

HIST2226 Final Compilation (Sample)

Outline

1. Week 1 – German History Before Hitler
2. Week 2 – Imperialism and War 1900-1918
3. Week 3 – Fascism
4. Week 4 – The Weimar Republic
5. Week 5 – The Collapse of Democracy
6. Week 6 – The Nazi State
7. Week 7 – Terror and Repression
8. Week 8 – Propaganda and Culture
9. Week 9 – Nazi Society
10. Week 10 – Foreign Policy and the Road to War
11. Week 11 – Persecution and the Paths to Genocide
12. Week 12 – Mass Murder and Downfall

Lecture 1 - German History Before and After Hitler

Lecture Outline

1. Perception of Germany pre-Hitler
2. Pre-Hitler Germany

I. Perception of Germany pre-Hitler

The Nazi promotion of its roots to German (Prussian) history. Even to the extent of tracing back to Martin Luther's teachings. These tend to refer to Germany's proud history of militarism and nationalistic pride.

The perspective perpetuated by British historians

'The history of Germany is the history of extremes. It contains everything except moderation, and in the course of a thousand years the Germans have experienced everything except normality.'

The perspective perpetuated by German historians

German Historian Otto Hintze (1915) - Germany is stuck in between strong militaristic powers

How different was Germany from the other European states with consideration to the context of the 1900s?

Consider how things have changed over the course of a century

Carl von Clausewitz (1806):

- The French: Militaristic, subject mentality, and obedient
- The German: Literary, hypercritical, and unlikely to submit to tyranny

II. Pre-Hitler Germany

Key Dates (1806 – 1914)

1. 1806: The end of the Holy Roman Empire

- Politically fragmented: consisted of countless duchies, states, counties, etc.
- Regionalism + Not centralised

Note: The entry of the French troops under Napoleon destroyed this fragmented-feudalistic system and replaced it with a modern centralised system. Concept of nationality introduced to the territory of Germany. Parliamentary rule over monarchs, freedom of speech, rule of law became increasingly prominent.

2. 1814: Creation of the German Confederation

- Created by the 9th Act of the Congress of Vienna on 8 June 1815 after being alluded to in Article 6 of the 1814 Treaty of Paris

3. 1848: German national assembly (The Frankfurt Parliament)

- The first freely elected parliament for all of Germany, elected on 1 May 1848
- ‘For the first time since 1521, the German people stepped to the centre of the German stage only to miss their cue once more. German history reached its turning point and failed to turn.’ - A.J.P Taylor, *The Course of German History* (1945) = essentially what the British perceived as normality
- Goal of a unified Germany that was Liberal and constitutionally governed. Realistically this could only be achieved via Prussia; not Austro-Hungarian Empire (Austria-Hungary) which was an empire consisting of a diverse range of ethnic groups
- ‘Germany is not looking to Prussia’s liberalism but to her power...The great questions of the day will not be decided by speeches and majority decisions – that was the mistake of 1848 to 1849 – but by iron and blood’ – Bismarck (1862)

4. 1871: Unification of Germany

- Germany unified into a politically and administratively integrated nation state officially on 18 January 1871
- Election of *Reichstag* (Parliament/Diet of the Realm/Imperial Diet) by universal male suffrage which has control over budget but cannot propose legislation nor appoint/dismiss governments. Considered highly modern and progressive by modern standards.
- Largely centred around Otto von Bismarck.

