

AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF LONG TERM FACTORS FOR THE
THE COLLAPSE OF DEMOCRACY IN WEIMAR GERMANY AND THEIR
LEGACY FOR THE POST SECOND WORLD WAR EUROPE

by
YAKUP CEKİ BİLMEN

Submitted to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in European Studies

Sabanci University
May 2012

AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF LONG TERM FACTORS FOR THE
THE COLLAPSE OF DEMOCRACY IN WEIMAR GERMANY AND THEIR
LEGACY FOR THE POST SECOND WORLD WAR EUROPE

APPROVED BY:

Assoc. Prof. Halil Berktay
(Dissertation Supervisor)

.....

Prof. Meltem Müftüler Bac

.....

Prof. Ayşe Kadiođlu

.....

DATE OF APPROVAL: 12.06.2012

© Yakup Ceki Bilmen 2012

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

To the beloved memory of my grandfather Yaakov Jak Maya

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I want to express my gratitude to my thesis adviser Assoc. Prof. Halil Berktaş without whose guidance this thesis wouldn't be the same. Throughout the process of writing he provided me with enlightening feedbacks and discipline which were so fundamental for this thesis. The opportunity to work with him did not only lead me to write this thesis but also to broaden my horizon about a very crucial period of European history.

I want to thank my fiancée Karen İcin for all her understanding throughout this occupied period of my life for the long hours that I have spent to write this thesis, which I should have normally spent with her.

Finally I want to thank my mother Fortune Maya, my brother Avi Bilmen, my grandmother Beki Maya and my uncle Marko Maya for all their support during this process and for always encouraging me to pursue the opportunities for more education.

ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF LONG TERM FACTORS FOR THE THE COLLAPSE OF DEMOCRACY IN WEIMAR GERMANY AND THEIR LEGACY FOR THE POST SECOND WORLD WAR EUROPE

YAKUP CEKİ BİLMEN

M.A in European Studies Program, Thesis 2012

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Halil Berktaş

Keywords: Weimar Germany, Democracy, Post Second World War Europe,
Rise of National Socialism, Social Darwinism, Antisemitism,
Völkisch Nationalism, German Reich

The tragic fall of Weimar Germany was a momentous event not only for Germany but also for the entire Europe since the first German democracy was succeeded by one of the most brutal regimes in history which had led the entire continent into abyss. This thesis tries to understand the long term causes of this fall by concentrating on the factors which had been crippling democratic prospects in Germany since the formation of the Second Reich. By concentrating on the continuities between the Kaiserreich and the Weimar Republic, it is trying to assert that Germany indeed had proceeded in a way unique to its own towards the dictatorship; the Nazi Third Reich. The conclusion part of this study discusses the lessons that have been drawn from the fall of first German democracy and hence shows the significance of the Weimar experience for the formation of a new political culture in the post Second World War Europe in general and Federal Republic of Germany in particular.

ÖZET

UZUN DÖNEMLİ FAKTÖRLERİN WEİMAR ALMANYA'SINDAKİ DEMOKRASİNİN YIKILIŞINDA OYNADIĞI RÖLÜN VE BUNUN İKİNCİ DÜNYA SAVAŞI SONRASI AVRUPA'YA BIRAKMIŞ OLDUĞU MİRASIN ANALİZİ

YAKUP CEKİ BİLMEN

Avrupa Çalışmaları Yüksek Lisans Programı, Tez, 2012

Danışman: Doçent. Dr. Halil Berktaş

Anahtar Kelimeler: Weimar Almanya'sı, Demokrasi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı
Sonrası Avrupa, Nasyonal Sosyalizm'in Yükselişi,
Sosyal Darwinizm, Antisemitizm, Völkisch Milliyetçiliği,
Alman İmparatorluğu

Weimar Almanya'sının trajik düşüşü, Alman demokrasisinin ardından, bütün kıtayı uçuruma iten tarihteki en vahşi rejimlerden birinin iş başına gelmesinden dolayı sadece Almanya için değil, bütün Avrupa için büyük önem taşımaktadır. Bu tez İkinci Alman İmparatorluğu'nun kuruluşundan bu yana demokrasi ümitlerini baltalamakta olan faktörler üzerine yoğunlaşarak, bu düşüşün uzun dönemli sebeplerini anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Bu tez Kayser Almanya'sı ile Weimar Cumhuriyeti arasındaki devamlılıklara odaklanarak, Almanya'nın aslında kendine özgü bir yol izleyerek diktatörlüğe; Nazi Üçüncü İmparatorluğu'na doğru ilerlediğini iddia etmektedir. Bu çalışmanın sonuç bölümü ilk Alman Demokrasi'sinin düşüşünden alınan dersleri tartışmakta ve bu şekilde İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrasında, Avrupa genelinde ve Federal Almanya özelinde yeni bir siyasi kültür oluşmasında Weimar tecrübesinin önemini ortaya koymaktadır.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION: Struggle Between Liberalism and Conservatism.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: Treaty of Versailles and German Humiliation.....	8
1.1 German Conquests and the Popular Expectations During the First World War.....	8
1.2 German War Aims Debate.....	10
1.3 War Guilt Clause, German Reaction and Reparations.....	12
CHAPTER TWO: Authoritarianism.....	17
2.1 Sonderweg.....	17
2.2 Bismarckian Legacies: Kulturkampf and Anti-Socialist Laws.....	18
2.3 Intellectual Roots of Authoritarianism.....	20
2.4 Prussian Dominance and Weak Parliamentary Arrangement.....	21
2.5 Burgfreiden, Volksgemeinschaft and Frontgemeinschaft.....	24
2.6 Exploitation of the Authoritarian Concepts by the German Right in the Weimar Republic.....	25
CHAPTER THREE: Culture.....	28
3.1 Culture v.s Civilization.....	28
3.2 Cultural Currents in Kaiserreich and the Weimar Republic.....	28
3.3 Gay and Lesbian Culture.....	30
3.4 Political Arts.....	32
3.5 Reaction of the Easterners and the Younger Generation.....	33
3.6 Nazi Reaction.....	36

CHAPTER FOUR: Antisemitism.....	38
4.1 Antisemitism in Kaiserreich Since 1873 Economic Crisis.....	38
4.2 Antisemitism in the Weimar Republic.....	40
4.3 Antisemitism Employed By Nazis For Political Purposes.....	42
 CHAPTER FIVE: Social Darwinism, Eugenic Ideas and German Nationalism.....	 45
5.1 The Public Debate About Social Darwinism In Kaiserreich...	45
5.2 Eugenism in Weimar Republic.....	46
5.3 Völkisch Nationalism in Kaiserreich.....	49
5.4 Nationalism in the Weimar Republic.....	51
5.5 Nazi Social Darwinism and Nationalism.....	53
 CHAPTER SIX: The Weimar Constitution.....	 55
6.1 General Perception of the Weimar Constitution Among the German People.....	 55
6.2 Weaknesses of the Weimar Constitution and It's pre-Weimar Roots.....	 56
 CHAPTER SEVEN: The Military.....	 63
7.1 Dominant Position of the Military in Kaiserreich.....	63
7.2 Reichswehr During the Weimar Republic	65

CHAPTER EIGHT: The Judiciary and The Civil Service.....	70
8.1 Continuity in Civil Service.....	70
8.2 Court Favoritism For the Right.....	72
8.3 Disaffection of the Civil Servants and Their Support For Nazis.....	74
CHAPTER NINE: The Party Politics.....	76
9.1 Political Parties and Social Milieus in Kaiserreich.....	76
9.2 Political Parties in Weimar Republic.....	77
9.3 Political Language in Weimar Republic.....	82
CONCLUSION: Weimar Experience and Lessons For the Post Second World War Europe.....	84
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	100

ABBREVIATIONS

SPD - Social Democratic Party of Germany

DNVP - German National People's Party

NSDAP – National Socialist German Worker's Party

Kampfbund – Militant League for German Culture

KPD – Communist Party of Germany

DAP – German Workers Party

DVP – German People's Party

Alldeutsche – Pan German League

DDP – German Democratic Party

ISK – International Socialist Combat League

SA – Stormtroopers

ECHR – European Court of Human Rights

CDU – Christian Democratic Union of Germany

CSU – Christian Social Union of Bavaria

Even stories with a sorry ending have their moments of glory, great and small and it is proper to view these moments, not in the light of their ending, but in their own light: their reality is no less powerful than the reality of their ending.

Thomas Mann, *Joseph und seine Brüder*

INTRODUCTION

Struggle Between Liberalism and Conservatism

Defeats in two world wars, ensuing economic catastrophe, occupation and finally the division of Germany didn't prevent her from reemerging as an economic giant and to finish the 20th century as one of the leading democracies in Europe. Given her troubled history, this is no small achievement. Since the formation of the Second Reich by "blood and iron", there had been a fierce clash between the Liberal and the Conservative Germany. My intention is to examine maybe the most important chapter in this struggle, the Weimar Germany and to understand how the long term developments that had started before the First World War, affected the Republic and finally brought it to its knees. The subject might be one of the most studied and best known case studies of, how weak democracies fail and succeeded by authoritarian regimes and might be seen as irrelevant in a continent that have already considered to transformed itself in to a one which is living in a Kantian world of perpetual peace. However, at the time of this writing, European Union is not only baffled with the economic crisis but also by the rise of the Viktor Orban's right wing government in Hungary and Islamophobia and Antisemitism in many of the member states. I believe it is still crucial to understand the Weimar Republic and the long term factors that led to its demise to better understand the state of democracy in Europe today.

Enlightenment played an important part in the struggle between the liberals and the conservatives. Especially Germany's Catholic nobles saw themselves the target of a grandiose conspiracy with roots that could be traced back to the rationalist culture of the 18th century Enlightenment. The triumph of rationalism and its crusade against the Christianity went hand in hand with the adaptation of popular sovereignty and the doctrine of natural rights as the foundation upon which all legitimate government was supposedly based.¹ The clash between the principles of Liberalism and Conservatism found its way in to the German constitution of the Bismarckian Reich as well in which the Imperial Constitution of 1871 represented an uneasy compromise between liberal

¹ Larry Eugene Jones, "Franz von Papen, the German Center Party and the Failure of Catholic Conservatism in the Weimar Republic", *Central European History*, Vol.38, no. 2 (2005), 200.

parliamentarism and old style monarchist authoritarianism.²

Before starting to explain the German liberalism, it should be mentioned that “Germany” was an invented word which may have served to conceal the extent of territorial divisions within the Bismarckian Empire. Germany was no political reality. There did not even exist a political center where decisions for the whole nation were made. No German equivalent of Paris or London existed and those who wished to play an active role in politics had to do so within the state in which they lived. This situation had left an important mark on liberalism. Liberalism in Baden was different from liberalism in Prussia or in Mecklenburg.³

During the 19th century Great Depression in Germany which lasted between 1873 and 1896, liberalism lost significant ground. Because of its free trading and universalistic ideals, it dramatically lost ground to the new politics based on sectional economic interest and to an emerging anti-modern ideological complex containing romantic, corporatist and anti-semitic forms of belief.⁴ As a result of the organization of the German Labor Movement into German Socialist Party (SPD) and the growth of anti socialism as a reaction to it, liberals suffered again, this time due to demands for exceptional legislation and restrictions of civil freedoms which had badly compromised liberal principles of constitutional liberty.⁵

But when one looks at the issue of the advances of Liberalism in Germany from another perspective, from the perspective of European wide conjuncture of capitalist development and constitution making in 1860s, then the investment of liberal hopes in the Bismarckian settlement of 1867-71 appears not as a liberalism denying compromise, but as a powerful, if unfinished realization of liberal visions of the future. Germany was reconstructed in that period, both in terms of territory, socio-culture and constitution, along the lines of the principles that were proposed by the German liberals. In the event it was Bismarck who proved to be the manager of this process but it were the liberals who defined the agenda he carried out not the pre-industrial and

² Conan Fischer, *The Rise of the Nazis* (New York: Palgrave, 2002; henceforth *The Rise*), 6.

