home for a harsh treaty. Even his own MPs did not always agree with him and he had just won the 1918 election in Britain by promising to 'make Germany pay', even though he realised the dangers of this course of action.

FOCUS TASK**Part 1: What were the aims of the Big Three at the Paris Peace Conference?**

Using the information and sources on pages 240–43, draw up a chart like the one below summarising the aims of the three leaders at the Paris Peace Conference.

N.B. Leave the fifth column blank. You will need it for a later task.

Leader	Country	Attitude towards Germany	Main aim	

PROFILE**David Lloyd George (Prime Minister of Britain)****Background**

- Born in 1863.
- First entered politics in 1890. A very able politician who became prime minister in 1916 and remained in power until 1922.

Character

A realist. As an experienced politician, he knew there would have to be compromise. Thus he occupied the middle ground between the views of Wilson and those of Clemenceau.

SOURCE 5

Lloyd George speaking to the House of Commons, before the Peace Conference.

We want a peace which will be just, but not vindictive. We want a stern peace because the occasion demands it, but the severity must be designed, not for vengeance, but for peace. Above all, we want to protect the future against a repetition of the horrors of this war.

• The Versailles Settlement, 1919

The Treaty of Versailles involved compromises on the part of the Big Three. But it also was a 'DIKTAT' – Germany had no say in the negotiations. If the German representatives had not signed the treaty, the Allies promised to re-start the war.

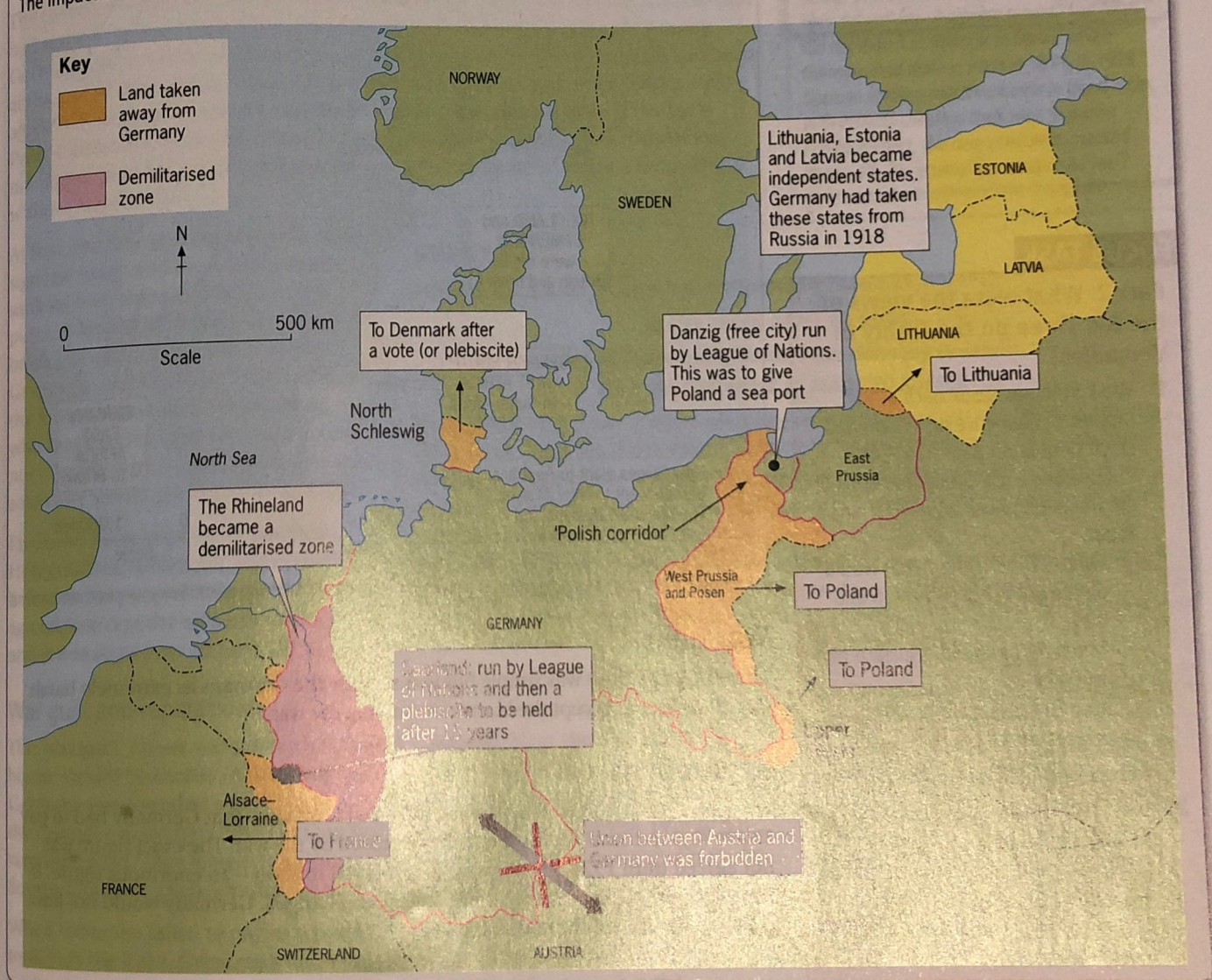
Territorial changes

As a result of the treaty, Germany's overseas empire was taken away (see Figure 9, page 246). This had been one of the causes of bad relations between Britain and Germany before the war. As a result of the treaty, former German colonies became MANDATES controlled by the League of Nations. This meant that the League was given power to rule them. In practice, the League delegated responsibility to its leading members, which effectively meant that France and Britain controlled them.

Germany's European borders were very extensive, and the section dealing with former German territories was a complicated part of the treaty (see Figure 7). In addition to these changes, the treaty also forbade Germany to join together with its former ally Austria.

FIGURE 7

The impact of the Treaty of Versailles on the borders of Europe.



