
Significance of the Great Depression

The Great Depression's significance on Germany was the biggest crisis that has ever struck before. The political, social, and economic effects on Germany are unique and very life changing for Germany and its people. The effects of the Great Depression made a downward spiral of the Germany economy, a rise of political power for Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime as a whole, and a social collapse of Germany's customs and ordinary life. The Great depression's significance can be assessed as more powerful and catastrophic than the years following the Treaty of Versailles in Germany from years 1912-1923. The Weimar republic was devastated by the Wall Street crash in October 1929. The Great Depression then followed. Germany was mainly affected by this crash, so was the United States because the US was giving Germans huge loans during this time. All the loans were being giving to them so they could pay off their reparations from WWI. So, when the Americans economy crashed it started a chain reaction that led to Germany. After the crash, the US gave Germany 90 days to start repaying the money Germany owed. The problem was Germany already had no money, so they went to ask other countries but everyone else had been affected by the crash so they had no way to gain money or pay off their loans. Once Germany could no longer gain money they stopped paying their reparations. When the French asked for their reparation money and Germany declined so France invaded the Ruhr in 1923.

The French took over the big industrial building. This ties into the Great Depression because it made Germany's economy even worse in the long run. To make the economy downfall even greater, then Weimar Republic instructed the Ruhr workers to go on strike, instead of helping the French. The consequences of the French invading the Ruhr are that This worsened the economic crisis in Germany. Government income from the Ruhr, one of Germany's most industrialized areas, was down. The Government started to print more money in order to pay the striking German workers in the Ruhr. While all of the chaos was happening around Germany with their economy and unemployment crisis, people started to look for extremist parties to follow. Before the Great Depression struck the Nazi, party was barley reaching over 100,000 members from over sixty million Germans. Since the Beer Hall Putsch in 1923, Hitler had changed his tactics and was following the rules of democracy. Since he tried to over throw power by force and lost, he wanted to take a more legal approach on the matter. He wanted to be elected while at the same time building a Nazi government that would replace the democracy. Hitler had begun his career in politics trying to appeal to the World War I veterans that wanted violence. By 1930 people thought of him as a new man even though that was just a cover up that he put in people's minds. Hitler needed the support of industrialists, and upper middle class. He already broadened his appeal to people but he needed more to win a voting race. He started aiming at the biggest mass of voting Germans, ones who were poor or lost their job. Which was almost every German in the country because of the economy status and hyperinflation. By the mid-1930's, the German government as a whole began to crumble and Hitler knew this was his time to strike. Also, Gustav Stresemann had died in October 1929, just before the Wall Street Crash. Once Stresemann died there started to be disunity to the political parties inside the Reichstag.

The Reichstag Fire Decree was the end to the communist leaders. On February 27, 1933, the Reichstag building caught on fire and burned down. The communist Marinus vander Lubbe was

caught in possession as the fire starter. However, the Nazi took advantage of the event. The next day, February 28, 1933, the Reichstag Fire Decree was passed. This proclamation by Hitler allowed to imprison political leaders without the court process. The Nazi could now freely jail all of their oppositionist. This was a huge step for Hitler he now almost had complete control of the government. On March 23, 1933 After the Reichstag Fire Decree the Enabling Act was passed. Hitler had full control of the government. The Enabling Act allowed Hitler to pass laws without the approval of President Hindenburg or parliament. Hitler's new power was the downfall to Germany's democracy. He could now do whatever he needed to do to secure his spot at the top. This is a way why the Great Depression was more significant than the Treaty of Versailles. Without the Great Depression, the Enabling Act Hitler could have never taken over power of the Reichstag. The terms of the Treaty of Versailles were used to punish Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire. These terms included reparations, payment for the losses and casualties of the victors. \$6.6 billion was owed from Germany to the Allies in reparations.

The Treaty of Versailles also included demilitarization of Germany. Germany was forced to reduce their army to 100,000 men, Germany was only allowed to have six battleships, German had to sink all of their submarines, and Germany was not allowed to have an air force. Germany also lost a lot of their land and population. For Germany, the Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France, the Ruhr was given to the French for fifteen years, the rich Posen farmlands and the Polish corridor were given to Poland, Danzig was made a free city, and Germany's colonies were given to Great Britain and France as mandates. The biggest effect on the territory loss was that millions of people were German but not in Germany. One might ask, who created the Treaty of Versailles? The answer to that question is the Big Three. 'The Big Three' consisted of the American president Woodrow Wilson, the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, and the French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau; although many others were present at the Versailles Peace Conference, these three men framed and constructed the Treaty of Versailles. These three men decided the fate of Germany and the rest of the Central Powers however, the Big Three all had different opinions on how to go about that. Georges Clemenceau was an idealist of a very harsh treaty. He wanted Germany to never recover again from what they once did to France in the past war. From 1871-1872, the Franco-Prussian war went on. Prussia, an early form of Germany, was victorious and took the Alsace-Lorraine from France. But, France took this back after World War I. Woodrow Wilson, the American president at the time, was for a fairer treaty that did not allow Great Britain and France to take advantage of Germany and its entire empire. This can be shown through Wilson's 'Fourteen Points'. He took a very realist approach and wanted Germany to recover in the recent future. Wilson did not want Germany to be harmed like it was from the Treaty of Versailles. David Lloyd George's ideas were in-between Georges Clemenceau and Woodrow Wilson however, George's beliefs were motivated for what was best for Britain. David Lloyd George wanted for Great Britain to attain territories near South Africa, New Zealand, and Australia.

So, in other words he was thinking that he himself only won the war and should get more spoils of war. But this idea was shut down by Wilson and Clemenceau. So, they needed a compromise. After this compromise if where Germany lost territory, it army, and had to pay reparations. The terms of the Treaty of Versailles would not have been that harsh if the Great Depression would not have struck. This is because Germany could have made it without a military and their land but, because of the reparations they were broke. So, then they started to get loans from America. Once they were starting to be stable during their golden years the Great Depression hit. Once the depression hit they had no way to obtain money leaving them

useless this is why the Great Depression was much more significant than the Treaty of Versailles. The Great Depression was the end to the Weimar Republic, If the Great Depression did not happen then Hitler would have never come into power. The Great Depression caused six million Germans to be unemployed. This was about one in every three Germans. These facts alone lead the Great Depression to being way more destructive, power, and influential than the Treaty of Versailles. Even though the Treaty of Versailles was very destructive to the Germans it mainly hurt the German spirit. It made them feel weak and defenseless. The Great Depression on the other hand made them broke and most of the population starving. This is why the Great Depression was the biggest event to happen between these years.

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