³ Dieter Langewiesche, “Nature of German Liberalism”, in *Modern Germany Reconsidered 1870-1945*, ed. Gordon Martel (New York:Routledge,1992; henceforth *Nature*), 97.

⁴ Geoff Eley, “Bismarckian Germany”, in *Modern Germany Reconsidered 1870-1945*, ed. Gordon Martel (New York: Routledge,1992; henceforth *Bismarckian Germany*), 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*,5.

aristocratic elite.⁶ The goals of a nation state and progress were regarded as the two sides of the same coin. Until a German nation state was born the term liberalism has meant a broad, progressive vision of the future: an end to borders that prevented the free movement of people, goods and ideas; improvement of living conditions for all, equal political rights for all man and a strong Parliament.⁷

But the conservative criticism and reaction has been widespread during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Europe. All over Europe conservatives were increasingly worried about the threat of revolution and were taking steps to resist it. The growth of mass social democratic parties at the end of the 19th century led to a conservative reaction against the liberal constitutions and the universal suffrage.⁸ There were clashes between predominantly conservative House of Lords and the liberal government in office between 1892 and 1896 in Britain.⁹ In Italy the criticism of the Parliamentary system continued and the attacks on liberalism persisted, so as to contribute to the climate in which in the immediate postwar period the rise of Fascism was possible.¹⁰ And in the Third Republic, the Dreyfus affair was a clear manifestation of the polarized political scene between the liberals and conservatives.

Even though 19th century was the period when Liberals all over Europe made some important gains after waging protracted battles against the conservatives, in the 20th century during the period in between two world wars, one by one European democracies started to crumble. Survivors from the 19th century were perhaps most shocked by the collapse of the values and institutions of the liberal civilization whose progress their century had taken for granted in “advanced” and “advancing” parts of the world. These values included a disdain from dictatorship, a commitment to constitutional government under freely elected governments and representative assemblies which oversaw the well functioning of the rule of law and an accepted set of citizen's rights and liberties.¹¹ But the twenty years between Mussolini's March on Rome and the peak of the axis success in the Second World War saw an accelerating

⁶ Ibid., 25-26.

⁷ Langewiesche, “Nature”, 110.

⁸ James Joll, *Europe since 1870* (London: Penguin Books, 1983; henceforth *Europe*), 250-253.

⁹ Ibid., 217.

¹⁰ Ibid., 125-126.

¹¹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century* (London: Abacus, 1995; henceforth *Extremes*), 109-110.

retreat of liberal political institutions.¹²

During the interwar period those democratic values mentioned above disappeared due to the political polarization in Europe. Ruling elites in many European countries were obsessed with anticommunism which led them to overlook the growing undemocratic practices in their countries¹³. In 1919 in Hungary, Bela Kun's revolutionary government was suppressed and the Admiral Horthy's autocratic regime was installed. In Italy, the liberal elites supported the formation of a Fascist government in 1922. In Spain, the founder of Falange Espanola, which was heavily influenced by Fascism, Primo de Rivera seized power. In Portugal, the republic succumbed to the dictatorship of Prof. Salazar and Poland turned its back to parliamentary rule in 1926 as a result of political instability and hyperinflation.¹⁴

By the emergence of the Great Depression, one government after the other started to slide towards rightwards. By then all the political debates were taking place on the right of the political spectrum. What was even more worrying was that most of the Europeans had no longer wished to fight for democracy. There were many non-democratic alternatives to meet the challenges of modernity. Due to the existence of proportional representation in many of the European countries' constitutions, the parliaments were regarded as acting for magnifying rather than to solving bitter social, national, and economic tensions in society at large.¹⁵ As the German legal scholar Moritz Bonn put it; "Legislative paralysis has produced the clamor for a dictator who is willing to do things the nations wants to be done, but who is not subject to the role of economic groups or *even of a majority*"¹⁶.

Here one should ask the inevitable question about the weakness of democracy in Germany. Why democracy as an idea and a form of government which was the final product of a more than a century old successful struggle on the part of liberals, has been discredited and collapsed so quickly in Germany? I believe long term factors which are peculiar to Germany are crucial to answer this question.

¹² Ibid., 11.

¹³ Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000; henceforth *Dark Continent*), 5.

¹⁴ Ibid., 5.

¹⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹⁶ Ibid., 5.

During the interwar period Fascism, Communism and Nazism were all carrying frontal attacks not only against the democratic countries but also against the democracy itself as a form of government. Today the idea that democracy is the most desirable and legitimate form of government is well established not only in Europe and but also throughout the world. Hobsbawm points out the role that Anti-Fascism has played in this transformation. It united an extraordinary range of forces. Ideologically, it was based on the shared values and aspirations of the Enlightenment; progress by the application of reason and science, education and popular government; no inequalities based on birth or origin; societies looking to the future rather than past. As Hobsbawm put it;

Some of these similarities existed purely on paper, though it is not entirely insignificant that political entities as remote from Western democracy as Mengitsu's Ethiopia, Somalia before the fall of Said Barre, Kim Il Sung's North Korea, Algeria and Communist East Germany chose to give themselves the official title of Democratic or People's Democratic Republic. These were the labels which interwar fascist, authoritarian and even traditional conservative regimes between the wars would have rejected with contempt.¹⁷

An indirect indication of the rise of the idea of democracy was the discreditation of its chief attacker; National Socialism in the post Second War World political rhetoric. After the end of the Second World War the use of National Socialism as a term of political abuse was very widespread. It has been used to discredit conservatism, nationalism, anti-communism, economic planning and private business.¹⁸

In order to better understand why such a transformation took place with regard to the perception of democracy after the Second World War, one should carefully examine the state of democracy during the period that preceded the Second World War. The long terms factors that weakened and finally annihilated it should be studied in depth to understand its legacy. Here by concentrating on Weimar Germany, I am selecting the most famous and may be the most studied case of a fall of a democracy. I believe it is crucial to study Weimar Germany because in the final analysis, it was the German democracy which was succeeded by the Nazis and it was world's experience with the Nazis that transformed the idea of democracy from its decadent perception in the

¹⁷ Hobsbawm, *Extremes*, 176.

¹⁸ Harold James, *A German Identity, 1770 to the Present Day* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000; henceforth *A German Identity*),136.

interwar period to its contemporary perception of the most suitable form of government for human beings.

Even though democracy was in decline throughout the most of the continent during the interbellum period, the decline and fall of democracy in Germany was unique in its significance not only because of its wider implications for Europe and the world but also because of its demonstration of how the long term social and political developments in a country can pave the way for the destruction of democracy. By stressing such a point I am not trying to imply that the fall of the Weimar Republic was inevitable and the republic was doomed to failure from the start. That runs the risk of falling in to the trap of structural determinism. Some experts like John Hiden are keen in their assertions that the fall of the Republic was not inevitable and it was the turn of the events that led to its downfall. I am aware that continuity in history should not be confused with inevitability. It is generally agreed among the historians that there were very important continuities which had helped to shape the history of Germany from 1890 to 1933. But Imperial and Weimar German societies were undergoing a very rapid and thorough modernization and as a result, as we will see, several political, economic, social and cultural forces were at work. This suggests that Germany could have evolved along any one of several alternative paths that were available to her.¹⁹ However, regardless of the debate whether the fall of the Republic was inevitable or not, one should still examine the historical continuity of social and political factors that contributed to the downfall of the Republic to better understand the ultimate collapse of democracy in Germany.

Since I am planning to dwell in to the "long term" factors that led to the downfall of the Weimar Democracy, I should clarify what I mean by long term factors. Such concepts like "short", "mid" or "long" term factors are vague, subjective and arbitrary and I am planning to take advantage of this arbitrariness of such concepts and make a definition of my own about what constitutes " a long term factor". Within the frame work of this study, what I mean by long term factors are the factors which have not only confined to the Republican Germany but have their roots in pre-WWI Kaiserreich. I managed to find a cluster of nine such factors; the Treaty of Versailles and German humiliation,

¹⁹ Geoff Layton, *From Bismarck to Hitler: Germany 1890-1933* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995; henceforth *Bismarck to Hitler*), 153.

authoritarianism, culture and generational conflict, anti-Semitism, social Darwinism, Eugenism and German Nationalism, Weimar Constitution, Judiciary and Civil Servants, military and party politics, that contributed to the dismantling of democracy in Weimar Germany. These nine factors either contributed directly to the weakening of democracy or provided ammunition for the National Socialist in their brutal quest for power, hence ending democracy, or both. I will analyze these factors in nine different chapters before I try to understand what kind of lessons Europe in general and Federal Germany in particular, managed to draw from these shortcomings of democracy in the post-Second World War period in the conclusion of chapter of my dissertation.

Before starting to examine those nine factors in depth, I must mention the difficulty of writing about such a contested historical issue like Weimar Germany. Since history deals with concepts which are doubly constructs of the human imagination not inanimate entities, they are not natural givens. There is no theory neutral data language to describe the human social world. Alternative conceptual frameworks may confront each other.²⁰ Issues like German war guilt clause, reparations, Weimar culture, German special path to development (Sonderweg) are still very hotly debated issues among the historians, hence inevitably contested.

Some German historians like Freidrich Meinecke rejects the Sonderweg argument, which states German peculiarities during the process of her nation state formation, and claims that what led to the downfall of Weimar Democracy and the rise of Hitler was not long the term developments in German history but an accident of history in which a criminal gang called the Nazis somehow had managed to capture power in Weimar Germany.²¹ Here in the following chapters, I will argue the exact opposite view which was mentioned above. My emphasis will be on the German history and as opposed to the “accidents of history”, I will try to understand the long term historical German peculiarities in order to explain the fall of the Weimar Democracy.

²⁰ Mary, Fulbrook, *German national identity after the Holocaust* (UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2002; henceforth *After the Holocaust*), 104-105.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

CHAPTER ONE

The Treaty of Versailles and German Humiliation

Since my criteria to decide whether a factor is a long term or not depends on its connection with the pre-WWI Germany, at the first look Treaty of Versailles might not seem a long term factor that had contributed to the downfall of democracy in Weimar Germany. But closer examination will reveal its pre-war connections. The treaty it self did not of course exist before the First World War but the psychology that had led the German people to interpret the treaty in such a humiliating and destructive way had came in to being in pre war Germany.

1.1 German Conquests and Popular Expectations During the First World War

The treaty of Versailles was one of the most important factors that had contributed to the fall of democracy in Germany. It was itself a catalyst rather than a direct cause of the collapse of democracy.²² First of all there was the expectation present in all over Germany that Germany was about to win the First World War. On 1 March, 1918 Kiev fell and Ludendorff occupied Ukraine and set up a Landowner's Republic. In April 1918 German troops landed in Finland which was another potential satellite state. On 7 May 1918, Germany forced a dictated peace on Romania. In September 1918, Ludendorff penetrated as far as the Baku oilfields to take up strategic positions on the rim of Central Asia. In the early autumn of 1918, it appeared to the Germans that, far from being lost, had in all essentials the war had been won.²³ Until August 1918 almost no one had contemplated the possibility of defeat; in most German imaginations, the worst that could happen would be a continuation of the long stalemate and then a negotiated peace without annexations and indemnities.²⁴

In line with those expectations there were vocal demands with regard to the war aims. In June 1915 the Pan German League and a group of professors at the University of

²² John Hiden, *Republican and Fascist Germany : themes and variations in the history of Weimar and the Third Reich, 1918-45* (London: Longman, 1996; henceforth *Republican*), 40.