Military restrictions

The size and power of the German army was a major concern of all the powers, especially France. The treaty therefore restricted German armed forces to a level well below what they had been before the war.

- The army was limited to 100,000 men.
- CONSCRIPTION was banned – soldiers had to be volunteers.
- Germany was not allowed armoured vehicles, submarines or aircraft.
- The navy could build only six battleships.
- The Rhineland became a DEMILITARISED ZONE. This meant that no German troops were allowed into that area. The Rhineland was important because it was the border area between Germany and France (see Figure 7).

SOURCE 8

The 'War Guilt' clause from the Treaty of Versailles, 1919.

The Allied governments affirm, and Germany accepts, the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied governments and their peoples have been subjected as a result of the war.

FOCUS TASK

Part 2: What were the views of the Big Three on the Treaty of Versailles?

- 1 Work in threes. Look back at the profiles of Clemenceau, Wilson and Lloyd George on pages 241–43. Choose one each. Study the terms of the treaty on pages 245–46. Think about:

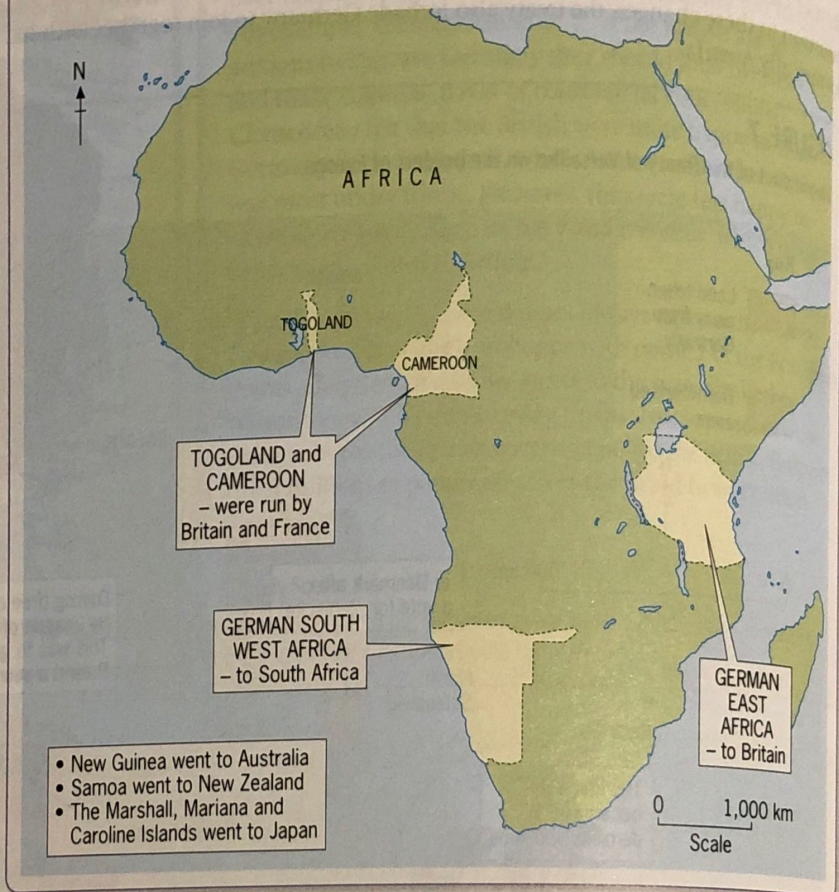
- which terms of the treaty would please your chosen person and why
- which terms would displease him and why
- how far he seemed to have achieved his aims.

Report your findings to your partners.

- 2 Look back at the chart you compiled on page 243. There should be a blank fifth column. Put the heading 'How they felt about the treaty' and fill it in for each leader with a one-sentence summary.

FIGURE 9

What happened to Germany's overseas empire as a result of the Treaty of Versailles.



War guilt

The WAR GUILT clause was simple but was seen by the Germans as extremely harsh. Germany had to accept the blame for starting the war.

Reparations

The major powers agreed, without consulting Germany, that Germany had to pay REPARATIONS to the Allies for the damage caused by the war. The exact figure was not agreed until 1921 when it was set at £6,600 million – an enormous figure. If the terms of the payments had not later been changed, Germany would not have finished paying this bill until 1984.

● The impact of the Treaty of Versailles

After the First World War, all of the defeated nations were assigned their own peace treaties, compelling reparations terms. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was split up, with new nations created, such as Czechoslovakia, and separate treaties were imposed on Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey. However, it was the Treaty of Versailles, presented to Germany, which was to shape the course of events in Europe in the coming decades.

German objections to the treaty

The terms of the treaty were announced on 7 May to a horrified German nation. Germany was to lose:

- 10 per cent of its land
- all of its overseas colonies
- 12.5 per cent of its population
- 16 per cent of its coalfields and almost half of its iron and steel industry.

Its army was reduced to 100,000 men. It could have no air force, and only a tiny navy. Worst of all, Germany had to accept the blame for starting the war and would therefore pay reparations.

The overall reaction of Germans was one of outrage. They certainly did not feel they had started the war. They did not even feel they had lost the war. In 1919 many Germans did not really understand how bad Germany's military situation had been at the end of the conflict. They believed that the German government had simply agreed to a ceasefire, and that therefore Germany should have been at the Paris Peace Conference to negotiate peace. They were angry that their government was not represented at the talks and that they were being forced to accept a harsh treaty without any choice.

At first, the new government refused to sign the treaty and the German navy sank its own ships in protest. At one point, it looked as though war might break out again. But what could the German leader Ebert do? He consulted the army commander, Hindenburg, who made it clear that Germany could not possibly win, but indicated that as a soldier he would prefer to die fighting.

Ebert was in an impossible position. How could he inflict war and certain defeat on his people? Reluctantly, he agreed to accept the terms of the treaty and it was signed on 28 June 1919.