Otto von Bismarck (1815 – 1898)

- Conservative Prussian statesman who dominated German and European affairs from the 1860s until 1890 and was the first Chancellor of the German Empire between 1871 and 1890.
- Conducted political attacks via policies against the *Reichsfeinde* (Enemies of the Reich). This included the Catholics, whom were a significant minority the new south-west territories, the Poles and the Socialists. These policies resulted in the alienation of a significant portion of the population (roughly 70%) by the Parliament. Nonetheless, these reactions were widely supported by Liberals and Nationalists.
- Consider Bismarck’s legacy on the rise of Hitler and the Nazis as well as the divisions created among the German people. Set the grounds for the rise of the Social Democratic Party in the German Federal Elections of 1912 (85% turnout), representing the persecuted minority that unified behind it.
- Society was becoming ‘socialistic, modern and effeminate.’ Baroness von Spitzemberg (1910)
- Consider that German society was the most progressive welfare state

Lecture 2 – Imperialism and War 1900-1918

Lecture Outline

1. Foreign Population Policies
2. Colonialism
3. Foundation for War
4. End of War

1. Foreign Population Policies

Foreign speaking population in the German Empire, 1900:

The Polish population should be “**Germanified** [so that the] inferior elements, always liable to excesses, and in particular their female members who are equipped with dubious characteristics” would be improved and could “benefit in full from the economic and moral superiority of Germanness.” Konrad von Studt (head of Prussian state in Westphalia), 1896.

- The Poles make up 6% of the German population, however, have high concentrations in certain areas.
- Desire of German policy makers to undermine the Polish culture and **language**; concept of German superiority engrained.
- This increased Polish resentment and resistance to the German government; rise of Polish nationalism.

1883-1887: Expulsion of 32,000 Poles from Eastern Germany (border with Austria-Hungary and Russian Empire) – the German Parliament denounced the act but was ignored (military v civil).

1886: Creation of Royal Prussian Settlement Commission – to help Germans settle in the territories (colonisation and expropriation of land + assimilation)

Note: This is not a traditional and conservative policy, but rather the rise of **nationalism and racialism**.

Max Weber (German Sociologist member of *Verein für Sozialpolitik*) 1864-1920

- ‘It is not possible to allow two nations with different bodily constitutions—differently constructed stomachs ... — to compete freely as workers in the same area.’
- Consider “the role ... that physical and mental race differences [*Rassendifferenzen*] between nationalities play in the economic struggle for existence.” “The German farmer” was being driven from the land in the East by a “lower race” (*tieferstehenden Rasse*) [the Poles]. – economic struggle

Friedrich Ratzel (German Geographer) 1844-1904

- *Lebensraum* (living space): “The European system of rural but intensively used spaces is retrograde ... [the pattern] of the future [is] a pattern which today, as it has for millennia, strives unremittingly after ever-larger spaces. – the Darwinist struggle for survival (spaces) where the powerful states win
- The larger states, such as represented by the United States are the modern expression of a political state...” – **references to the US is common among German intellectuals**

2. Colonialism

Definition: The expansion of territory by occupation through military force, often resulting in the exploitation of local resources and population. Is it limited to territories outside Europe (i.e. Africa, South Americas, Asia, etc.)?

Perspectives

Bismarck (change in perspective)

“For as long as I remain Chancellor, we will not become involved in Colonialism.” (1881) – skeptical of the benefits of colonialism, focus on reform in Germany

Social Imperialism: Colonialism would provide “a new objective for the Germans, one capable of filling them with enthusiasm after the popularity of the government had begun to wane”.

Benefits of colonialism: Prestige (other major European powers already have colonies), economic benefits, territory, nationalism (gratification of the German people), potential alliance with France against Britain, redirect German immigration from the US to colonies.

- “For a people who suffer from constant overproduction and each year send some 200,000 of their children overseas, colonization has become a question of **survival**.” German Historian Heinrich von Treitschke (1884) – regarding the immigration of the German people to the US
- 'the substance of all policies of colonization is to exploit a foreign population to the highest degree'. (1889) August Bebel (SPD)

Note: Contemporary cartoons appear to imply that German colonialism would not be as bad as other colonial powers – superior colonial power

German colonies: Togoland/Cameroon, South-West Africa, East-Africa, and New Guinea

Note: Investment (military and economic) in colonialism did not pay off for Germany; for example, in South-West Africa, conflict broke out with the Herero people led by Samuel Maharero against the German military led by Lothar von Trotha.