²³ Paul Johnson, *Modern Times: The world from twenties to the nineties* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers,1983; henceforth *Modern Times*), 105.

²⁴ James, *A German Identity*, 115.

Berlin sponsored a congress on war aims which at the end of its deliberations sent an address to the Chancellor, containing the most grandiose terms for the extent of the Empire in Eastern and Western Europe and overseas that the government must insist upon after the inevitable victory of Germany.²⁵ In July 1915, a petition was given by the intellectuals who called for a programme of annexations which are necessary for protecting Germany from future attacks and stressing the civilizing mission that Germany could perform in Slav lands. The petition was signed by 1347 professional men, theologians, school teachers, artists, writers and academics, with the largest single group of signatories being University Professors who numbered 352.²⁶

Even though political organizations like Fatherland Party had been established with the purpose of dulling the critical faculties of the German middle class and mobilizing them in support of war aims that Germany was now incapable of attaining, the moderate intellectuals and parties shared the zeal for grandiose war aims too.²⁷ Moderate figures from Center Party and right wing Social Democrats to the well known Berlin military historian Hans Delbrück stood for annexations that would make Germany supreme in Europe.²⁸ Even the Unions joined the nationalist euphoria. Together with the majority of the SPD, they were influenced by an ideology of expansionism and agreed to the national coalition of consensus by giving up the right to strike.²⁹

However, there was a huge gap between the reality on the ground and the expectations of the German people. Far from being “stabbed in the back”, the German army itself consistently asked for the cessation of hostilities. The stab in the back was a myth. General Ludendorff, the actual leader of the High Command had insisted on September 28, 1918 on an armistice at once and his nominal superior Field Marshall Von Hindenburg had given him his support. On October 2, during the meeting of the Crown

²⁵ Gordon Alexander Craig, *Germany 1866-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980; henceforth *Germany*), 358.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 361.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 388.

²⁸ MacGregor Knox, *To the threshold of power, 1922/33 :Origins and dynamics of the Fascist and National Socialist Dictatorships* (New York: Cambridge, 2007; henceforth *Origins of the Dictatorships*), 187.

²⁹ Folko Arends and Gerhard Kümmel, “Germany:From Double Crisis to National Socialism”, in *Conditions of Democracy in Europe, 1919-1939*, ed. Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Jeremy Mitchell (London: Mac Millan Press, 2000; henceforth *Conditions*), 191.

Council in Berlin, which was presided over by Kaiser Wilhelm II, Hindenburg once more expressed High Command's demand for an immediate cease fire. He said the army can not wait for another 48 hours. In a letter written on the same day, Hindenburg stated that the military situation made it an imperative to stop fighting.³⁰

Fifty years later, a German historian who had been a front line officer in 1915 wrote:

Today we can not, without a shudder of horror, look back to the dreadful contradiction that became apparent in the summer of 1915 between the deep concern with which the country's responsible statesman and its leading soldiers regarded Germany's future and the tidal wave of expectations of victory and victorious demands which at the time submerged our nation ever more irresistibly.³¹

1.2 German War Aims Debate

What made the gap between reality and expectations of the German war situation more explosive during the Weimar Republic was the missed opportunity on the part of the statesman and intellectuals to tell the people the truth about the Germany's prewar intentions. A substantial number of historians, mainly German, have now demonstrated that the foreign policy of the Second Reich aimed at war sooner rather than later as a means of breaking the Franco-Russian alliance and achieving an early form of Lebensraum in Eastern Europe.³²

Historian Fritz Fischer, whose ideas have led to the famous Fischer controversy in German historical profession, argued that the German government in July 1914 accepted, indeed hoped, that a major European war would result from its enthusiastic backing of Austria against Serbia. For Fischer, underlying intention of the German ruling elite between 1911-1914 was to consolidate its own position with a successful foreign policy and it was hoped that a war would resolve the growing social tensions.³³ He argued that Germany in 1914, deliberately chose not only to abandon Bismarck's moderate policy of semi-hegemony in Europe in favor of a Napoleonic policy of hegemony but also seek world power status at the expense of Great Britain and Russia. Fischer rested his case upon a detailed examination of the Chancellor Hollweg's

³⁰ William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of The Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Touchstone Book, 1962; henceforth *The Rise and Fall*), 31.

³¹ Craig, *Germany*, 358.

³² Stephen J. Lee, *The Weimar Republic* (London: Routledge, 1998; henceforth *Weimar*), 36.

³³ James Retallack, "Wilhelmine Germany" in *Modern Germany Reconsidered 1870-1945*, ed. Gordon Martel (New York: Routledge, 1992), 36-39.

annexationist programme of 9 September 1914. According to this programme France was going to be destroyed as a great power, Russia reduced to dimensions reached under Peter the Great, Belgium would be reduced in to German vassal state, Luxemburg annexed outright, and Russia and Britain replaced by Germany as the dominant power in the Middle East and Persia.³⁴

However, having mentioned the German intentions before the war, one should also mention the fragility of its geo-strategic position in the continent and its role in inducing an offensive mentality in German war making. Exposed frontiers and a relatively narrow territorial base naturally favored offensive maneuvers, in which surprise, speed and concentration of forces had to carry the day. In the 19th and 20th centuries the strategic offensive hardened in to a dogma in Germany. According to Josef Joffe to break permanently free of encirclements, Wilhelm II initiated what Frederick and Bismarck had feared most: a two front war against both East and West.³⁵

After examining the 1914 top secret foreign office documents that it had commissioned, many of the members of the Reich Cabinet, concluded privately that Germany had indeed launched the war. But Ebert, then the Reich President and the Republic's first cabinet under Scheidemann as chancellor, shrank from publication.³⁶ Even among the German Socialists, the only ones to admit German war guilt were Kurt Eisner, who was murdered in 1919, Karl Kautsky who had the job of putting the prewar diplomatic documents in order and Eduard David who had seen the key papers when he was the undersecretary at the Foreign Ministry immediately after the monarchy had fell. But none of the revealing documents were published or made accessible.³⁷ Even SPD was unable to distance itself from the Right wing view that Germany bore little or no responsibility for the outbreak of the First World War and therefore the treaty of Versailles was an utterly unjust settlement imposed on an innocent but defeated nation.³⁸ The treaty caused great bitterness and condemned by the entire range of

³⁴ Holger H. Herwig, "Industry, Empire and The First World War" in *Modern Germany Reconsidered 1870-1945*, ed. Gordon Martel (New York: Routledge, 1992; henceforth *Industry*), 55-56.

³⁵ Josef Joffe, "The Continuities From Frederick the Great to the Federal Republic", in *A Century's Journey: How the Great Power Shaped the World*, ed. Robert A. Pastor (New York: Basic Books, 1999; henceforth *Frederick to the Federal Republic*), pg. 94

³⁶ Knox, *Origins of the Dictatorships*, 235.

³⁷ Johnson, *Modern Times*, 108.

³⁸ Richard J. Evans, *Rereading German history : from unification to reunification, 1800-1996*

political opinion. It was seen by Hugo Preuss, a prominent politician and legal expert who drafted the Weimar constitution, as a severe blow to the new Republic. He referred to the “criminal madness of the Versailles Diktat” and claimed that the new constitution was born with this curse upon it.³⁹ He believed Versailles to be an insupportable mortgage on Weimar; “Weimar would forever bear the stigma of national humiliation”. Friedrich Naumann also argued in the same way and another Democrat Konrad Haussman, even went as far as to say that a possible Allied occupation wouldn't have such damaging effects as the shame of accepting the peace treaty.⁴⁰

However some historians like Stephen J. Lee thinks the terms of the Treaty of Versailles were not harsh for Germany. The transfer of territory to France, Belgium and Denmark was limited in scope and the return of Alsace Lorraine to France, after its conquest by Prussia in 1871 was inevitable. The incorporation of Northern Schleswig in to Denmark after the plebiscite simply reversed the annexation of the area by Bismarck in 1864. French revanchism was not the key factor in the financial provisions, they were needed to rebuild the shattered infrastructure of both France and Belgium, whose territory, not Germany's, had borne the destruction of four years of warfare.⁴¹ But this was not the general perception of the German people. The perception of the German people was that the treaty is not aimed to create a “Wilsonian peace without victors or vanquished” but rather to ensure that Germany can no longer be a military threat to France.⁴² As Geoff Layton puts it; “Most Germans had been convinced that the war of 1914 had been fought for defensive reasons and that in no way could Germany alone be made to accept responsibility.”⁴³

1.3 War Guilt Clause, German Reaction and Reparations

In such a delusional state of mind and without knowing much about what was really going on with the war, German people, after the end of hostilities were presented with

(Newyork: Routledge, 1997; henceforth *Rereading*),101.

³⁹ Stephen J. Lee, *European Dictatorship, 1918-1945* (New York: Routledge, 2000; henceforth *Dictatorship*), 211.

⁴⁰ James, *A German Identity*,122.

⁴¹ Lee, *Weimar*, 36-37.

⁴² Richard Bessel, “Germany from War to Dictatorship”, in *20th Century Germany, politics, culture and society 1918-1990*, ed. Mary Fulbrook (UK: Oxford University Press, 2001; henceforth *War to Dictatorship*), 23.

⁴³ Layton, *Bismarck to Hitler*, 87.

the Treaty of Versailles. It was almost inevitable for such a treaty to arouse resentment and humiliation under above mentioned conditions. In the wake of four years of brutal warfare that had destroyed large areas of France and Belgium and the loss of millions of lives, the Allies were not in a mood to offer lenient terms.⁴⁴ But the Germans were expecting to gain Austria and Sudetenland from defunct Austria-Hungarian Empire, but they were rebuffed.⁴⁵ Instead they were deprived 13% of their prewar territory and 10 % of their prewar population.⁴⁶

Apart from charging Germany with responsibility for initiating the war, the treaty brought even more humiliation to Germany; the creation of the Polish corridor, partition of Upper Silesia and declaration of Danzig as a free city were particularly problematic for the Germans.⁴⁷ Moreover the German army was limited with 100.000 soldiers and its navy with 15.000. The German General Staff and military academies alongside cadet schools were abolished. Germany was not permitted to have offensive weapons, airplanes, tanks and submarines.⁴⁸ As the result of the article 231, the war guilt clause, Reparations Commission set the sum of the indemnity to be paid by Germany to the Allies at 132 billion gold marks.⁴⁹

The famous article 231 of the treaty read;

The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.⁵⁰

The emotional effect of the war guilt issue was huge. Not only did the war guilt clause make no distinction between the Kaiser's government and that of the new republic which was held accountable for the policies of its predecessor but it also suggested that a degree of moral blame was attached to Germany from which her opponents were

⁴⁴ Michael E. Telzrow, "Lessons of the Weimar Republic", *New American*, Vol.25, issue 10 (2009), 36.

⁴⁵ Lee, *Weimar*, 40.

⁴⁶ Lewis E. Hill, Charles E. Butler and Stephen E. Lorenzen, "Inflation and the destruction of democracy: the case of Weimar Republic", *Journal of Economic Issues*, Vol.11, issue 2 (1977), 300.

⁴⁷ Hiden, *Republican*, 12-13.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*,14.

⁴⁹ Craig, *Germany*, 439.