War guilt and reparations

The 'war guilt' clause was particularly hated. Germans felt at the very least that blame should be shared. What made matters worse, however, was that because Germany was forced to accept blame for the war, it was also expected to pay for all the damage caused by it. The German economy was already in tatters. People had very little food. They feared that the reparations payments would cripple them. As Source 12 shows, there was little sympathy for them among their former enemies.

When Germany failed to pay its reparations in 1922–23, French and Belgian troops took over the Ruhr, Germany's main industrial area. This was completely legal under the treaty (see Chapter 2 on Germany, pages 60–1 for more details).

SOURCE 10

From *Deutsche Zeitung* (German News), on the day the treaty was signed.

Today in the Hall of Mirrors the disgraceful Treaty is being signed. Do not forget it! The German people will, with unceasing labour, press forward to reconquer the place among the nations to which it is entitled.

SOURCE 11

From *Peacemakers*, by Professor Margaret Macmillan of the University of Toronto, published in 2001.

The mistake the Allies made, and it did not become clear until much later, was that, as a result of the armistice terms, the great majority of Germans never experienced their country's defeat at first hand. Except in the Rhineland, they did not see occupying troops. The Allies did not march in triumph to Berlin, as the Germans had done in Paris in 1871. In 1918 German soldiers marched home in good order, with crowds cheering their way; in Berlin, Friedrich Ebert, the new president, greeted them with 'No enemy has conquered you'!

SOURCE 12

Headlines and article from the British newspaper *the People*, 25 May 1919.

ALLIES STERN REPLY TO HUNS.

Terms of Peace Treaty Better Than Germany Deserves.

WAR-MAKERS MUST BE MADE TO SUFFER

The Allies have made a stern and uncompromising reply to Rantzau's pleas that German industry will be ruined and her population rendered destitute by the economic terms of the Peace Treaty. The reply points out that the terms have been determined by Germany's capacity to pay, not by her guilt; and the Huns are reminded that as they were responsible for the war they must suffer the consequences as well as other nations.

The German Delegation has left for Spa to consult with their Government, probably with the idea of arranging a means for 'saving their face', as it is now believed they will sign the Treaty.

THINK

- 1 How would you describe the tone of Source 10?
- 2 How does Source 11 help to explain the attitude shown in Source 10?

SOURCE 4

From Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, 1923–24.

We demand equality of rights for the German people in its dealings with other nations, and abolition of the Peace Treaties of Versailles and St Germain. [The Treaty of St Germain was Austria's equivalent of the Treaty of Versailles.]

SOURCE 5

From Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

We turn our eyes towards the lands of the east ... When we speak of new territory in Europe today, we must principally think of Russia and the border states subject to her. Destiny itself seems to wish to point out the way for us here.

Colonisation of the eastern frontiers is of extreme importance. It will be the duty of Germany's foreign policy to provide large spaces for the nourishment and settlement of the growing population of Germany.

SOURCE 6

From Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

We must not forget that the Bolsheviks are blood-stained. That they overran a great state [Russia], and in a fury of massacre wiped out millions of their most intelligent fellow-countrymen and now for ten years have been conducting the most tyrannous regime of all time. We must not forget that many of them belong to a race which combines a rare mixture of bestial cruelty and vast skill in lies, and considers itself specially called now to gather the whole world under its bloody oppression.

The menace which Russia suffered under is one which perpetually hangs over Germany. Germany is the next great objective of Bolshevism. All our strength is needed to raise up our nation once more and rescue it from the embrace of the international python ... The first essential is the expulsion of the Marxist poison from the body of our nation.

Hitler's aims and Allied reactions

Hitler was never secretive about his plans for Germany. As early as 1924 he had laid out in his book *Mein Kampf* what he would do if the Nazis ever achieved power in Germany. His three main aims are described below.

Abolish the Treaty of Versailles!

Like many Germans, Hitler believed that the Treaty of Versailles was unjust. He hated the Treaty and called the German leaders who had signed it 'The November Criminals'. The treaty was a constant reminder to Germans of their defeat in the First World War and their humiliation by the Allies. Hitler promised that if he became leader of Germany he would reverse it.

By the time he came to power in Germany, some of the terms had already been changed. For example, Germany had stopped making reparations payments altogether. However, most points were still in place. The table in the Focus Task on page 249 shows the terms of the treaty that most angered Hitler.

Expand German territory!

The Treaty of Versailles had taken away territory from Germany. Hitler wanted to get that territory back. He wanted Germany to unite with Austria. He wanted German minorities in other countries such as Czechoslovakia to rejoin Germany. But he also wanted to carve out an empire in eastern Europe to give extra *LEBENSRAUM* or 'living space' for Germans.

Defeat Communism!

A German empire carved out of the Soviet Union would also help Hitler in one of his other objectives – the defeat of COMMUNISM or BOLSHEVISM. Hitler was anti-Communist. He believed that Bolsheviks had helped to bring about the defeat of Germany in the First World War. He also believed that the Bolsheviks wanted to take over Germany.

FOCUS TASK**What were Hitler's aims for Germany by 1933?**

It is 1933. Write a briefing paper for the British government on Hitler's plans for Germany. Use Sources 4–6 to help you.