Note: Liberal response regarding the massacres were largely negative; preference for containment camps.

3. Foundation for War

Against Jews

German Historian Heinrich von Treitschke, 1880:

- “Year after year, out of the inexhaustible Polish cradle there streams over our eastern border a host of hustling, pants-peddling youths, whose children and children’s children will someday command Germany’s stock exchanges and newspapers.”
- “The Jews are our misfortune!” Appeals to the conservative racial biasness against Jews; force for mass social mobilization.
- Rise of anti-Semitism among the masses petitioning restrictions on employment of Jews, segregating them from society. References to the US racial policy against the Chinese – The Chinese Exclusion Act 1882.
- Notably the legislators do not enact these policies despite rising normalization of anti-Semitism.
- The WWI radicalized all elements of German society – racial sentiments, military v civil

Authority of the Kaiser

“You have sworn loyalty to me. You have only one enemy and that is my enemy. In the present social confusion it may come about that I order you to shoot your relatives, brothers or parents, but even then you must follow my orders without a murmur.” Kaiser Wilhelm II, November 1891 – Kaiser as the central figure of authority

“When war comes, parties will cease to exist. We are only German brothers.” Kaiser Wilhelm II to the people of Berlin, 31 July 1914 – war ends political and socio-economic differences.

Note: There is a shift of German nationalism from the Kaiser to the German people on the outbreak of war in 1914; differences of the past ignored? Majority of support came from the middle-class men; among the working class there were massive demonstrations for peace prior to the war.

Against Russians

Russian soldiers are ‘semi-barbarians, who scorch, murder, loot, who shoot at Samaritans, who vandalize medical stations, and spare neither women nor the injured’ – SPD journalist Wilhelm Düwell.

- Socialists support the war as they saw it as an opportunity to topple the Russian monarchy as well as the removal of social classes
- The Russian invasion on the Eastern Front created an illusion of self-defence

Change in society

Consider the militarisation of districts – civilian governors replaced by military governors

Influential figures

Paul Ludwig Hans Anton von Beneckendorff und von Hindenburg

Returned from retirement in 1911 to take helm for the war – creation of the cult of Hindenburg (replacing the Kaiser as the central figure = destabilisation of balance of power between the civil government and the military)

- ‘Those who subscribe to the war loan give me my most beautiful birthday present!’ (1917).
- ‘Times are hard, but victory is certain.’
- Hindenburg use the threat of resignation to undermine the civil government and take over as the Commander in Chief.

4. End of War

Reasons why surrender/negotiated peace was a difficult option

- Loss of power by the military – return of political party and abdication of the Kaiser
- Sense of superiority lost
- Deaths for little purpose; justification was necessary – miniscule territorial gains made
- Payment for the war – the defeated would pay via taxes or parties have to settle their own expenses
- Food riots since 1915 (led by women) + political anti-war movements
- By 1917, majority of soldiers return with the desire to end the war + the Parliament issued a peace declaration

The peace resolution was 'political sentimentality, sentimental humanitarianism and feebleness.'
German lieutenant on Eastern Front – militaristic perspective (radical nationalist)

- Anti-Semitism claiming that Jews failed to participate in the war; reality was there was over-participation by Jews of over 100,000. Not a unique perspective, Britain and Russia claimed that Jews profited from the war.

July 1917 Peace Resolution: "The Reichstag strives for a peace of understanding and the permanent reconciliation of the peoples. With such a peace, forced acquisitions of territory and political, economic, or financial oppression are inconsistent."

- Revolution against the military demanding the end of war promoting democratic ideals and peace
- 750,000 soldiers deserted the frontlines
- "You see comrade, we've had it, no one believes in victory any more, what the newspapers write is all lies and deception. [. . .] If we quit now, we still can save a lot, money, people. [. . .] We are bringing our comrades to the point that they all get involved like in Russia, we have nothing more to lose." Soldier in hospital in August 1918 overheard by police spy.