⁵⁰ *The Weimar Republic Source book* ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995; henceforth *Sourcebook*), pg.8

free.⁵¹ The point was raised by German Protestant theologian Ernst Troeltsch during his sermon in June 1919:

And as these accusations continued, they were also applied to the new revolutionary government, which was in no way responsible for the Imperial administration, as well as to the fully debilitated Germany of the ceasefire period. Thus it was possible to refuse every negotiation...⁵²

After the treaty's articles became known to the German President, Ebert even offered to declare the treaty “a peace of violence”. As a symbol of grief he went as far as to order the suspension of public amusements for a week.⁵³ On the day the treaty was signed, the German newspaper *Deutsche Zeitung* heavily denounced the terms of the treaty with the following revanchist terms:

Vengeance German nation. Today in the Hall of Mirrors, the disgraceful treaty is being signed. Do not forget it. The German people will with unceasing labor press forward to re-conquer the place among nations to which it is entitled. Then will come vengeance for the shame of 1919.⁵⁴

But the much criticized war guilt clause, the article 231 which was designed to lay a legal basis for reparations in fact makes no mention of “war guilt”. The victors incorporated the same clauses, *mutatis mutandis*, into the treaties with Austria and Hungary, neither of whom interpreted it as a declaration of war guilt. But the German politicians and propagandists incited the German people endlessly on the basis of the unilateral war guilt.⁵⁵ The revision of the “imposed peace”, the “Diktat von Versailles” became the declared objective of all parties. For the parties, whose primary aim was to undermine parliamentary government, to outbid the moderate parties in revisionism of the treaty was a commonly adopted tool.⁵⁶ Hitler, for example used the perceived injustices of the Versailles such as war guilt clause and labeled it as the Versailles Diktat. This continuous objection and exploitation of the Treaty of Versailles enabled Nazis to collaborate closely with the conservative forces within the DNVP, the army and the business which enhanced Hitler's reputation at a crucial stage in his party's

⁵¹ Joll, *Europe*, 277.

⁵² Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg, *Sourcebook*, 1995.

⁵³ David Evans and Jane Jenkins, *Years of Weimar and The Third Reich* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1999; henceforth *Years of Weimar*), 23.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁵ Sally Marks, “The Myths of Reparations” *Central European History*, Vol. 11, no. 3 (1978), 231-232.

⁵⁶ Peter Pulzer, *Germany 1870-1945, Politics, State Formation and War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997; henceforth *Germany 1870-1945*), 100.

development.⁵⁷ Nazis were determined to gain power on the basis of tearing up the peace treaties of 1919, rearming and re-conquering the lost territories in the East and West.⁵⁸ This was the most fatal effect of the Treaty of Versailles, alongside the resentment and humiliation it generated among the German people, it gave a tool for Hitler to increase the power of the very party which would subsequently dismantle the democracy in Weimar Germany. To support their opposition to Versailles Nazis even invented strange stories. They claimed for instance, that what the Allies really required was not the export of goods but the export of people in an attempt to depopulate Germany. The Nazi economic experts Fritz Reinhardt, in a brochure entitled “The Young Plan and the Export of Humans” stated that 62 million Germans would be reduced to between 20-25 million.⁵⁹ The Nazis even incorporated the objective of the revocation of the peace treaties in to their 1920 party programme.⁶⁰

Largely forgetting the responsibility of the imperial wartime government for initiating this string of disasters, the middle class opinion put the blame on the Republican politicians who had signed the peace treaty. Middle class politics began to shift rightwards and individual voters turned increasingly to parties which were indifferent or openly hostile towards the Republic. In January 1919 elections, the Republican parties took 72.4% of the votes. But as soon as June 1920, after the signing of the treaty, The Republicans polled just 43.6% of the votes.⁶¹

Harsh peace conditions gave National Socialism a resonance throughout the country, providing a context within which it and a whole range of völkish, imperialist and nationalist ideas seemed to make sense and seemed to explain the nation's predicament more convincingly than other ideologies could.⁶² Versailles's most visible contribution to the Nazi success was in Schleswig-Holstein and the North Eastern areas that were cut in to two by Poland, where the voting for the Nazis were heaviest. These areas might be described as “threatened border areas” next to the territories that the Versailles

⁵⁷ Lee, *Weimar*, 41.

⁵⁸ Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of The Third Reich* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2003; henceforth *The Third Reich*), 229.

⁵⁹ James, *A German Identity*, 132-133.

⁶⁰ Michael Mann, *Fascists* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 141

⁶¹ Fischer, *The Rise*, 97.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 49.

Treaty confiscated from Germany.⁶³

Another issue which was brought to the German political scene by the Treaty of Versailles was the issue of war reparations. This issue was also exploited by the Nazis. Young Plan which in effect moderated the reparation terms is a good example to illustrate how the issue was taken up by the Nazi propaganda machine and exploited to the full extent. The German government agreed the terms of the Young Plan but the German Right regarded the payment of reparations as treason. Even though resulting referendum ended in a humiliating defeat for the DNVP led National Solidarity Movement, the involvement of the Nazis in the campaign gave then the small Nazi Party exposure and respectability to an unprecedented scale. Moreover, by relating Germany's economic and social crisis to the terms of the peace treaty, the campaign broadcasted the Nazis' central message to a wide and increasingly receptive audience. During the state and local elections in 1929 and 1930, Nazis saw significant advances. Its share of the poll soared from 2.6% of 1928 to 18.3% in September 1930.⁶⁴

When the context of which the treaty came in to effect is examined, it is clear that the German elites and the people would perceive it as a great humiliation. As the German people saw their pre-war hopes had vanished so suddenly in to the thin air and the war had been lost and its effects came to home with such a treaty, the Versailles inevitably became one of the most important factors that had hampered the first German democracy.

⁶³ Mann, *Fascists*, 189.

⁶⁴ Fischer, *The Rise*, 100.

CHAPTER TWO

Authoritarianism

2.1 Sonderweg

The politics of the Bismarckian period are thought to have cast a long shadow over Weimar Germany. They established powerful continuities that extended through the imperial period to that of Weimar and played key part in rendering German society vulnerable to Nazism.⁶⁵ The long term peculiarities of German history often described as Sonderweg, a unique path of historical development. Never having undergone a bourgeois revolution as occurred earlier in England and France, Germany subsequently diverged from the “Western” democracies under the rule of Wilhelm. This special path not only explained the persistence of feudal elites in Germany but also illustrated the dangers of late industrialization in a nation without the parliamentary traditions necessary to safeguard the diffusion of power.⁶⁶ German industrialization came, to use Ralf Dahrendorf’s, classic formulation “late, fast and thoroughly”, producing within two generations one of the world’s most advanced industrial economies but leaving in its wake substantial residues of pre-industrial, indeed pre-capitalist modes of production and distribution. Artisans, small shopkeepers and members of the traditional middle class found themselves threatened by the rapid development of large scale corporate capitalism on the one hand and the emergence of increasingly well organized and apparently militant socialist working class movement on the other. Deeply entrenched elites in the army, bureaucracy and East Elbian aristocracy who felt that they were under attack, sought to maintain their monopoly on political power through a series of manipulative strategies like Weltpolitik, Kulturkampf and anti-socialist laws. Lacking a tradition of successful bourgeoisie revolution, the upper middle class which was brought up and socialized in pre-industrial values by the conservative educational system, army and bureaucracy was gradually co-opted.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Eley, *Bismarckian Germany*, 1992.

⁶⁶ Retallack, *Wilhelmine Germany*, 1992.

⁶⁷ Thomas Childers, “The Social Language of Politics in Germany: The Sociology of Political Discourse in the Weimar Republic” *American Historical Review*, Vol.95, issue 2 (1990), 332.

The British historian Richard J. Evans described the Bismarckian Germany with the following words;

The unification of Germany under Bismarck created a German Reich which was dominated by the authoritarian, backward looking values of its ruling caste; Prussian military and land owning aristocracy. Despite its booming industrial economy, the Empire's social and political structures were to a large extent feudalistic. Its middle classes were deferential to the state and the titled nobility, its urban and rural masses regimented in to the loyalty and obedience by the disciplining power of the army, police, the judiciary and the educational system, all of which geared to producing not independent thinking citizens but supine, unquestioning subjects.⁶⁸

2.2 Bismarckian Legacies: Kulturkampf and Anti-Socialist Laws

When examining the long term effects of the Kaiserreich on the Weimar Germany, it is worth remembering that a mere 50 years separated Bismarck's foundation of the German Empire in 1871 from the rise of the Nazi's in the period 1930-32.⁶⁹ Bismarckian and Wilhelmine legacies with regard to authoritarianism were very profound in the Weimar Germany. Part of this authoritarianism was the direct result of the Iron Chancellor's views and policies. His two guiding principles were German unity and state power.⁷⁰ Bismarck barely concealed his contempt for liberalism, socialism, parliamentarism, egalitarianism and many other aspects of modern life.⁷¹ In December 1884, he was raging against the unmanageability of the Reichstag, telling the members of the Ministry of State that “one could get nowhere with the present electoral law and the logical thing to do was to conclude that this arrangement” has not worked out.⁷² But especially in his two specific policies; Kulturkampf and anti-socialist laws Bismarck left a bitter authoritarian legacy to the future German generations.

The Protestant-Catholic divide has been running deep in the 19th century German society. The French occupation of the Rhineland and Westphalia before 1815 and Prussia's annexation of the two regions at the Congress of Vienna, struck directly at the regional hegemony of Germany's Catholic aristocracy and meant it would be living in a predominantly Protestant state headed by a ruling house that over the course of the preceding two centuries had systematically reduced the East Elbian nobility to a

⁶⁸ Evans, *Rereading*, 23.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁷⁰ John Wheeler-Bennett, “The end of Weimar Republic”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 50, Issue 2 (1972), 352.

⁷¹ Evans, *The Third Reich*, 2-3.

⁷² Craig, *Germany*, 168

subordinate status within the Prussian state.⁷³ In the newly established German Empire Bismarck continued this policy of undermining the power of Catholic population and its institutions by the policies of Kulturkampf. He especially saw the dogma of Papal Infallibility which was outlined in 1870, as a potential threat to the autonomy and the sovereignty of the state.⁷⁴ Within the framework of his policy of Kulturkampf, Bismarck had provided the state with the right to inspect schools and the banning of the Jesuit order from Prussia followed. The policy reached its climax with the so called May laws of 1873 in which the state obtained the power over the education of the priests. Civil marriage was made compulsory, all religious orders other than the medical ones were dissolved and the constitutional guarantees of self government to the churches were revoked.⁷⁵ In a fierce educational battle against the Catholic schools and Catholic Church in general, he had deliberately set Germans against Germans on confessional grounds. The great mass of Roman Catholic Germans had been ingrained with a distrust of their government that was to last for years.⁷⁶

Repression of another group, this time the Socialists paved the way for more authoritarianism in the Bismarckian Reich. The anti-socialist law gave the police authorities the right to forbid the existence of clubs and organizations of any kind, including cooperative funds and publications that supported social democratic, socialist and communist activities designed to subvert the existing political and social order in ways that threatened the public order and particularly the harmony of the social classes. Assemblies serving the same purpose were also forbidden. Immediately after the law was approved by the Reichstag on 19 October 1878, 45 out of 47 leading party newspapers were suppressed.⁷⁷ The authoritarian approach against the Socialists was not confined to the Bismarckian period but also continued after the Iron Chancellor. During Hohenlohe's term of chancellorship, unending series of attempts to disable the Socialist Party either by police actions or by legislative means were practiced.⁷⁸ What was more alarming for Germany was that the repeated and public statements of the Kaiser had been describing millions of his working class subjects as untrustworthy, disloyal and capable of helping Germany's enemies. This was a potential factor in

⁷³ Jones, 193.

⁷⁴ Arends and Kümmel, *Conditions*, 2000.

⁷⁵ Pulzer, *Germany 1870-1945*, 26.