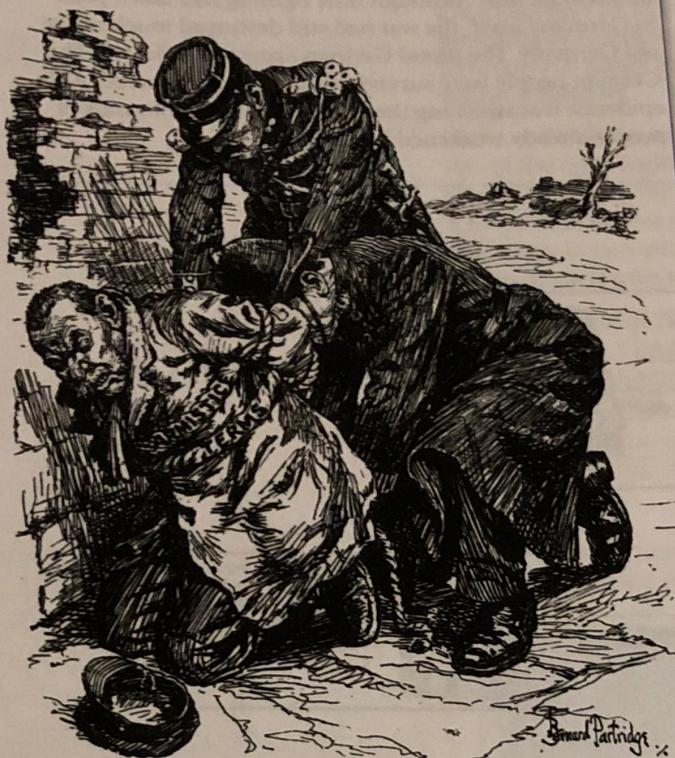
Conclude with your own assessment on whether the government should be worried about Hitler and his plans.

In your conclusion, remember these facts about the British government:

- Britain is a leading member of the League of Nations and is supposed to uphold the Treaty of Versailles, by force if necessary
- The British government does not trust the Communists and thinks that a strong Germany could help to stop the Communist threat

SOURCE 9

A cartoon from *Punch* magazine, 1919.



GIVING HIM ROPE?

GERMAN CRIMINAL (to Allied Police). "HERE, I SAY, STOP! YOU'RE HURTING ME! [said] IF I ONLY WHINE ENOUGH I MAY BE ABLE TO WRIGGLE OUT OF THIS YET."

FACTFILE

Treaty of Versailles terms

As a result of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, signed in June 1919, Germany:

- was blamed for the war (WAR GUILT clause)
- lost its overseas empire
- lost some territory in Europe
- was forbidden to join with Austria
- could not join the League of Nations
- was limited in its armed forces.

As a result of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany lost:

- approximately 10 per cent of its territory
- 12.5 per cent of its population
- 16 per cent of its coal fields and almost half of its iron and steel industry.

The end of the monarchy, November

In autumn 1918 the Allies had clearly won the war. Germany was in a state of chaos, as you have seen in Figure 8. The Allies offered Germany peace, but under strict conditions. One condition was that Germany become more democratic. When the Kaiser refused, in northern Germany mutinied and took over the town of Kiel. This triggered other revolts. The Kaiser's old enemies, the Socialists, led uprisings of workers and soldiers in German ports. Soon, other German cities followed. In Bavaria an independent Socialist REPUBLIC was declared. On 9 November 1918 the Kaiser, realising he had little chance, abdicated his throne and left Germany for the Netherlands.

Post-war problems in Germany

Germans felt betrayed. The end of the war had come suddenly and unexpectedly; their Kaiser had come. A new government had to face all the problems that existed in German society. In addition, a devastating outbreak of influenza had swept across western Europe and killed many Germans who were suffering from malnourishment and had little resistance to germs.

German reparations

At the end of any conflict, the victorious countries sought compensation from those NATIONS responsible for starting the war. At the conclusion of the First World War, Germany's REPARATIONS were spelt out in the Treaty of Versailles, decided upon by the British, American and French leaders.

The details of this are covered in Chapter 6 on pages 245–50, but the main terms are given in the Factfile here.

Financial reparations were also enforced by the treaty. The bill, announced in April 1921, was set at £6,600 million, to be paid in annual instalments. This was 2 per cent of Germany's annual output. The Germans protested that this was an intolerable strain on the economy, which they were struggling to rebuild after the war, but their protests were ignored.

The invasion of the Ruhr

The first instalment of £50 million was paid in 1921, but in 1922 nothing was paid. Ebert, Socialist leader and German Chancellor, did his best to play for time and to negotiate concessions from the Allies, but the French in particular ran out of patience. They too had war debts to pay to the USA. So in January 1923 French and Belgian troops entered the Ruhr, an industrial area of Germany near the French border. This was quite legal under the Treaty of Versailles. They began to take what was owed to them in the form of raw materials and goods.

The results of the occupation of the Ruhr were disastrous for Germany. The government ordered the workers to carry out passive resistance, which meant they went on strike. That way, there would be nothing for the French to take away. The French reacted harshly, killing over 100 workers and expelling over 100,000 protesters from the region. More importantly, the halt in industrial production in Germany's most important region caused the collapse of the German currency.

SOURCE 10

A 1923 German poster discrediting Belgian goods, as long as

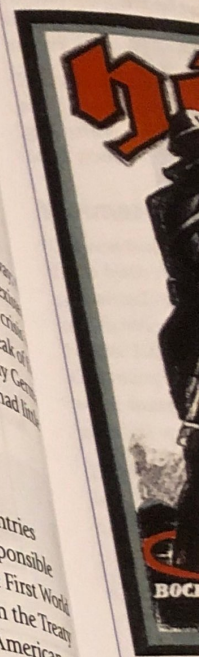


FIGURE 12

The rising cost of a loaf of bread in Berlin.

Date	Number of marks
1918	0.63
1922	163
January 1923	250
July 1923	3,465
September 1923	1,512,000
November 1923	201,000,000,000

FIGURE 13

The exchange rate value of the mark in pounds.

1921	£1 = 500 marks
Nov 1923	£1 = 14,000,000,000,000 marks

SOURCE 14

E. Dobert, *Convert to Freedom*, 1941.

Billion-mark notes were quickly handed on as though they burned one's fingers, for tomorrow one would no longer pay in notes but in bundles of notes ... One afternoon I rang Aunt Louise's bell. The door was opened merely a crack. From the dark came an odd broken voice: 'I've used 60 billion marks' worth of gas. My milk bill is 1 million. But all I have left is 2,000 marks. I don't understand any more.'

