

Table, slightly. after a  
war emotions are



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

table, Hitlers triumph had not” Discuss Without wanting to delve into the ‘ What if?’ school of history, the debate about Weimars failure can become a vague one since there is so much known about the period and so many factors which could have effected the outcome of Weimars history.

Some argue its collapse was inevitable in 1919 others go right up to 1933, but what is not certain was Hitler’s triumph I would argue that after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles the collapse of Weimar was almost inevitable. From the very beginning it was extremely hindered economically by the treaty, and this caused problems with inflation, industry, employment and the economy all-round throughout the 1920s. The people were humiliated by the terms, for instance the war guilt clause and the allied powers (the much hated victors) seemed to have overall say in what Weimar was to do and be. The Germans lacked a democratic background and the most likely revolution after the war should have probably involved a dictator of some sort. For want of evidence one can look at the outcome of Russia (and maybe Italy) after the war. Britain and France had quite a strong base of democracy but still just survived the onslaught of political extremism, although France even wavered slightly.

After a war emotions are paramount and people aren’t as rational as they normally are. Democracy isn’t a stable form of government at the best of times and so demands some sort of rational response from the people if it is too survive. Even from the very beginning Weimar was subject to attacks from both extremist sides without being given a chance to prove itself. When it did try to prove itself it failed-how extreme would the people feel then? Some may argue that throughout the mid 20s Weimar looked as if it would

survive, however the signs of improvement were illusions and most people detested the governments foreign policy (Young plan, Dawes Plan, League of Nations etc.

) as further compromise with the creators of the Diktat. The 1929 Depression seemed to be the final shove for Weimar democracy after years of ambiguous and often incompetent governing by a system that was widely hated before it even started . The effects were devastating to the world at that time and the world of the future. But in Germany where we focus our intentions the impact was huge.

The 1923 inflation was bearable as there was still enough food and people had something to do (to an extent) but 1929 was far worse. The middle class were wiped out and proletarianised, this turned them into a revolutionary force, and the nature of their bourgeoisie background would make them fearful of the communists (associated with the ruthless Bolsheviks) and inevitably they would turn to the right, usually the Nazis. But one must bear in mind that everyone was effected from farmers to industrialists, and so the number of discontents grew dramatically.

One could go on forever about the impact of the depression but the important ' fact' to the suffering German people was that this was the fault of the Weimar democracy, after all, this had never happened under the Kaiserreich and even more importantly fascist Italy had weathered the storm very well. So much was the impact of the slump that being a revolutionary became the largest occupation next to being unemployed (many of whom joined private armies for something to do ie: the SA) Surely evidence that

Hitlers triumph was becoming more inevitable before 1932. The inevitable failure of democracy was also becoming vividly clear. Financing unemployment caused bitter wrangling among the parties. The numbers of those without work rose; but the revenue to finance relief for the jobless was shrinking. The parties of the workers clamoured for relief payments to be kept up; the parties representing employers interests said payments must be cut.

Thus the depression wedged the parties further apart revealing the party-ridden and ineffective nature of the Weimar parliamentary system at the very time when there was a great need for a strong united government. The slump polarised the parties and allowed the nazis to become more powerful. The economic and political crisis which occurred after 1929, and the inadequacy of Hindenburg had provided the nazis with the opportunity to gain power; and Hitler himself had shown considerable skill in political manoeuvring in these crucial years.

But the foundations of Hitlers triumph were arguably laid down earlier. Once it used to be considered that, in the four years or so after the Putsch, at a time of relative prosperity, the nazis were some what of an ineffectual fringe group. Modern historians now think otherwise.

Real progress was being made, although the party often grew slowly. The nazis, unlike other political groups, were on an exponential learning curve concerning how to win over people by whatever means (it is not necessary to explain the how's.) Hitler was preparing his movement in a way so that it was able to exploit the next disaster, this came in 1929, so it is arguable that

by 1932 his triumph was inevitable. Throughout the 1920s the Nazi party had built up a dedicated leadership and a fanatical organisation, and the liberalism of the Weimar republic enabled the Nazi party to achieve publicity, both for its programme and for its often violent defence of alleged German interests against 'the enemy'. The strength of the Nazi programme was it was vague enough to be flexible.

By 1932 it was everything to every man and such was the organisation and support it had that it was inevitable, no matter what some leading politicians thought, that the Nazis and Hitler were at least bound to achieve some position of power, their strength was too great. It is even arguable that Weimar, or at least its spirit, had collapsed by 1930 when the Article 48 became an 'everyday' rather than 'emergency' clause under the 'Old Gang' of Hindenburg and his companions. When Brüning became chancellor he had barely any support from the Reichstag and was forced to rule by presidential decree, thus acting as a bridge towards Nazi totalitarianism.

These actions arguably paved the way for Hitler. One fact that must not be ignored is the fact that by September 1930 the Nazi vote totalled 6.4 million and then by July 1932 it was 13.7 million - 38% of the Reichstag vote. The Nazis had swallowed up the vote of the splintered right wing parties, something no party on the left managed to do. People began to say and think 'a strong man is needed to clean up the place'. The parliamentary process seemed unable to provide such a leader.

The government continued to slip into chaos. There appeared to be no alternative to Hitler or communism. Communism had no appeal to any class

apart from the proletariat and was feared by every other. It lacked any strong leadership, organisation or appeal. Hitler had this in abundance, he was therefore the obvious choice, his triumph was inevitable.

It could be argued that had Hindenburg not appointed Hitler as chancellor he would have never got the chance. However I believe that the ' Old Gang' would continue to fail and raise more tensions (evidence of their incompetence is their gross underestimation of Hitler), Hitler's mass support demanded recognition and his party was very unlikely to be suppressed especially due to their size and the favour the armed forces showed towards it. Although not desirable to Hitler an armed coup was not out of the question, the SA numbered at least 300, 000 and the army only 100, 000! However it is doubtful that although Hitler could probably gain power by force he would find it difficult to consolidate. He would not be able to gradually introduce laws etc to achieve his aims ' legally' and some sort of civil war would insue, so it would be hard to see if a triumph by force would be the same as his actual triumph by law. Concluding it is possible to see the inevitable fall of the Weimar republic but more difficult to see Hitlers inevitable triumph. However when observed the facts clearly show that even before the failures of the upper stratum of the government between 1930-33 that Hilter was inevitably going to triumph at some stage. He was a much more astute and intelligent politician than any other and before 1932 had prepared himself to take advantage of any trouble the government may have had or any opportunity it gave him, which due to his large following was bound to come within the early thirties if not 1933.

The nazis played on the Governments failures far more than any other party and this policy was likely to prove successful as by 1932 things did not seem to be getting better concerning the way things were being governed. Yes, it could be argued that it was a sort of autocratic system that the people wanted, but it was not the autocrat the people wanted. Like Stresseman in the 1920s it was doomed to fail because in a time of extreme moods it was too compromising. Hilter wasn't compromising , he was a man of action, something that was bound to be a strength over the bumbling Weimar system.

If it was inevitable that Weimarr was to collapse then it was inevitable that something had to fill its place. That thing had to be stronger, more attractive and understandable to the German people. That thing was Hitler.