⁷⁶ Craig, *Germany*, 77.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 263.

alienating a large section of the working class.⁷⁹

2.3 Intellectual Roots of Authoritarianism

However, the authoritarian character of the Reich can not only be blamed on the Iron Chancellor or the ruling elite. It had deeper roots in the German society. Authoritarian ideas had already been penetrated in to the minds of the German intellectuals. German culture which became dominant in the 19th century and which coincided with the rise of Prussian Germany rested primarily on Fichte and Hegel, the former anti-Semitic and the latter adoring the state power and then on Von Treitschke, Nietzsche and Wagner. Together they managed to establish a spiritual break with the West. Wagner was rabidly anti-Semitic, as well as anti-parliamentarian and anti-democratic.⁸⁰ Nietzsche's idealization of war as the testing ground of human greatness reinforced the anti-democratic prejudices of Germany's ruling elites and encouraged them to think of war as a panacea for their nation's domestic problems.⁸¹ What was interesting was the blossoming of philosophical irrationalism among the well educated classes of Germany alongside the above mentioned authoritarian tendencies during the same period. The Bildungsbürgertum which played a dominant role in Germany's cultural and intellectual life between the middle of the 19th century and outbreak of the First World War, started to feel during the same period a gradual decline of its hegemony. As a reaction they started increasingly to turn against the liberal principles that they have used to promote and embraced a philosophical irrationalism, an increasingly powerful force in German culture. Second volume of Arthur Schopenhauer's "The World as Will and Idea" depicted how the idea that death was nothing but redemption from the pain of individual existence demonstrated the way in which the tenets of philosophical irrationalism had begun to penetrate in to the minds of Germany's educated elite. The operas of Richard Wagner became an enormously influential vehicle for the dissemination of an inherently irrational view of the world throughout the German bourgeoisie.⁸² This German state of mind had led the German historian Wolfgang Mommsen, after 1945, to conclude that "Germany had only rejoined the common

⁷⁹ Ibid., 270.

⁸⁰ Shirer, *The Rise and Fall*, 99.

⁸¹ Larry Eugene Jones, "Culture and Politics in the Weimar Republic", in *Modern Germany Reconsidered 1870-1945*, ed. Gordon Martel (New York: Routledge, 1992; henceforth *Culture and Politics*), 77.

⁸² Jones, *Culture and Politics*, 77.

stream of Western political culture from which it had gradually dissociated itself since the Enlightenment.”⁸³

But above everyone else it was the nationalist historian Heinrich Von Treitschke who exerted a huge influence on the German ruling elite. In his lectures, which were attended by the figures like Alfred von Tirpitz and Heinrich Class, he propagated unconditional obedience to the state. For him the subjects are little more than slaves in the nation and it doesn't matter what do people think as long as they obey.⁸⁴ He glorified war as a German destiny. In his lectures he compared Augustus the strong of Saxony with the Frederick William I of Prussia to the great disadvantage of the former, reflecting that Frederick William I had built an army whereas Augustus had built Dresden, the most beautiful city in Germany.⁸⁵

This authoritarian understanding of state owes great deal to Leopold van Ranke as well. Ranke perceived history as the story of struggles between the powers and the supreme law of the state was self assertion in the sense that state should impose the *necessity of ordering all internal relationships* for the purpose of asserting itself. His doctrine was especially welcomed by conservatives in Germany because it was stressing the authority, order and discipline and enabling the conservatives to deny civil liberties with the pretext that these endanger the security of the state.⁸⁶

2.4 Prussian Dominance and Weak Parliamentary Arrangement

Another authoritarian aspect of the German Reich was the irrelevance of the Parliament in decision making and the power of Prussia inside the Federal Council which was, in practice, making German Federalism irrelevant. The permanence of Prussian dominance in the executive power of new Germany was guaranteed by the position of the king Emperor; the Prussian King became the Emperor of Germany.⁸⁷ He had the final word over the direction of German Foreign Policy and he alone could appoint and

⁸³ Jill Stephenson, “The rise of the Nazis: Sonderweg or spanner in the works?”, in *20th century Germany, politics, culture and society 1918-1990*, ed. Mary Fulbrook (UK: Oxford University Press, 2001; henceforth *Sonderweg*), 79.

⁸⁴ Shirer, *The Rise and Fall*, 99.

⁸⁵ Craig, *Germany*, 205.

⁸⁶ Pulzer, *Germany 1870-1945*, 80.

⁸⁷ James, *A German Identity*, 88.

dismiss the executive.⁸⁸ Not only was the King of Prussia ex officio Emperor, not only the Chancellor generally also the Prime Minister of Prussia but many of the state secretaries were members of the Prussian cabinet.⁸⁹

Common to both the Reichstags of Bismarck's years and those of the period before the First World War was a notable lack of enthusiasm about the prospect of challenging the political establishment, which was the crown and its agencies in the matters of political importance.⁹⁰ What was even more important was the entrenched power of Prussia in the Federal Council. Due to its influence, the federalism in the Bismarckian Reich had only served as a window dressing to make the dictatorship of Prussia more respectable. States were not consulted or even informed by the Imperial German government. In the Federal Council Prussia had seventeen members which was enough to prevent any constitutional change.⁹¹ During the crisis of July 1914, the impotence of the States and the Federal Council were exposed. The Federal Council which was supposed to decide the policy of Germany met only to pass routine orders forbidding the export of foodstuffs and the state governments were left to learn the course of events from the gossips which their representatives could pick up in Berlin.⁹² German expressionist novelist Alfred Döblin described the situation of the Wilhelmine period with the following words; "Remember the time of the Wilhelmine Regime... of the conservative terrorism in the Prussian Chamber, of the sovereign power of Junker provincial councilors, of the farce of Reichstag..."⁹³

Reichstag was regarded as a weak institution in the Kaiserreich because the working of democracy was harmed by the fact that the chief executive authority of the Empire, the Imperial Chancellor was not responsible to the Imperial Parliament and could not be overthrown by it. When a chancellor was dismissed or obliged to resign, it was not because he lost the confidence of Reichstag but of the Kaiser.⁹⁴ Not only there was a widespread perception of the impotence of the Reichstag among the political circles, but there were actual attempts on the part of the politicians to do as little as possible

⁸⁸ Layton, *Bismarck to Hitler*,

⁸⁹ Pulzer, *Germany 1870-1945*, 19.

⁹⁰ Craig, *Germany*, 47.

⁹¹ A.J.P Taylor, *The Course of German History: a survey of the development of German history since 1815* (New York: Routledge, 2001; henceforth *German History*), 134.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 134.

⁹³ Craig, *Germany*, 338.

⁹⁴ Joll, *Europe*, 120.

with the Parliament. After the Socialist gain of 67 new seats which consolidated their position in Reichstag in 1912 elections, political groupings had found it hard to make the Reichstag an effective body. In such circumstances Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg was encouraged to have as little to do with parties from then on and started to bypass Reichstag whenever it was possible. He had created majorities from issue to issue and on occasion, appealed to the sections of the society which was distrusting the politics and politicians to support him against the quarreling parliamentarians. His policy of standing above the parties led to an increase in authoritarianism.⁹⁵

Hollweg's perception of the French Third Republic can shed light on how democracy was perceived in a society which was full of so many authoritarian tendencies. Before he left the office of Imperial Secretary for the Interior in 1909, Hollweg prepared a report about the French Third Republic in which he criticized republican form of government to be inadequate to maintain a well disciplined army. In the report he said;

For a Republic, it is in any case very difficult to keep the army at the height of its power, for an overall chief, which soldiers naturally need is lacking. As far as officers were concerned republican governments could never replace an overall commander of the army because their interventions were political, capricious and incompetent. Promotion was dictated by political reliability and favoritism rather than by courage, honor, experience and capability. As a consequence, the Etat-Major, divided along political lines which necessarily impaired chains of command.⁹⁶

After such a report by Hollweg, no one will be surprised that Chancellors, envoys, secretaries and counselors in Germany all associated the parliamentary and republican systems of government with the decline of France.⁹⁷

The perceived weaknesses and the divisiveness of the Parliamentary politics had led the Willhelmine Germany into another authoritarian phenomenon; a general yearning for a Führer. In 1891 Julius Langbehn wrote in his book "Rembrandt as Educator" that dissatisfied with their present political leaders, Germans yearned for their "secret emperor, an artistic dictator, a Ceaserlike artistic individual, powerful and spiritually

⁹⁵ Craig, *Germany*, 292

⁹⁶ Mark Hewitson, *National Identity and Political Thought in Germany: Wilhelmine depictions of the French Third Republic, 1890-1914*, (New York: Clarendon Press, 2000; *French Third Republic*), 166.

⁹⁷ Hewitson, *French Third Republic*, 168.

overwhelming”.⁹⁸ Many Germans looked nostalgically back to the Reich created by Bismarck and dreamed of a leader who would resurrect Germany's lost glory.⁹⁹ What the moderate Center Party newspaper, *Germania* had described in December 1916 “as the devotion of the masses to a genius remained for many Germans the true democracy of a Volk seasoned and made clear sighted through hard necessity.”¹⁰⁰ The end of the empire left an even deeper yearning for a Führer than before. During the Weimar Republic, the Reichswehr shared the collective German national yearning for a Führer. As the German high ranking military commander Carl Heinrich von Stülpnagel wrote to a colleague in January 1924;”It is our misfortune to lack in Germany a men of remarkable qualities who can and will rule as a dictator.”¹⁰¹

2.5 Burgfrieden, Volksgemeinschaft and Frontgemeinschaft

However, what took the German authoritarianism to new heights were the policies that were implemented by the ruling elite during the First World War. Burgfrieden (a civil truce) was established on August 4th of 1914 which entailed agreement over no criticism of each other on the part of the political parties and the government.¹⁰² This led even the German Socialists who earlier favored a general strike in the event of a war, to drop the idea and finally the Kaiser to say “I see no parties anymore, I only see Germans”.¹⁰³ This was one of the most authoritarian legacies of the Reich to the Republic. In the words of German historian Detlev J. Peukert;

A Burgfrieden among the dominant social institutions which encompassed all the political parties and the mass rallying behind the banner of Volksgemeinschaft (people's community) provided the foundations for a political model of chauvinistic integration under the hegemony of military-conservative complex which was eventually to reach its fatal culmination in the era of totalitarianism.¹⁰⁴

According to the German historian Hans Ulrich Wehler the Burgfrieden of 1914 and its intended creation of a German Volksgemeinschaft was dismissed as a mask constructed

⁹⁸ Pulzer, *Germany 1870-1945*, 54.

⁹⁹ Evans, *The Third Reich*, 257.

¹⁰⁰ Knox, *Origins of the Dictatorships*, 229.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 290.

¹⁰² Taylor, *German History*, 193.

¹⁰³ Evans and Jenkins, *Years of Weimar*, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Detlev J.K Peukert, *The Weimar Republic, the crisis of classical modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993; henceforth *Classical Modernity*), 24.

to preserve the ruling elite.¹⁰⁵ But regardless of the underlying intention of the Burgfreiden policy, its effect was to leave a legacy of authoritarianism to the new Republic.