THINK

- 1 Use Figure 12 to work out how much bread a one-billion mark banknote could buy in July 1923 and November 1923.
- 2 Use the sources and figures on this page to describe in your own words how ordinary Germans were affected by the collapse of the mark.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Which of the following was the more important reason for the collapse of the German economy by 1923?

- The harshness of the Treaty of Versailles, including reparations payments.
- The hyperinflation that had developed by 1923.

Explain your answer with reference to both reasons.

Hyperinflation

SOURCE 15

A photograph taken in 1923 showing a woman using banknotes to start her fire.



Because it had no goods to trade, the government simply printed more money. For the government this seemed an attractive solution. It paid off its debts in worthless marks, including war loans of over £2,200 million. The great industrialists were able to pay off all their debts as well.

This set off a chain reaction. With so much money in circulation, prices and wages rocketed, but people soon realised that this money was worthless. Wages began to be paid daily instead of weekly. Workers needed wheelbarrows to carry home their wages. The price of goods could rise between joining the back of a queue in a shop and reaching the front!

Poor people suffered, but the greatest casualties were the richer Germans – those with savings. Prosperous middle-class families would find that their savings in the bank, which might have bought them a house in 1921, by 1923 would not even buy a loaf of bread. Pensioners found that their previously ample monthly pension would not even buy a cup of coffee.

It was clear to all, both inside and outside Germany, that the situation needed urgent action. In August 1923 a new government under Gustav Stresemann took over. He called off the passive resistance in the Ruhr. He called in the worthless marks and burned them, replacing them with a new currency called the Rentenmark. He negotiated to receive American loans under the Dawes Plan. He even renegotiated the reparations payments (see page 69). The economic crisis was solved very quickly. Some historians suggest that this is evidence that Germany's problems were not as severe as its politicians had made out.

It was also increasingly clear, however, that the HYPERINFLATION had done great political damage to the Weimar government. Right-wing opponents had yet another problem to blame the government for, and the government had lost the support of the middle classes.

• Weimar Germany

The day after the Kaiser fled, Friedrich Ebert became the new President of Germany. He immediately signed an ARMISTICE with the Allies. He also announced to the German people that the new Republic would have freedom of speech, freedom of worship and better working conditions. A constitution was drawn up (see Factfile and Figure 16).

The success of the new government depended on the German people's acceptance of an almost instant change from the traditional, AUTOCRATIC government to this new democratic system. The prospect was not a good one.

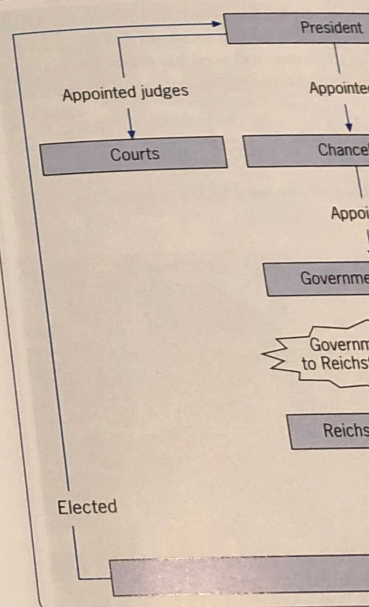
Weimar democracy

The reaction of politicians in Germany was unenthusiastic. From both right and left. On the right wing, nearly all remained in their positions in the army, judiciary, civil service and police. They restricted what the new government could do. Many by the Kaiser. A powerful myth developed that men were many Communists who believed that at this time a Communist revolution just like Russia was needed.

Despite this opposition, in January 1919 free elections were held in Germany's history. Ebert's party won a majority in the Weimar Republic. It was called this because, like the Russian Revolution, it was met in the small town of Weimar rather than in Berlin. In February 1919, Berlin was thought to be too violent.

FIGURE 16

The Weimar Constitution.



● Weimar Germany

The day after the Kaiser fled, Friedrich Ebert became the new leader of the Republic of Germany. He immediately signed an ARMISTICE with the Allies. The war was over. He also announced to the German people that the new Republic was giving them freedom of speech, freedom of worship and better working conditions. A new constitution was drawn up (see Factfile and Figure 16).

The success of the new government depended on the German people accepting an almost instant change from the traditional, AUTOCRATIC German system of government to this new democratic system. The prospects for this did not look good.

Weimar democracy

The reaction of politicians in Germany was unenthusiastic. Ebert had opposition from both right and left. On the right wing, nearly all the Kaiser's former advisers remained in their positions in the army, judiciary, civil service and industry. They restricted what the new government could do. Many still hoped for a return to rule by the Kaiser. A powerful myth developed that men such as Ebert had stabbed Germany in the back and caused German defeat in the war. On the left wing there were many Communists who believed that at this stage what Germany actually needed was a Communist revolution just like Russia's in 1917.

Despite this opposition, in January 1919 free elections took place for the first time in Germany's history. Ebert's party won a majority and he became the President of the Weimar Republic. It was called this because, to start with, the new government met in the small town of Weimar rather than in the German capital, Berlin. Even in February 1919, Berlin was thought to be too violent and unstable.

THINK

Study the Factfile on the Weimar Constitution and Figure 16.

- 1 What aspects of the Constitution made Weimar Germany seem very democratic?
- 2 What aspects might suggest the possibility of either weak government or one person being able to take charge?

