Your notes

GCSE History: revision notes

Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918–39

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The Weimar Republic, 1918–1923

- The Kaiser abdicated in November 1918, and the new **Weimar Republic** signed the armistice. Its constitution (1919) gave the vote to everyone over 20 and used proportional representation, but led to weak coalitions, and Article 48 let the President rule by decree.
- The Treaty of Versailles (1919) was hated: Germany lost territory, its armed forces were cut, it accepted blame for the war and had to pay reparations. The politicians who signed the armistice were called the '**November Criminals**'.
- Challenges: the Spartacist Uprising (1919), the Kapp **Putsch** (1920), political murders, the French occupation of the Ruhr (1923) and **hyperinflation** (1923), which wiped out savings but let some people pay off debts.

Recovery, 1924–1929

- Gustav Stresemann introduced the **Rentenmark** (1923) and negotiated the Dawes Plan (1924) and the Young Plan (1929). The Locarno Pact (1925), joining the League of Nations (1926) and the Kellogg–Briand Pact (1928), which renounced war, improved Germany's standing.
- Society changed: wages and housing improved, unemployment insurance was introduced (1927), women gained the vote and more opportunities, and art, cinema and architecture flourished. But the recovery depended on American loans.

Hitler's rise, 1919–1933

- Hitler joined the small German Workers' Party (DAP) in 1919, which became the Nazi Party (NSDAP) in 1920, with a 25-Point Programme. The SA (Brownshirts) was set up in 1921.

- The Munich **Putsch** (November 1923) failed, but Hitler's trial gave him publicity, and in prison he wrote Mein Kampf. During the 'lean years' (1924–28), support was low, but Hitler reorganised the party.
- The Depression (from 1929) brought mass unemployment and support for extremist parties. Nazi propaganda, Hitler's image and fear of communism won votes. In the 1932 presidential election, Hindenburg beat Hitler, but Hitler won over 13 million votes. In July 1932 the Nazis became the largest party.
- After political deals, Hindenburg appointed Hitler Chancellor on 30 January 1933.

Nazi control and life in Nazi Germany, 1933–1939

- Creating a dictatorship: the Reichstag Fire and emergency decree (February 1933), the **Enabling Act** (March 1933), banning trade unions and other parties (1933), the Night of the Long Knives (June 1934), and Hitler becoming Führer (August 1934).
- Control: the SS, the **Gestapo**, concentration camps, the courts, propaganda (Goebbels) and censorship; the Concordat with the Catholic Church (1933), and the Reich Church.
- Women: the Law for the Encouragement of Marriage (1933) gave loans to newly married couples, reduced with each child. Young people: the Hitler Youth and the League of German Maidens; Nazi-controlled schools.
- Employment: the Reich Labour Service, autobahns, rearmament and conscription cut unemployment. The figures ignored '**invisible unemployment**', such as women and Jews forced out of jobs. The German Labour Front replaced trade unions.
- Persecution: a 1933 law led to the forced sterilisation of people with some disabilities and hereditary illnesses. Jews faced the boycott (1933), the Nuremberg Laws (1935) and Kristallnacht (1938). Roma and other minorities were also persecuted.

Key terms

Weimar Republic	The democratic German government from 1919 to 1933.
November Criminals	The name given by opponents to the politicians who signed the armistice.
Hyperinflation	Prices rising so fast that money becomes worthless, as in 1923.
Rentenmark	The new currency introduced in 1923 to end hyperinflation.
Putsch	An attempt to seize power by force.
SA	The Nazi stormtroopers, also called the Brownshirts.
Enabling Act	The 1933 law that let Hitler make laws without the Reichstag.

Your notes

Invisible unemployment	Unemployed groups, such as women and Jews, left out of the official figures.
Gestapo	The Nazi secret police.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What was the German Workers' Party (DAP)?
2. What was the Nazi Party's 25-Point Programme (1920)?
3. What were the Nazis' 'lean years' (1924–28)?
4. What was the Rentenmark?
5. What was the Kellogg–Briand Pact (1928)?
6. What did women gain in Weimar Germany?
7. What was the SA?
8. What happened in the presidential election of 1932?

Answers

1. The small party Hitler joined in 1919, which became the Nazi Party
2. Its list of aims, including overturning the Treaty of Versailles
3. A time of low support while Germany recovered
4. The new currency introduced in 1923 to end hyperinflation
5. An agreement by countries not to use war to settle disputes
6. The vote, and more opportunities in work and politics
7. The Nazi stormtroopers, or Brownshirts
8. Hindenburg beat Hitler, but Hitler won over 13 million votes

What to do next

Practise 12 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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