Another authoritarian concept that has emerged in postwar Germany as a result of the war experience was Frontgemeinschaft. The völkish myth was lent far greater resonance and a contemporary, concrete form in the shape of the Frontgemeinschaft, the front line community. This particular interpretation of war time experience claimed that the universal dangers and general suffering to be found in the trenches of the Western Front had united soldiers from every background in a common struggle against the enemy. This solidarity was contrasted with conflict ridden nature of domestic parliamentary politics where Germans were fighting for their sectional interests rather than the common national good. Veterans associations such as the Stahlhelm combined advocacy of the frontgemeinschaft with demands for the restoration of the monarchy.¹⁰⁶ So the authoritarian spirit of 1914 was the product of the illusions of Volksgemeinschaft, Burgfreidenpolitik and Frontkameradschaft(comradeship of the trenches).¹⁰⁷

2.6 Exploitation of the Authoritarian Concepts by the German Right in Weimar Republic

Therefore Weimar Republic was inheriting such a political culture from the Kaisereich that was grossly authoritarian. Hitler did not lose time to exploit the yearning for a Führer for his own advantage. In mid 1920s after Hitler's release from prison, its centerpiece became the Führer principle; the unconditional loyalty to the leader, the personification of the German volk. After about 1927, Nazis seem to have given almost unconditional devotion to their leader, the personification of Germany, as is revealed by the most familiar Nazi slogan of all "Ein Volk, Ein Führer and Ein Reich".¹⁰⁸ After Nazi Party had acquired the Munich based newspaper, the Völkischer Beobachter in December 1920, the newspaper's Bavarian base helped to promote a leadership cult which presented Hitler as the embodiment of the National Socialist movement's

¹⁰⁵ Herwig, *Industry*, 61.

¹⁰⁶ Fischer, *The Rise*, 50.

¹⁰⁷ Peukert, *Classical Modernity*, 67.

¹⁰⁸ Mann, *Fascist*, 143.

ideology and program and wider mission.¹⁰⁹ The other authoritarian concept, besides the führer, which was incorporated in to the Nazi rhetoric was Volksgemeinschaft.

Volksgemeinschaft was not originally a Nazi concept. It found expression in some Conservative, Catholic, and Social Democratic circles before WWI. Even though it was not originally a Nazi concept, Volksgemeinschaft was consistently and convincingly promoted by the Nazis to exert a wide appeal. It is certainly true that millions of middle class voters saw Nazis as a bulwark against Marxism but at the same time they perceived Nazism an escape from class and sectional politics altogether.¹¹⁰ For a population which has the feeling that it was deeply divided politically, socially, economically and as we will see in the next chapter, culturally, the alleged unity of the volk under the banner of the Volksgemeinschaft was quite appealing. Here the constant propagation of Volksgemeinschaft and hence the alleged unity contributed to the Nazi electoral success.

During the Weimar years German Jurist Carl Schmitt's ideas were very influential and contributed heavily to the authoritarian understanding of the period and especially to Chancellor Brüning's authoritarian stance. Brüning embraced Schmitt's notion that state had to be above the “contending armies” encroaching on the state. Especially the dying elite of the old Wilhelmine regime saw the political crisis during the Weimar years as the constitutional theorist Carl Schmitt had seen it; “mass armies” of class and nationalism had invaded the liberal parliamentary debating space. There was no longer a higher, neutral state able to arbitrate their claims authoritatively.¹¹¹ The subtle criticism about the lack of unity in the Parliamentary scene was apparent in Schmitt's ideas in which he saw Parliament, rather than transforming interest groups in to a Rousseauian general will, as a stock market on which the various pieces of social power are traded.¹¹² So it should be no surprise that Brüning who was influenced by such ideas played a key part in the process of transformation of the democratic republic in to an authoritarian dictatorship. Whatever his motives and however limited his maneuver, Brüning's was an essentially authoritarian project. Effectively removing the

¹⁰⁹ Fischer, *The Rise*, 79.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 138-139.

¹¹¹ Mann, *Fascists*, 201.

¹¹² Christian Bailey, “The European Discourse in Germany, 1939-1950: Three case studies”, *German History*, Vol.28, no:4(2010), 466.

Reichstag from the business of government and undermining the power of the local governments were clear indications of his authoritarian aims.¹¹³

During the Weimar period a strong tradition of anti-western and anti-democratic thought was maintained by writers and activists like Moeller van den Bruck who induced widespread nostalgia for the Second Reich and the anticipation of a third. The response of much of the population was to criticize Weimar politicians and to turn to more authoritarian figures like Hindenburg and finally Hitler.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Bessel, *War to Dictatorship*, 30.

¹¹⁴ Lee, *Dictatorship*, 161-162.

CHAPTER THREE

Culture and the Generational Conflict

3.1 Culture v.s Civilization

Thomas Mann, who announced in his essay “Gedanken im Kriege”(thoughts in wartime), published in November 1914 that the Great War was a crusade in defense of German culture. He explains the meaning of culture in partly military terms as unity, style, form, self control and discipline. The “kultur” is opposed by Mann, to all the French liberal traditions of “Zivilization”; liberty, equality and fraternity, all of which he dismisses as the cosiness of social contract.¹¹⁵ As Mann’s essay shows in the Weimar Germany culture was a battleground between the liberals and the conservatives. The ruling caste; princes, generals, landowners, the law professors, the so called Easterners drew a fundamental distinction between the “civilization” which they perceived as rootless, cosmopolitan, immoral, un-German, Western, materialistic and racially defiled and the culture which they perceived as pure, national, German, spiritual and authentic.¹¹⁶ What was interesting and difficult to understand even with hindsight was the enormous importance of the place of the culture in Weimar Germany. The Republic even established a post called Federal Art Expert that was operating within the Ministry of Interior which was given the task of dealing with the issues of culture and managing the celebration ceremonies of the new holidays invented by the Republic.¹¹⁷

3.2 Cultural Currents in Kaiserreich and the Weimar Republic

However most of the cultural currents which had disturbed the conservatives so much were not the creations of the Republic, they had their roots in the Second Reich. Main impetus of these cultural currents came from the Second Reich and Weimar Republic brought to maturity what had already been growing or in the words of Peter Gay; “The

¹¹⁵ Stephen Lamb and Anthony Phelan, “Weimar Culture: The Birth of Modernism” in *German Cultural Studies: An introduction* ed. Rob Burns (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995; henceforth *The Birth of Modernism*), 54.

¹¹⁶ Johnson, *Modern Times*, 111.

¹¹⁷ Manuela Achilles, “With a passion for reason: celebrating the constitution in Weimar Germany”, *Central European History*, Vol. 43, no.4 (2010), 667.

Republic created little, it liberated what was already there.”¹¹⁸

In 1880s Naturalist movement liberated German painting from the pseudo classical style of 1870s and brought the ordinary scenes of daily life into canvass. European art had been going through a series of revolutions ever since the painting of Claude Monet, “Impression, Sunrise” which had given its name to the Impressionist movement. The first Impressionist exhibition in Paris in 1874 had shocked the French public with a new conception of how to depict the natural world.¹¹⁹ The 1890s saw the beginning of Impressionism in Germany. German Impressionism was an attempt on the part of the artists and their upper middle class patrons to escape from the pessimism caused by frightening political and economic forces by using aestheticism.¹²⁰

In the turn of the 20th century the avant-garde’s break with the Renaissance European tradition was most apparent in the field of painting. The Expressionists, Abstractionists and Cubists liberated color and form from their representational functions.¹²¹ First World War and the revolution gave the Expressionists their utopianism and their practice of using highly charged emotion. Through their revolutionary rhetoric, Expressionist artists tried to forge a liberating alliance with the masses. Revolt against parental authority was a commonplace of Expressionist literature.¹²² Dadaism which was originated in Zurich in 1916 constituted even more radical break with the tradition due to the fact that it had turned utilitarian objects and texts into artistic accounts in its collages and provocative performance art and abolished the barrier protecting the realm of art from that of everyday life.¹²³ Anything that might cause shock and outrage among conventional bourgeoisie arts lovers was acceptable Dada. Scandal was its main principle.¹²⁴ It was often the revolutionary left that primarily attracted to avant-garde. Dada was clearly for revolution whereas its successor, surrealism had difficulty only in deciding which brand of revolution it was for; the majority choosing Trotsky over Stalin.¹²⁵ In 1927 the members of the well known artists' association in Germany, Abstrakten, even started to join the Communist Party. Its prominent members Paul

¹¹⁸ Johnson, *Modern Times*, 117.

¹¹⁹ Joll, *Europe*, 139.

¹²⁰ Craig, *Germany*, 218.

¹²¹ Peukert, *Classical Modernity*, 165.

¹²² Craig, *Germany*, 477.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹²⁴ Hobsbawmn, *Extremes*, 179.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 187.

Fuhrmann was first to join who was followed by Alice and Oskar Nerlingers.¹²⁶ After the 1929 May Day several of the Abstrakten came to the conclusion that they should have an obligation to inject political messages in to their arts.¹²⁷ Especially Oskar Nerlinger demonstrated in his paintings, the painters who retreat in to their encapsulated studios, eyes fixed only upon paints and canvas. These painters Nerlinger's images expresses, need to learn to see again, to see the reality of the industrial technological world, they need to see Communist masses marching with red flags.¹²⁸ Not only Dada and its successor surrealism but also the much despised developments like Bauhaus architecture, the physics of relativity, psychoanalysis and atonal music all had their roots in the pre-World War One German Reich as well.¹²⁹

What caused the most resentment among the conservatives were people like Frank Wedekind who made heroes out of pimps, whores and thieves and who did his best to demonstrate that compared to the values of the supposedly respectable classes of the society, their own were more honorable and more consistently observed.¹³⁰ Expressionist playwrights like Ernest Toller stressed the horrors of war in his plays and Arnold Zweig denounced German militarism.¹³¹ Many of the successes of the then renowned Berlin Theater of 1920s were strongly political in tone and written by liberal sophisticates, who were known as being daring, pessimistic, problematic and above all disturbing.¹³²

3.3 Gay and Lesbian Culture

Another cultural phenomenon that touched sensitive nerves in Weimar Germany was the gay and lesbian cinema. Films like “Different from others” in 1919 and “Girls in Uniform” in 1931 created an outrage among the conservatives. In this period at least one of the films dealing with Frederick the Great, “Fredericus-Rex-Zyklus” which was

¹²⁶ Vernon L. Lidtke, “Abstract Art and Left Wing Politics in the Weimar Republic”, *Central European History*, Vol. 43, Issue 4 (2010), 62.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 62.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 75.

¹²⁹ Craig, *Germany*, 470.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 220.

¹³¹ Donald L. Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2001; henceforth *The Jews*), 34-36.

¹³² Johnson, *Modern Times*, 113.

broadcasted in 1922, pointed out to his homosexuality.¹³³ There was a general openness about sexuality in Weimar cinema. The enlightenment films of which Anders is one, dealt with sexual problems of various kinds. Two of the most famous films of the period, *Die Büchse der Pandora* and *Der Blaue Engel* represented the power of heterosexual female society.¹³⁴ Despite the fact that article 175 of the Weimar Constitution made the male homosexuality illegal, a diverse set of lesbian and gay subcultures rooted in the middle of the previous century. Adele Meyer's book *Lila Nächte*, detailing the quantity and variety of the lesbian clubs and bars in Berlin in the period, was clearly demonstrating the extent of the gay and lesbian culture in the republican Germany. Even at the time, one could buy guides, in some cases aimed at heterosexual tourists, listing the extensive lesbian and gay nightlife in Berlin. There were lesbian and gay meeting places, magazines, novels, even a theater; *Theater des Eros*, 1921-24.¹³⁵

German gay movement, like many of other cultural phenomena in the Weimar Republic, was not a creation of the Republic but of the Wilhelmine Germany, even of its predecessor. It dates back to 1862 when Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, came out to his family and began writing series of books about "Researches on the Riddle of Love between Men" and continuing in 1869 in the work of Carl von Westphal on "contrary sexual feeling" and that of Karoly Benkert, who first used the term "homosexuality". Such works inspired Magnus Hirschfeld and others in founding in 1897 the sexual, in practice homosexual, emancipation organization; the Scientific Humanitarian Committee.¹³⁶ Moreover the Weimar Censorship law was perhaps the least repressive in Europe. Films like *Blue Angel* could hardly been shown in Paris. Stage and night club shows in Berlin were the least inhibited of any major capital. Plays, novels and even paintings touched on the themes of homosexuality and transvestism. It was in Germany that Freud's writings were most fully absorbed by the intelligentsia and penetrated in to the artistic expressions.¹³⁷

¹³³ Richard Dyer, "Less and more than women and men: Lesbian and gay cinema in Weimar Germany", *New German Critique*, Vol. 51(1990), 6.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹³⁷ Johnson, *Modern Times*, 114.