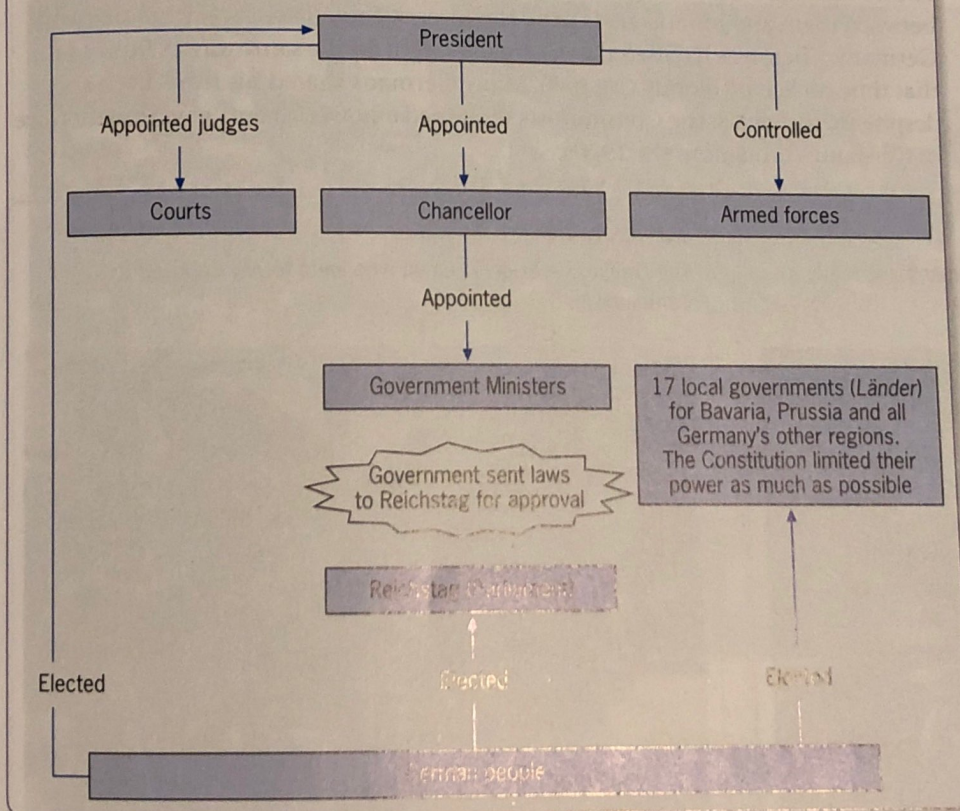
FACTFILE

The Weimar Constitution

- Before the war Germany had had no real DEMOCRACY. The Kaiser was virtually a dictator.
- The Weimar Constitution, on the other hand, attempted to set up probably the most democratic system in the world where no individual could gain too much power.
- All Germans over the age of 20 could vote.
- There was a system of PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION – if a party gained 20 per cent of the votes, they gained 20 per cent of the seats in the Parliament (Reichstag).
- The Chancellor was responsible for day-to-day government, but he needed the support of half the Reichstag.
- The Head of State was the President. The President stayed out of day-to-day government. In a crisis he could rule the country directly through Article 48 of the Constitution. This gave him emergency powers, which meant he did not have to consult the Reichstag.

FIGURE 16

The Weimar Constitution.



The beginnings of the Nazi Party

FACTFILE The early years, 1889-1919



- Born in Austria in 1889.
- He got on badly with his father but was fond of his mother.
- At the age of 16 he left school and went to Vienna to pursue his ambition of becoming an artist. However, things went wrong for him and between 1909 and 1914 he was virtually a 'down and out' on the streets of Vienna.
- During this period he developed his hatred of foreigners and Jews.
- When war broke out in 1914, Hitler joined the German army and served with distinction, winning the Iron Cross.
- Hitler found it very hard to accept the armistice and was completely opposed to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.
- He despised Weimar democracy and like many Germans looked back to the 'glorious days' of the Kaiser.
- Hitler stayed in the army after the war, working in Munich for the intelligence services. It was in this job that he came across the DAP or German Workers' Party led by Anton Drexler. He liked the ideas of the party and joined in 1919.

FACTFILE

The 25-Point Programme of the Nazi Party

The most important pledges of the Programme were:

- the abolition of the Treaty of Versailles
- union of Germany and Austria
- only 'true' Germans to be allowed to live in Germany; Jews in particular were to be excluded
- large industries and businesses to be nationalised
- generous provision for old age pensioners
- a strong central government in Germany.

Germany faced another crisis in 1923. The Nazi Party (National Socialist German Workers' Party) had been formed in 1920. It had a 25-point programme (see Factfile) which combined right-wing and left-wing policies in an attempt to appeal to as many Germans as possible. In 1921 Hitler became its leader.

SOURCE 20

American intelligence report on political activities in Germany, 1922.

The most active political force in Bavaria at the present time is the National Socialist Party ... It has recently acquired a political influence quite disproportionate to its actual numerical strength ... Adolf Hitler from the very first has been the dominating force in the movement and the personality of this man has undoubtedly been one of the most important factors contributing to its success ... His ability to influence a popular assembly is uncanny.

SOURCE 21

A person who went to Nazi meetings describes the impact of Hitler's speeches. From *A Part of Myself: Portrait of an Epoch*, by C. Zuckmayer.

Hitler knew how to whip up those crowds jammed closely in a dense cloud of cigarette smoke – not by argument, but by his manner: the roaring and especially the power of his repetitions delivered in a certain infectious rhythm ... He would draw up a list of existing evils and imaginary abuses and after listing them, in higher and higher crescendo, he screamed: 'And whose fault is it? It's all ... the fault ... of the Jews!'

Hitler had a clear and simple appeal. He stirred nationalist passions in his audiences. He gave them SCAPEGOATS to blame for Germany's problems: the Allies, the Versailles Treaty, the 'November Criminals' (the Socialist politicians who signed the Treaty), the Communists and the Jews.

His meetings were so successful that his opponents tried to disrupt them. To counter this, he set up the SA, also known as the storm troopers or brownshirts, in 1921. These hired thugs protected Hitler's meetings but also disrupted those of other parties.

By 1923 the Nazis were still very much a minority party, but Hitler had given them a high profile.

