

Q6 - Germany

a)

Nationalism was a relatively insignificant cause of the failure of democracy in Germany from 1918-1934, because several other causes are much more important.

The ~~collapse~~ failure of democracy in Germany from 1918-1934 refers to the collapse of the Weimar Republic and nationalism refers to the ~~interest~~ placing of your nation's interests above that of the international community as a whole. Democracy failed in Germany from 1918-34 as a result of the lack of a democratic tradition, constitutional flaws, rise of opponents to democracy, the Great Depression and political backroom intrigue, all of which are more important than nationalism.

Democracy failed in Germany because ~~that~~ of its lack of a democratic tradition, which was more significant than nationalism. ~~Now~~ During World War I, on March 21 1918, the German army launched Ludendorff's Spring Offensive in an attempt to break the 4 year stalemate on the Western Front. ^{Though} Initially successful, the Allies launched a counter-attack ~~with~~ and because of the failure of German supply lines to match the speed of advance of the troops, the counter attacks succeeded in ~~down~~ breaking the Hindenburg line. As a result, in October 1918, ~~the~~ the German military abdicated responsibility for defeat to the civilian government, and on 9th November Kaiser Wilhelm abdicated. ~~Thus~~ America insisted that Germany become a democracy,

and thus on the 10th November a civilian government formed in Germany, which signed the Armistice on the 11th. Thus, democracy was imposed as a condition of surrender on Germany, ~~was~~ and they accepted it in an attempt to gain a better peace. However, the Treaty of Versailles forced Germany to accept responsibility for the war and imposed economic, military and population limits on Germany. Consequently, the Weimar Republic was associated with the humiliation of the Treaty of Versailles, leading to Germany being ~~seen~~ what some historians have called, "a democracy without democrats".

Further, constitutional flaws present since the Republic's inception made its collapse inevitable. The new Republic was based on a voting system of proportional representation, which made it easy for small parties to be elected to the Reichstag, making the government unstable and elections frequent, and thus no majority government ever formed in the Republic's history. The inclusion of article 48 in the constitution allowed the president to rule by decree, thus bypassing the democratic process, which ultimately resulted in the Republic's collapse. Further, the constitution was 'too democratic' because it allowed ~~opposed~~ parties opposed to the system to be elected, thus creating the possibility that the democracy could be overturned democratically, and ~~was~~ coupled with the lack of a democratic tradition amongst voters, this made its collapse inevitable.

The rise of opponents to the democracy was more significant than nationalism in its breakdown. When Germany defaulted on its reparations payments in 1923, the French invaded the Ruhr and the policy of passive resistance ~~ended~~ resulted in hyperinflation. The people began linking this humiliation, as well as Versailles with the system itself. Opponents to democracy capitalised on this, ~~whereas~~ and even during the successes of the Stresemann Era, such as the Locarno Treaties of October 1925 and the Young and Dawes Plans, which set Germany's ~~of~~ reparations payments within her capacity to pay, political parties opposed to the system, namely the KPD and NSDAP, gradually grew both in terms of votes and membership numbers. Furthermore, the Weimar republic not only allowed the key elements of the old system to survive, it allowed them thrive, and thus the army, the industrialists, the civil service, the judiciary and the Prussian landed Aristocracy, all of whom were opposed to the republic, grew in significance during this period. There has been an historical trend in recent years to view the period of 1923-1929 as one in and of itself, yet the reality is that the growth of opposition during it made it the inevitable prelude to authoritarian dictatorship.

The great Depression was the short-term trigger event, that sparked the long-term factors and resulted in the collapse of the democracy. During the Stresemann Era, German economic prosperity was financed by borrowed American money under the

Dawes and Young Plans, and in this period ~~€~~ 23 billion Reichsmarks came into the economy from America alone, equivalent to Germany's reparations payments. However, the German government channelled short-term loans into long-term infrastructure projects, thus, when the ~~the~~ Wall Street Stockmarket crashed in 1929, and ~~the~~ USA banks demanded the rapid repayment of loans, the German economy became crippled. ~~Example~~ In ~~the~~ 1929, German unemployment was 6%, and this had skyrocketed to 30% by 1933. Germans associated this economic failure with the political system, and thus their votes became increasingly radicalised. As the historian McCauley suggests, the psychological impact of the Depression was more significant than the economic effect in resulting in the downfall of democracy.

Finally, the political backroom intrigues of 1921-1933 became the true cause of the republic's collapse. ~~Also~~ In 1930, Chancellor Müller's government was divided over relict payments, and so General of the Army Kurt von Schleicher convinced president Hindenburg to replace Müller with Brüning. Brüning subsequently implemented his deflationary economic policy by Article 48, bypassing the Reichstag and this became the true cause of the republic's collapse. In September 1930, the Reichstag passed a vote of no confidence in Brüning, resulting in an election which saw the Nazi ~~seats~~ seats in the Reichstag increase from 12 to 107 and it became the second largest party. Brüning retained power and in 1932 banned the SA and SS,
(next book)

which saw him shift too far to the left of the political spectrum in the eyes of Schleicher, who convinced Hindenburg to instate Franz Von Papen as Chancellor. Hindenburg did so, and in return for Nazi co-operation to form a majority government, Papen ~~reinstated~~ legalised the SA and SS and organised new elections. These July 1932 elections saw the Nazis increase from 107 seats to 230, and as a result Hitler demanded the Chancellorship and refused to co-operate with ~~Papen~~ Papen, resulting in the ~~11~~ November 1932 elections which saw the Nazi vote drop to 196 seats. In a last ditch attempt to keep Hitler out of power, Hindenburg appointed Schleicher Chancellor. Papen meanwhile plotted with Hitler and formed a majority and Hindenburg appointed Hitler Chancellor on 30 January 1933, believing Papen would control him. By March 1933, however, Hitler had passed the Enabling Act through the Reichstag, making Hitler the legal dictator of the nation and cementing the collapse of the democracy.

Thus, the Weimar Republic collapsed from 1918-1933, as a result of ~~these~~ factors far more significant than nationalism, which played a relatively irrelevant role in the process. Democracy collapsed in Germany because of the lack of a democratic tradition, constitutional flaws, opponents to democracy, the Great Depression, and political backroom intrigues; in which nationalism played only a minor role.