3.4 Political Arts

In the cultural sphere, modernization involved the emergence of a new type of intellectual who, in the spirit of Nietzsche's call for the transvaluation of all values, rejoiced in the destructive power of his own reason as traditional values, beliefs and standards of aesthetic taste started to crumble.¹³⁸ Post WWI period in Germany witnessed the emergence of a radically new strand of cultural modernism that sought to forge an alliance between cultural and political revolution. The marriage of art and revolution was most apparent in Munich where Ernest Toller, Erich Mühsam and several other liberati of the left placed their talents at the service of the Soviet Republic from February to May 1919. Erwin Piscator's "Agitprop" and Bertholt Brecht's "Epic Theater" were only two of the well known examples of the way in which the notion of art's sake gave way to a more politicized concept of art that was allied to the social and political emancipation of the German worker.¹³⁹ The message in Brecht's Epic Theater was clear;

The purpose of the drama was not to effect an emotional catharsis on the part of the audience through its identification with the tragic fate of the great hero but to raise consciousness of the masses and to instill in them a clear awareness of the universal class conflict that constituted bourgeois capitalist society.¹⁴⁰

However, exclusively political nature of arts in Germany was not limited to the Weimar period, art in Imperial Germany was not simply an ornamental luxury, but it had major symbolic and didactic functions, both as part of the cultural "identity kit" indispensable to a new nation and as a new medium for communicating historical facts, myths and political values.¹⁴¹ During the Wilhelmine Germany, the conservative criticism against the emerging cultural modernism and changing way of life had already started. During that period, most exclusive manifestation of cultural conservative opposition was the Geroche -Kreis, a group of writers assembled around a charismatic leader and dedicated to an anti materialist, anti liberal, and anti egalitarian programme for the ultimate

¹³⁸ Jones, *Culture and Politics*, 82.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁴¹ Robin, Lenman and John, Osborne and Eda, Sagarra, "Imperial Germany Towards the Commercialization of Culture", in *German Cultural Studies: An introduction*, ed. Rob Burns (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995; henceforth *Commercialization of Culture*), 20.

benefits of the volk.¹⁴² So neither in the sense of conservative cultural criticism, nor in the sense of political arts the Republican period constituted a break with the Kaiserreich, it was rather a continuation with the imperial period.

3.5 Reaction of the Easterners and the Younger Generation

The modernist interpretations of arts and the perceived changes in the German way of life were very offensive to the Easterners, they called the cultural trend of the Republic as Kulturbolschewismus. To many Germans, artistic modernism exacerbated a more fundamental disorientation. Believing the proper function of art to be a lifting of the spirit through an emphasis on beauty and heroism, the critics of modernism condemned forms of art conceived as means for exploring new perspectives on reality and for bringing society's blemishes into sharper focus. They believed that Germany had lost its traditional bearings and that the new art functioned as a critical and corrosive force, promoting the unraveling of the social fabric by questioning the legitimacy of prevailing attitudes and institutions. Cultural anxiety manifested itself across a wide political spectrum. On the extreme right, it often assumed the form of conspiracy theory. The threat to traditional German culture was said to emanate from a network of racially, spiritually and even financially interconnected artistic and cultural movements, led by Jews and Marxists, promoted by Feminist and symbolized by the increasing visibility of Negroes on the art scene.¹⁴³ Especially during the occupation of the Rhine, the conservative and far right press was rife with articles which denounced Jazz music as the worst form of Kulturbolschewismus.¹⁴⁴ The resentment in the conservative circles against the Weimar modernism and cultural degeneracy it allegedly encouraged came to a head in a protracted and heated Reichstag debate in 1926 on a motion, proposed by the German National People's Party, which sought to ban "trash" and "filth" from publication, performance or screening. For members of the Catholic Center Party and their allies further to the right, economic prosperity had produced a dangerous development towards "economic individualism and mammon" which threatened to destroy the classical and religious foundations of German culture. Those

¹⁴² Ibid., 32.

¹⁴³ Alan E. Steinweis, "Weimar Culture and the Rise of National Socialism: The Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur," *Central European History*, Vol. 24, Issue 4 (1991), 404.

¹⁴⁴ Theodore F Rippey, "Rationalisation, Race and the Weimar Response to Jazz," *German Life and Letters*, Vol. 60. no.1 (2007), 83.

fears were underlined in a more extreme fashion by the Nationalists, who rallied against the “excesses of destructive sensual pleasure and “the worship of the body, nudity and lasciviousness”. Germany, they proclaimed, was faced with nothing less than a moral decline of Roman proportions.¹⁴⁵

The feeling of the erosion of the traditional values was deeply entrenched among the Germans during the Republican era. Especially with the onset of the Great Depression, male and female prostitution which was the product of Weimar's sexual tolerance as well as its economic failure became more noticeable and more widespread. Hawking and street selling turned in to begging and the German society seemed to be on the verge of moral misery.¹⁴⁶ There were changes in the position of women and even greater changes in the woman's and man's perception and definitions of woman's status. Changes in reproductive patterns set off debates about the role of sexuality, family and the bringing up of children.¹⁴⁷ Especially during 1920s women's social status underwent a radical transformation. A notable feature of urban scene was the so called “neue Frau”, a woman with independent income, assiduously following the latest fashions, reading women's magazines and dancing the newest American dance styles, such as Charleston. Her androgynous look reflected a desire on the part of aspiring women to match men in terms of opportunities and achievement.¹⁴⁸

As the Republic declined in economic strength fewer and fewer young people supported the Weimar system. They were often more concerned with drinking and dancing. Indeed one of the unfortunate outcomes of WWI was that many youths of 1920s Germany grew up without fathers. The traditional ties that bound the young to their families and communities were severed by the war and the post war upheavals.¹⁴⁹ By the hyperinflation following the French occupation of Ruhr, younger generation started to downplay the significance of the traditional values completely and gravitated to “immorality”. Marriage was no longer an economically secure arrangement. Consequently the commercial sex industry bloomed, particularly in Berlin. A contemporary of Klaus Mann, Stefan Zweig summed up Weimar mood thusly:

¹⁴⁵ Lamb and Phelan, *The Birth of Modernism*, 68.

¹⁴⁶ Evans, *The Third Reich*, 233.

¹⁴⁷ Peukert, *Classical Modernity*, 89.

¹⁴⁸ Lamb and Phelan, *The Birth of Modernism*, 58.

¹⁴⁹ Telzrow, 38.

It was an epoch of high ecstasy and ugly scheming, a singular mixture of unrest and fanaticism. Every extravagant idea that was not subject to regulation reaped a golden harvest; theosophy, occultism, yogism and Paracelism. Anything that gave hope of newer and greater thrills, anything in the way of narcotics, morphine, cocaine, heroin found a tremendous market.¹⁵⁰

But again, pretty much like the changes in cultural fields, “the erosion of traditional values” too had already started during the Wilhelmine Reich. The Second German Reich was marked by a social revolution in terms of the conflict between the old and the young. The rise of the urbanized industrial society before the First World War, had given the younger age group a special pioneering role. They had started to be represented in disproportionate numbers in industry and big cities. Young people were becoming conspicuous was becoming a code word implying the breakdown of traditional ties and social controls.

The Weimar Republic inherited this social situation from the Reich.¹⁵¹ During the Republican era there was a tension between the Gründerzeit generation which consisted of the people who were born in the decade after the establishment of the Reich, and the younger front generation.¹⁵² Well established political parties had been criticized by the younger generation as not being open to the young. SPD leaders have been portrayed as a complacent aging clique and guarding the apex of influence from the young and energetic. It should not be forgotten that Robert Michels, who coined the term “iron law of oligarchy” which he meant the power in political parties inevitably become concentrated in the hands of a few experienced professionals for whom the maintenance of the party's electoral position and organization became more important than the policies it was suppose to serve, had in mind especially SPD to which he had originally belonged.¹⁵³ In the Center Party as well, there was a gap between the top of the party and the members of the youth organization. Thus the political aspirations of the young front generation were blocked.¹⁵⁴ The results of this generational conflict in Wilhelmine Germany had spilled over to the Weimar Republic. The younger generation increasingly began to see the government as dominated by prewar political parties. The SPD and Catholic Center Party were especially seemed stodgy and not capable of

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 37.

¹⁵¹ Peukert, *Classical Modernity*, 89-90.

¹⁵² Ibid., 18.

¹⁵³ Joll, *Europe*, 129.

¹⁵⁴ Hiden, *Republican*, 48-53.

instituting the rapid social change that attracted the German youth.¹⁵⁵ As a result a self styled younger generation declared a war on the senile republic which was unable to cater for its needs. A new generation of without jobs started to identify itself with the chauvinistic campaign to liberate the Volk from international debt slavery and the yoke of the Versailles Diktat.¹⁵⁶ An overwhelming majority of the independent youth organizations were not only hostile to the Republic but also nationalistic in outlook and militaristic in character and aspirations.¹⁵⁷ Given such a background it is no surprise that in 1930, more than one third of the membership of the Nazi Party was aged thirty or under. In comparison with all the political parties of the time the Nazis stood out clearly as a movement of the younger generation, with the exception of the Communists.¹⁵⁸

3.6 Nazi Reaction

For the Nazis, the task of art in constructing the Volksgemeinschaft was not, as the modernists believed, to criticize but to express deeply felt emotional needs of the people. Art had to create values not destroy them.¹⁵⁹ Kampfbund für deutsche kultur (Militant League For German Culture) served as Nazi movement's primary vehicle for cultural and artistic mobilization. It set forth as one of its paramount goals the need to educate Germans about the intimate connection between cultural decay and national decline.¹⁶⁰ In the autumn of 1929, the Kampfbund launched its first of many attacks on female emancipation. It took the form of a newsletter article titled "Dollarism and Feminism". The article combined its indictment of emancipation with an attack on favorite target; mammonist culture of modern capitalism. The growing materialism of contemporary society, the author concluded, stemmed from the unleashing of feminine instincts hitherto kept under control by civilized people.¹⁶¹ The League published selection of articles representing a mix of crude racial theory with more mainstream, conservative perspectives on culture. Racist treatises exposes on Jewish Marxist influence in the arts and demands for the elimination of foreigners from German

¹⁵⁵ Telzrow, 38.

¹⁵⁶ Peukert, *Classical Modernity*, 94.

¹⁵⁷ Evans, *The Third Reich*, 130.

¹⁵⁸ Peukert, *Classical Modernity*, 293

¹⁵⁹ James, *A German Identity*, 139.

¹⁶⁰ Steinweis, 405.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 409.

cultural life.¹⁶² Nazis, in their early stages of development, consistently promised to reassert Christian moral standards and to eradicate the decadence and immorality which many believed characterized Weimar urban society and culture. By this way they appealed to many in both rural areas and the urban middle classes.¹⁶³

Joseph Goebbels' words in January 1928 about West Berlin which was thought to epitomize the Weimar culture, was quite indicative about the Nazi perspective on the emerging Weimar culture;

That is Berlin West. The heart turned to stone of this city. Here in the niches and corners of cafes, in the cabarets and bars, in the Soviet theaters and mezzanines, the spirit of the asphalt democracy is piled high. Here the politics of sixty million diligent Germans is conducted. Here one gives and receives the latest market and theater tips. Here one trades in politics, pictures, stocks, love, film, theater, government and the general welfare... The eternal repetition of corruption and decay, of failing ingenuity and genuine creative power, of inner emptiness and despair, with the patina of a *Zeitgeist* sunk to the level of the most repulsive pseudo-culture.¹⁶⁴

Nazi Party on the one hand has exploited the unfulfilled aspirations of the younger generations and the above mentioned controversies in the German cultural scene on the other, in its unstoppable quest for power. But two other phenomena which were deeply entrenched in some of the German literary circles and cultural scene were so instrumental for the rise of Nazis that they both deserve separate chapters. These two were antisemitism and social Darwinism combined with German nationalism.