The Munich Putsch, 1923

By November 1923 Hitler believed that the moment had come for him to topple the Weimar government. The government was preoccupied with the economic crisis. Stresemann had just called off Germany's passive resistance in the Ruhr (see page 62). On 8 November, Hitler hijacked a local government meeting and announced he was taking over the government of Bavaria. He was joined by the old war hero Ludendorff.

Nazi storm troopers began taking over official buildings. The next day, however, the Weimar government forces hit back. Police rounded up the storm troopers and in a brief exchange of shots 16 Nazis were killed by the police. The rebellion broke up in chaos. Hitler escaped in a car, while Ludendorff and others stayed to face the armed police.

Hitler had miscalculated the mood of the German people. In the short term, the Munich Putsch was a disaster for him. People did not rise up to support him. He and other leading Nazis were arrested and charged with treason. At the trial, however, Hitler gained enormous publicity for himself and his ideas, as his every word was reported in the newspapers.

In fact, Hitler so impressed the judges that he and his accomplices got off very lightly. Ludendorff was freed altogether and Hitler was given only five years in prison, even though the legal guidelines said that high treason should carry a life sentence. In the end, Hitler served only nine months of the sentence and did so in great comfort in Landsberg castle.

This last point is very significant. It was clear that Hitler had some sympathy and support from important figures in the legal system. Because of his links with Ludendorff, Hitler probably gained the attention of important figures in the army. Time would show that Hitler was down, but not out.

SOURCE 22

Leading Nazi Otto Strasser recalls a conversation with Hitler in the early 1920s.

'Power!' screamed Adolf. 'We must have power!' 'Before we gain it,' I replied firmly, 'let us decide what we propose to do with it.'

Hitler, who even then could hardly bear contradiction, thumped the table and barked: 'Power first – afterwards we can act as circumstances dictate.'

SOURCE 23

Hitler declares the revolution, 8 November 1923.

The Bavarian Ministry is removed. I propose that a Bavarian government be formed consisting of a Regent and a Prime Minister invested with dictatorial powers ... The government of the November Criminals and the Reich president are declared to be removed ... I propose that, until accounts have been finally settled with the November Criminals, the direction of policy in the National Government be taken over by me ...

SOURCE 24

Hitler at his trial in January 1924.

I alone bear the responsibility but I am not a criminal because of that ... There is no such thing as high treason against the traitors of 1918 ... I feel myself the best of Germans who wanted the best for the German people.

2.2 Germany and the Depression

FOCUS

In 1929 the American stock market crashed and sent the USA into a disastrous economic depression. In a very short time, countries around the world began to feel the effects of this depression. Germany was particularly badly affected. American bankers and businessmen lost huge amounts of money in the crash. To pay off their debts they asked German banks to repay the money they had borrowed. The result was economic collapse in Germany. Businesses went bankrupt, workers were laid off and unemployment rocketed.

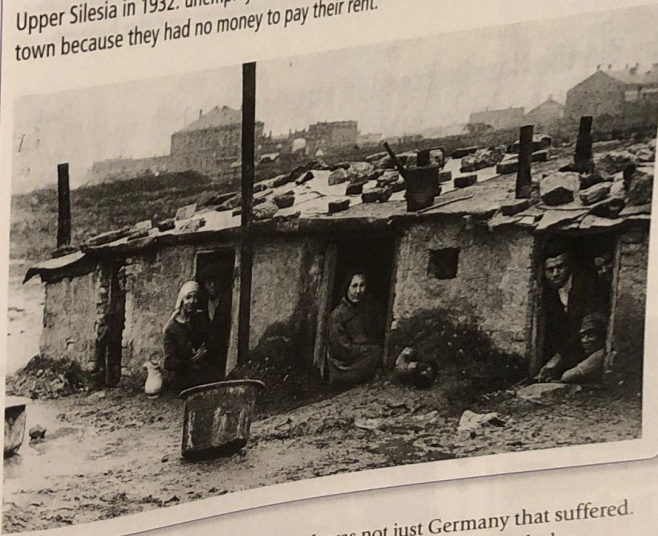
In this part of the topic you will study the following:

- The impact of the Depression and why people supported the Nazis.
- The failure of Weimar democracy, and how Hitler became Chancellor in 1933.
- How Hitler established his DICTATORSHIP by 1934.

• The impact of the Depression

SOURCE 1

Upper Silesia in 1932: unemployed miners and their families moved into shacks in a shanty town because they had no money to pay their rent.



The Depression was a worldwide problem. It was not just Germany that suffered. Nor was the Weimar government the only government grappling with the problem of unemployment. However, because Germany had been so dependent on American loans, and because it still had to pay reparations to the Allies, the problems were most acute in Germany.

In addition, it seemed that the Weimar Constitution, with its careful balance of power, made firm and decisive action by the government very difficult indeed (see Factfile, page 63).

Thus all sections of society were affected in different ways – from business leaders to industrial workers. The effects were not just economic. The recently gained mood of optimism vanished, and the defects of Weimar Germany, mostly hidden in the later 1920s, suddenly became glaringly obvious.

SOURCE 2

An eyewitness describes the unemployed vagrants in Germany in 1932.

No one knew how many there were of them. They completely filled the streets. They stood or lay about in the streets as if they had taken root there. They sat or lay on the pavements or in the roadway and gravely shared out scraps of newspapers among themselves.

ACTIVITY

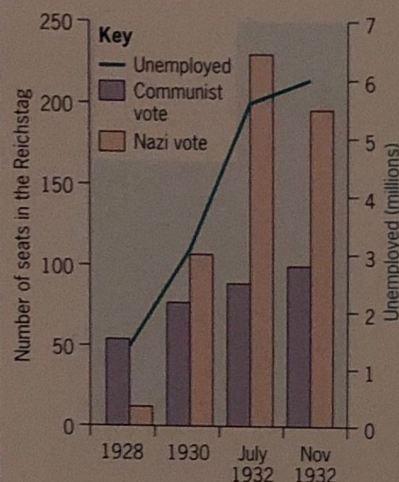
Draw a diagram to show how the Wall Street Crash could lead to miners losing their jobs in Silesia.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Describe two economic problems for Germans caused by the Wall Street Crash.

