

The Weimar Republic was born amidst an intense atmosphere of political, economic and social instability as the defeat of WWI created a long-term legacy of bitterness in German society. Nationalist movements, such as the NSDAP or Nazi Party thrived in times of social hardship, and were triggered by events such as the Great Depression, in which widespread starvation, unemployment and social unrest thrived. ~~The Weimar Republic~~ The revitalisation of nationalist movements ~~and~~ which stressed the importance of nationalism was a significant factor which contributed to the failure of democracy in Germany.

German defeat in WWI created ~~potentially~~ severe social unrest which cut ~~across~~ through all of society. The German Reichswehr, were bitter after their defeat on the Western Front and failed to

acknowledge their defeat. The signing of the TDV by Weimar officials such as Walter Rathenau was insulting to ex WWI veterans - ~~and~~ ~~them~~ They labelled the TDV, dolchstoßlegende, or stab in the back, as they believed the Weimar Government, which was proclaimed in 1918, had portrayed the German people and Germany's image as a powerful & influential super power. This deflated national identity and pride led to the revitalisation of nationalist movements such as the NSDAP & Nazi Party. Part of the Nazi Party's popularity was based on their jingoism, or extreme nationalistic policies and desire to restore Germany's vitality and will. It was this long term bitterness which ~~meant~~ ~~the~~ ~~reason~~ ~~of~~ regarding the signing of the Treaty of Versailles which brought to the fore ~~not~~ the importance of nationalism.

as espoused by Hitler's nationalist movement and the labelling of Weimar's officials the 'November Criminals' which ~~caused~~ ~~meant~~ <sup>caused</sup> the failure of the Weimar Republic and democracy in Germany.

Other issues outside of the revitalisation of nationalist movements which stressed the importance of nationalism, including the social unrest which frequently occurred on the streets of Germany including the Spartacist Uprising in 1919. The communist revolt, led by Rosa Luxemburg & Karl Liebknecht was a warning of what was to come for the new democracy which would be marred by political & social instability. The Spartacists ordered a general strike on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1919 & were determined to unleash a social revolution which would rival Russia. Ebert, Weimar's first President, appealed to the army to

suppress the radicals; however, this The Freikorps, ex WWI veterans, volunteered to handle the uprising. ~~and~~ It was largely due to the successful suppression tactics of the Freikorps which caused the failure of the uprising. This, however, was not an isolated incident, and the Weimar republic experienced its next political uprising causing social unrest & tension in the newly formed democracy, the Kapp Putsch in March 1920. The putsch was led by Wolfgang Kapp and supported by over 5000 men, many of whom were part of the Freikorps. The Kapp Putsch was an attempt by forces of the right, who stressed the importance of nationalism, to overthrow the Bavarian government as it tried to enforce the military stipulations of the Treaty of Versailles. According to the Treaty the

army was to be limited to 100,000 and Germany's military ~~power~~ power significantly reduced. Ebert's attempts to disband the Freikorps ignited the Kapp Putsch who rebelled against the diktat (dictatorship) of Versailles. It is therefore evident, the bitterness of the TGV and the importance of nationalism, created social unrest in the Weimar Republic causing its fateful demise in 1933.

Instability and uncertainty were common themes that carried throughout the Weimar Republic's short life. Political instability was rife throughout Weimar Germany, in particular, the Reichstag which was plagued with political bickering and disagreements. During the early years of Weimar the SPD were Germany's largest political party and supported worker reforms & movements. The SPD, however, did not

have a majority of seats to rule alone calling for the establishment of coalitions. The SPD ~~is~~ joined with the <sup>German</sup> Conservatives. Although they shared common values, they did not always agree. When political disagreements & bickering occurred the government simply 'crashed.' Between 1919 and 1933 the Weimar Republic crashed 21 times, typifying the political instability of the Reichstag due to the formation of coalitions. Proportional representation, a democratic process whereby if a political party wins 10% of electoral votes they are entitled to 10% of total seats in the Reichstag. Political parties would continually make coalitions & agreements needed to gain the 51% majority to rule alone. Partners wanted things in return for voter loyalty and ministers continually changed. Consistency & stability were

absent in Germany's first democracy and contributed to the failure of the democracy & the Weimar Republic.

Economically, the fledgling Democracy was dealt the burden of huge reparation payments according to the TOV. As the government struggled to pay the reparations, social & economic instability intensified.

Germany's inability to pay reparations led to the invasion of the Ruhr by Franco/Belgium troops on January 11<sup>th</sup> 1923. The French confiscated German bank assets and industrial goods & sent them to Paris.

The German mark became worthless & hyperinflation became reckless. Over 200,000 Germans lost their job due to the hyperinflation of January 1923. Despite Stresemann's attempts to reduce reparations and establish a payment plan Germany could actually repay through the Dawes

Plan in 1924 and later the Young Plan in 1929 the Weimar Republic continued to struggle economically. An Agricultural Depression in 1927 and oversupply of university students furthered Germany's growing unemployment & growing discontent. The final blow, however for the fledgling republic was the crash of wall street in October 1929 which would economically & socially destroy the Republic. By 1932 over 6 million Germans were unemployed, nearly 30% of the population and starvation was rife. The government's adoption of <sup>the</sup> deflationary policy which cut welfare payments & increased taxes worsened the situation. "The Great Depression more than any other event tipped the scales against the survival of the Weimar Republic." (Mason). The Great Depression ~~was~~ encouraged the ~~the~~ development



nationalist movements & parties such as the Nazi Party, as <sup>German</sup> people, were desperate for change, hope and reassurance. because for them the "...unrelaxable human anxiety and embitterment burnt into the minds of millions of ordinary German men and women." (Bullock.) The Nazi Party stressed the importance of nationalism in the restoration of German vitality & will and vowed for the abolishment of weak democracies & economic chaos. The German people saw hope in Hitler's nationalist movement, something that was foreign to them. Hitler & the Nazi Party's ability to appeal to the emotions of the people through extensive propaganda allowed the Nazis to gain in popularity and crush the fledgling democracy. The Nazis took ~~an~~ advantage of the Weimar Republic weaknesses... they exploited the

crises that befell the Republic, particularly the Depression."

Therefore, it was Weimar's political, social and economic weaknesses which the Nazi Party exploited and the growth of nationalist movements which stressed the importance of nationalism that ultimately led to the failure of Germany's first democracy, and the appointment of a terrifying dictatorship on January 30<sup>th</sup> 1933.