

The versailles treaty essay



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Climbing from the Versailles Treaty The Versailles Treaty was commissioned by Great Britain, France, and a defeated Germany. Together they hoped the treaty would stabilize Europe and guarantee another world war would never happen again. However, just over two decades later, once again war engulfed Europe. So, is it logical that the question be asked; how did the Versailles Treaty help cause World War II? The treaty put much punishment on Germany by territory losses, major military restrictions, economical reparations, and the War Guilt Clause.

World War II was one of the greatest wars of all time. One of the components that led up to this was German territorial losses. These losses included the Polish Corridor, Danzig, Alsace Lorraine, and a piece of Denmark. Out of these the Polish Corridor and Danzig impaired Germany the most because by taking the Polish Corridor it split the country into two parts, cutting some people away from their families. Also, the loss of Danzig, a major port city, as well as the loss of big coal-producing territories, greatly diminished the German economy.

This reduced the German coal-production by forty percent. The people that in habituated these lost areas would have a hard life becoming accustomed to the new rule and being told that they were no longer considered a part of Germany. The peoples had resentment for the new power along with a lack of loyalty, and being discriminated against. Hitler suggests that Germans should respond to the Versailles Treaty with blood shad and valance. He says “. . . No nation can remove this hand from its throat except by the sword.

(DOC A) (DOC B) According to article 160 of the Versailles Treaty, the German Army must not comprise more than seven divisions of infantry and

three divisions of cavalry by no later than March 31, 1920. After the passing of this date the total number of German military troops must not exceed one hundred thousand men, this total includes officers. Also, the total effective strength of officers, which includes the personnel of staffs, must not go over four thousand.

This article continues with the role in which the army should play. The army should be devoted exclusively to the maintenance of order and peace within the territory and to the control of the German frontiers. When the regulations were put into force, Germany's Army weakened. France became the superior military force. Thus, making the Germans feel insecure about themselves and their protection. These insecurities felt by the Germans from the military restrictions, added to World War II, by making them feel less in control.

The damage done during World War I was very severe and the victorious countries wanted this damage to be paid for by Germany in the aftermath. The Versailles Treaty required Germany to agree that she will make compensation for all the damage done to the civilian population of the Allied and Associated powers. This also included their property, during the period of the belligerency (DOC C #1). The reparations that are to be made by Germany were determined by an Inter-Allied Commission, who is to consider the claims and give Germany the opportunity to defend its self.

Article 233 states, " The Commission shall draw up a schedule of payments prescribing the time and manner for securing and discharging the entire obligations within a period of thirty years from May 1, 1921. " The amount of reparations set was 132 billion gold marks or \$367 billion at the value in

2010. This angered and humiliated the Germans who paid very little of the reparations in the 1920s. The amounts were reduced in 1929 (from 1921) to 112 billion gold marks or \$341 billion. Within the next three years the Germans paid only two billion gold marks (this does not include American Loans) (DOC C # 2).

The treaty also states that if Germany fails to meet its obligations any remaining unpaid balance may be postponed for future payment or can be handled in another manner, that will be determined by the Allied and Associated Government affirm. Article 231 of the Versailles Treaty, also referred to as the War Guilt Clause, forced Germany to accept the responsibility that they alone caused World War I and that it was their duty to pay reparations to the Allied and Associated Governments affirm(DOC D # 1).

This clause was the justification for reparations. The Germans, on the other hand, saw this treaty, " as an atrocious injustice, an evil thing which must be destroyed. " (DOC D # 2) The knowledge of the treaty was embedded into the minds of the Germans, and only one word can describe how they felt: humiliation. This is why German enthusiasm, arising from the Nazi regiment, came from the way Hitler resurrected Germany from the ashes of World War I. He restored their sense of pride, and their sense of self respect, making the world look at German anew.

Although, the Versailles Treaty was a major component in the start of the Second World War, there were many other components that added to the ignition of the war. The Versailles Treaty alone was the most influential

because it caused anger and humiliation throughout the German regiment. The treaty itself was supposed to guarantee the prevention of a Second World War, but ended up causing an even bigger uprising than thought, by territorial losses, major military restriction, economical reparations, and the War Guilt Clause.

Sources: DOC A: Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, 1924 DOC B: Treaty of Versailles, 1919, Article 160 and German political cartoon, 1920 DOC C # 1: Treaty of Versailles, 1919, Articles 232 and 233 DOC C # 2: Chart compiled from varied sources including John Maynard Keynes, The Economic Consequences of the Peace, 1920; Charles Mee, the End of Order: Versailles, 1919 DOC D # 1: Treaty of Versailles, 1919, Article 231 DOC D # 2: Laurence V. Moyer, Victory Must Be Ours: Germany in the Great War 1914-1918, 1995