FIGURE 3

Support for the Nazis and Communists, and unemployment, 1928–32.

**SOURCE 4**

Albert Speer, writing in 1931. Later, he was to become an important and powerful Nazi leader.

My mother saw a storm trooper parade in the streets of Heidelberg. The sight of discipline in a time of chaos, the impression of energy in an atmosphere of universal hopelessness seems to have won her over.

SOURCE 5

A Nazi Party rally in Frankfurt in 1932.

**Growth in support for extremist parties, 1928–32**

The effects of the Wall Street Crash, leading to economic depression in Germany, convinced many Germans that the government of the Weimar Republic had failed. Therefore many turned to the Communists who promised a workers' revolution, or they looked to the right-wing parties, especially the Nazis with their promises of a return to strong rule and the restoration of Germany's status in the world.

The appeal of the Nazi Party

Hitler's ideas now had a special relevance:

- Is the Weimar government indecisive? Then Germany needs a strong leader!
- Are reparations adding to Germany's problems? Then kick out the Treaty of Versailles!
- Is unemployment a problem? Let the unemployed join the army, build Germany's armaments and be used for public works like road building!

The Nazis' 25-Point Programme (see page 66) was very attractive to those most vulnerable to the effects of the Depression: the unemployed, the elderly and the middle classes. Hitler offered them culprits to blame for Germany's troubles – the Allies, the 'November Criminals' and the Jews. None of these messages was new but they had not won support for the Nazis in the Stresemann years. The difference now was that the democratic parties simply could not get Germany back to work.

In the 1930 elections the Nazis won 107 seats. In November 1932 they won 196 seats. They did not yet have an overall majority, but they were now the biggest single party.

Why did the Nazis succeed in elections?

The Nazis came to power because Hitler and his supporters made promises that appealed to many people. Hitler's PROPAGANDA chief, Joseph Goebbels, simplified the main policies put forward by the Nazi Party so that they could be easily understood by everyone.

The use of propaganda

The promises made by the Nazi Party during this period were generalised statements of their beliefs:

- They talked about a return to traditional values.
- They criticised the democratic system of the Weimar Republic and its failure to solve the nation's economic problems.
- They promised employment and economic strength.
- They cited the Jews, Communists, Weimar politicians and the Treaty of Versailles as the root causes of Germany's problems.

Because these were expressed as generalised beliefs, rather than detailed policies, it was difficult to criticise them, and they appealed to large sections of society. When the Nazis were criticised over a specific policy, they were very likely to drop it. This happened when their plans to nationalise industry were criticised by industrialists.

There is no doubt that Nazi campaign methods were modern and effective. Goebbels understood how effectively propaganda could be used and the Nazis' posters and pamphlets could be found everywhere. Their rallies impressed people with their energy, enthusiasm and sheer size.

The role of the SA

The Nazi Party was also seen as a party of order, in a time of chaos. During this period there were frequent street battles between Communist gangs and the police. In contrast, the SA and SS gave an impression of discipline and order. Many people welcomed the fact that the SA were prepared to fight the Communists (page 76). The SA were better organised and usually had the support of the police and army when they beat up opponents and disrupted meetings and rallies.

Hitler's appeal

The Nazis' greatest campaigning asset was Hitler. He was a powerful speaker who was years ahead of his time as a communicator. Hitler ran for president in 1932, winning 13 million votes to Hindenburg's 19 million. Despite Hitler's defeat, the campaign raised his profile hugely. Using films, radio and records he brought his message to millions. He travelled by plane on a hectic tour of rallies all over Germany. He appeared as a dynamic man of the moment, the leader of a modern party with modern ideas. At the same time, he was able to appear to be a man of the people, someone who knew and understood the Germans and their problems.

SOURCE 6

A Nazi election poster from July 1932. The Nazis proclaim 'We build!' and promise to provide work, freedom and bread. They accuse the opposing parties of planning to use terror, corruption, lies and other strategies as the basis for their government.



FACTFILE

The SA

This military group was important in the Nazi rise to power. It protected Nazi rallies and disrupted the meetings of political opponents. Although the organisation gave the impression of order, its members were not always strictly disciplined and were not fully under Hitler's control. They were known as the Brownshirts.

The SS

Originally part of the SA in the 1920s, but the organisation became separate under Heinrich Himmler. The SS swore total loyalty to Hitler, were tightly disciplined, and were known as the Blackshirts.

SOURCE 7

Hitler speaking at an election rally, July 1932.

Our opponents accuse us National Socialists, and me in particular, of being intolerant and quarrelsome. They say that we don't want to work with other parties. They say the National Socialists are not German at all, because they refuse to work with other political parties. So is it typically German to have thirty political parties? I have to admit one thing – these gentlemen are quite right. We are intolerant. I have given myself this one goal – to sweep these thirty political parties out of Germany.

SOURCE 8

An eyewitness account of one of Hitler's meetings in the 1920s.

He began to speak and I immediately disliked him. I didn't know then what he would later become. I found him rather comical, with his funny moustache. He had a scratchy voice and a rather strange appearance, and he shouted so much. He was shouting in this small room, and what he was saying was very simplistic. I thought he wasn't quite normal. I found him spooky.

'Negative cohesion'

Not everyone was taken in by Nazi campaigning methods and Hitler's magnetism (see Source 8). But even some of the sceptics supported the Nazis. The historian Gordon Craig believed that this was because of something he called 'negative cohesion'. This meant that people supported the Nazis not because they shared Nazi views (that would be positive cohesion) but because they shared Nazi fears and dislikes. In what was seen as a modern, decadent culture, the Nazis could count on the support of those who felt traditional German values were under threat.