

History, Weimar and Nazi Germany

Lesson 4

Worksheet:

Why did most Germans feel ‘stabbed in the back’?

Mr McNally



The Paris Peace Conference

The Paris Peace Conference was the formal meeting of the **Allied Powers** after World War One. The aim was to discuss peace terms for Germany. The meeting was dominated by the **‘Big Four’** (France, America, Britain and Italy) who all had differing aims for a settlement with Germany.

France wanted **revenge** and wanted the harshest terms for Germany.

Britain wanted to make Germany pay but also wanted to be able to trade with Germany in the future.

America wanted a lasting peace and wanted a **moderate** settlement.



The Treaty of Versailles

War Guilt - **Article 231** of the **Treaty of Versailles** stated that Germany was to blame for causing the First World War. This was humiliating for Germany as publicly stated that its army was in the wrong. It also led to **reparation** payments in which Germany had to pay for the damage caused to the Allied Powers.

Economic - Germany were forced to pay the Allies £6.6 billion in **reparations**. This was an amount they could simply not afford to pay. The French also took the output from the rich Saar coalfields for 15 years. This further weakened the German economy.



Military - The German army was **banned** from having any **heavy artillery** and limited to **100,000 men**. Their navy was also banned from having any submarines and they were limited to six battleships. In addition, the Germans were banned from having an air force. Finally, the Rhineland was **demilitarised** which meant that Germany could not position their troops in part of their own country.

Territory - All of Germany's **colonies** were given to the Allies. In addition, Germany lost **Alsace and Lorraine** to France, whilst the port of **Danzig** was made an international city and no longer part of Germany. Land was also given to Poland including **Posen** and **West Prussia**. This caused a huge problem as it cut off **East Prussia** from the rest of Germany.



Dolchstoß

The terms of the Treaty of Versailles horrified Germany. They labelled the Treaty as a **Diktat**, an enforced/imposed peace on Germany. People lost respect for the Weimar politicians and conspiracy theories started to spread about the politicians betraying the army.

The **Dolchstoß** theory was the idea that the German army was not militarily defeated in WW1. Instead, the German surrender was caused by treasonous politicians who stabbed the army in the back. As a result, they were nicknamed the **November Criminals**.

This idea was popular amongst the ex-soldiers who were not blamed for causing WW1. It made the **Weimar Republic** extremely unpopular.



Impact on Germany

Germany was already struggling economically before the **Treaty of Versailles** and suffering from food shortages. The terms of the treaty made things a lot worse for Germany.

The German army was limited, meaning lots of soldiers lost their jobs and were **unemployed**. At the same time, the government did not have the money to invest in the welfare of the country. Instead, Germany had to find ways of paying the **reparations** to the Allies which put a further strain on the economy.

Germany entered a period of 'depression' which was categorised by high unemployment and **poverty**.



Glossary

Armistice - The formal agreement to end the First World War

Article 231 - The War Guilt clause in the Treaty of Versailles

Diktat - An agreement that is imposed on a country rather than negotiated

Dolchstoß - The belief that the German army was not defeated militarily but betrayed by their politicians

November Criminals - The nickname given to the politicians who signed the armistice and Treaty of Versailles

Reparations - Compensation that German had to pay the Allies for damages caused in WW1

Unemployment - When a person does not have a job



Comprehension Questions

1. What impact did Article 231 have on Germany?
2. Explain why Germany viewed the Treaty of Versailles as a *Diktat*.
3. What was the Dolchstoss theory?
4. Why did Germany go into a economic depression in 1919?
5. Challenge question: Which of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles had the most significant negative impact on Germany?