¹⁶² Ibid., 418.

¹⁶³ Stephenson, *Sonderweg*, 88.

¹⁶⁴ Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg, *Sourcebook*, 560.

CHAPTER FOUR

Anti-Semitism

As Donald L. Niewyk put it; “The Jews were aware that Jewish emancipation stood or fell with the fortunes of liberalism. But the fortunes of liberalism in Germany were less than prosperous.” During the liberal era of 1870s many of the German Jews have preferred to convert in to Christianity. Conversion quickly opened the doors that have been previously shut by the law and what was more important was the prevailing animus was religious not racial.¹⁶⁵ However after the liberal era of 1870s things have started to change for the Jews. A new wave of reaction started to unfold. From all positions at all levels of German civil service Jews started to be blackballed. No Jew could hope to enter the army officer's corps and it was very difficult for the Jews to secure a professorship at a German University.¹⁶⁶ The immediate reason for this change of attitude towards the Jews was the 1873 crisis.

4.1 Anti-Semitism in Kaiserreich Since the 1873 Economic Crisis

Anti-Semitism had long been existed in Germany but the economic crisis of 1873 brought those anti-Semitic sentiments in to open. German born American historian George Mosse wrote that the stereotype of the Jew as rapacious and unprincipled was well established in popular literature in the 19th century Germany. But the crash in 1873 added a new dimension to the already existing preconceived notions and the stereotypes about the Jews, by identifying the Jew with the market and the unearned capital.¹⁶⁷ Otto Glagau's highly influential articles in the periodical *Gartenlaube* ran under the title “The social question is the Jewish question”. He began with stock exchange and ended by blaming the Jews on the grounds that, as he claimed 90% of all the *Gründer*, the stock speculators of the early 1870s, were Jews.¹⁶⁸ Searching for their economic difficulties in 1870s, the lower middle class demagogues started to portray the Jews not as a religious minority but a racial one. They began to stress not the total assimilation of the group but their total exclusion from the German society. But the

¹⁶⁵ Niewyk, *The Jews*, 1-3.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁶⁷ Craig, *Germany*, 84-85.

¹⁶⁸ James, *A German Identity*, 101.

anti-Jewish slanders had not confined to the circles around middle class demagogues. Well known figures contributed to anti-Semitism as well. Richard Wagner described the Jews as the perpetual foreigners;

Jews speak the language of the nation in which he lives from generation to generation, but he always speaks as a foreigner. This was why Jews could write no national music and thus no genuinely popular opera. But it was impossible to avoid the political and cultural power of Jews as long as there was Jewish emancipation and Jewish emancipation would be successful for as long as money was the driving force of history.¹⁶⁹

In 1880s small anti-Semitic parties like the Antisemitische Deutschsoziale Partie, Antisemitische Volkspartei and the Deutsche Volksverein started to pop up one after the other.¹⁷⁰ During 1890s a second wave of anti-Semitism which have been drawn upon the imported racialist ideas of Gobineau from France, focused on something that the Jews can not change; race.¹⁷¹ Writers like Wilhelm Marr contrasted the Jews not with the Christians but with the Germans, thus presented the issue not within the framework of religion but within the framework of race.¹⁷² Eugen Dühring equated capitalism with the Jews and the nationalist historian Heinrich von Treitschke claimed that the Jews were undermining the German culture and popularized the phrase that said “the Jews are our misfortune”.¹⁷³ The chairman of the Pan German League Heinrich Class said if he had the power wielded by Kaiser, he would first deal with the internal enemies of the Reich; the Social Democrats and the Jews.¹⁷⁴

During the 19th century the anti-Semitism in Germany was also incorporated in to the “back to the land movements” that were widespread in Europe in general and in Germany in particular. For the people who were yearning for a simpler, more ordered, more secure and more hierarchical society which they imagined that had existed, the Jews symbolized cultural, financial and social modernity.¹⁷⁵ Bavarian Professor of Antiquities Wilhelm Heinrich Rieh made the “back to the land” aspect of anti-Semitism in Germany very clear:

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 97.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.,102.

¹⁷¹ Niewyk, *The Jews*, 7.

¹⁷² Evans, *The Third Reich*, 27-28.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 28.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 47.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 24.

The true basis of the Volk was the peasant. There could be of course workers, but they too had to be artisans, organized in local guilds. The proletariat, on the other hand, was the creation of the Jews. Having no landscape of their own, they destroyed the others, causing millions of people to be uprooted and herded in to the giant cities, the nearest they possessed to a landscape of their own.¹⁷⁶

4.2 Anti-Semitism in the Weimar Republic

Weimar Republic, with its one of the most progressive constitutions in Europe, brought the legal equality for the Jews living in Germany. The Republic opened up new opportunities for the Jews in the civil service, politics and the professions as well as in government. Germany to have a Jewish Foreign Minister like Walter Rathenau would be impossible under the Wilhelmine Reich. But once again, partly as a reaction against this liberation of the Jews, 1920s saw a broadening and deepening of the currents of anti-Semitism in German politics and society.¹⁷⁷ German nationalist poet and journalist Adolf Bartels wrote in his article which was published in January 1920;

According to our view, with the revolution internationalism triumphed over nationalism or put more precisely, Judaism over the Germans... We are obviously of the opinion that the struggle between internationalism and nationalism is in no way decided with the German revolution and the constitutional order born of it, that the struggle will continue and can in consequence produce events of another nature. For us it is the great struggle of the age, which must be out not only in politics, but in all areas of life and culture. The internationalists, or let us say clearly, the Jews and the comrades of the Jews have long maintained the practice of posing as the only true representatives of culture... But we the Germans who are conscious of our national character did not fall for Wilhelm II's empty talk of culture.¹⁷⁸

Particularly targeted was the Eastern Jews (Ost Juden) whose numbers were increasing especially after the infamous Tsarist pogroms in 1881-82 and who were migrants with strange accents and unfamiliar forms of behavior. Anti-Semitic agitators quickly discovered that Ost Juden could be exploited for political purposes. They propagated on Germany's inability to absorb them and sought to obscure the distinctions between the newcomers and German Jews.¹⁷⁹ In the crisis ridden atmosphere of the Weimar Republic they were regularly deported by German authorities. 1923 was one of the worst years of the Weimar Republic with regard to antisemitism against the Ost Juden. First there was the mass expulsion order by the Bavarian government and then in the

¹⁷⁶ Johnson, *The Modern Times*, 118.

¹⁷⁷ Evans, *The Third Reich*, 149-150.

¹⁷⁸ Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg, *Sourcebook*, 123.

¹⁷⁹ Niewyk, *The Jews*, 15.

same year there took place one of the biggest anti-Jewish riots in Berlin's Scheuneviertel district where a mob of 30.000 descended in to the street and Jewish passerby and shopkeepers were beaten and nearly a thousand Jewish owned stores were looted.¹⁸⁰

Creeping inflation and shortages of essential goods were attributed to the Jewish capitalists, as well as the astronomical reparations of the Versailles Treaty by the Völkish groups. Jews were accused of not fighting for Germany during the war by evading military service. This final allegation must have been stemmed from the census of the Jews in the army carried out by the Prussian War Ministry in October 1916 to prove this specific point.¹⁸¹ Jews were not only accused of not fighting for Germany but also of fighting only for revolutionary causes. The presence of the Jews like Rosa Luxemburg, Hugo Haase and Kurt Eisener in the more “radical” elements of the German society and their negative stance against the German war effort in 1917 played in to the hands of those anti-Semitic accusers.¹⁸²

Church served as one of the most notable centers in Weimar Germany where the Judeophobia was spawned. What was very dangerous for the Jews was the dissemination of the völkish notions about Jews by the trusted religious leaders. There were cases of pastors handing out anti-Semitic pamphlets to the people who came to the Church for confirmation classes. Church publications occasionally contained parts from the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.¹⁸³ What was even more alarming was the existence of great masses of ordinary Christians of Catholic or Protestant faith, which were either indifferent to the Jews or influenced to varying degrees by the criticism of Jews as bearers of secularism. Those criticisms neutralized much Christian opposition to anti-Semitism and helped opened the way to Christian support for Nazis.¹⁸⁴

It should be clearly mentioned that neither SPD nor KPD systematically exploited anti-Semitism. On the contrary they despised the way anti-Semitism has been exploited in Germany. Many of their members, even their leaders were Jewish and their Jewish

¹⁸⁰ Peukert, *Classical Modernity*, 160.

¹⁸¹ Niewyk, *The Jews*, 10.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 55-58.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

identities were not even an issue. However this did not prevent some elements of the Left to board the train of anti-Semitism and exploit it for political purposes from time to time. In their effort to appeal to the radical right, Communist Party stressed its own opposition to the Jewish Capitalists. Especially in the crisis years of 1923 and 1930-33, Communists resorted to this tactic as part of their larger strategy of National Bolshevism which sought to merge German nationalism with the Russian Communism on the basis of common hostility to Western Culture and Capitalism. Typical, in that sense was the party leader Ruth Fischer's demagogic appeal of 1923 to völkish students to hang the Jewish capitalists from the street lamps.¹⁸⁵

Some Social Democrats both directly and indirectly contributed to anti-Semitism in Weimar Germany. Not many Social Democrats expected anti-Semitic violence if Nazis would manage to take over in Germany. As one Social Democratic publication put it in 1932 "Jews who can pay up will have nothing to fear in the Third Reich, they would be grabbed by the purse not by the gullet". So as the most outspoken opponents of anti-Semitism the German Social Democrats spread doubts that Nazis were ideologically so keen to stick to their anti-Semitic views. That impression may have induced some Germans that once in power Nazis would be more conservative and responsible.¹⁸⁶ Also the depiction of the Jews in SPD journals and newspapers were problematic. There, the Jews were portrayed as symbols of materialism and associated with the profit motive. They were depicted as dirty, smelly and sexually deprived. Anti-Semitic jokes and cartoons were commonplace in many Social Democratic weeklies.¹⁸⁷

4.3 Anti-Semitism Employed by Nazis For Political Purposes

The impact of anti-Semitism on the weakening of Weimar democracy was great but indirect. Its main function was to serve as a tool for Hitler to further his political aims. Anti-Semitism was one of the most instrumental phenomena for Nazis to appeal to the already existing anti-Jewish feelings which were present in some parts of the German society. The infant German Workers Party (DAP), which then been transformed in to the National Socialist Workers Party, published a set of guidelines in

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 68-69.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 71.

¹⁸⁷ Evans, *Rereading*, 157.

January 1919 in which the Jews were vilified “as wealthy, lazy manipulators who constituted an undesirable alien presence in Germany, not least because they put their personal interests, or those of Foreign powers above German interests.”¹⁸⁸ 1920 Nazi Party Programme contained an explicit exclusionary stance against the Jews. It had the article that said “No Jew may be a member of the nation”.¹⁸⁹ The Nazis 25 points which were published in full in 1923 made plain the anti-Semitic intentions of the Nazis in points 4,8 and 24 which promised, in sum, the exclusion of Jews from public life, the removal of their citizenship rights and if needs be their expulsion from Germany.¹⁹⁰

The extent of anti-Semitism among the Nazi supporters was demonstrated by a competition called “Why I became a Nazi”. Half of the 581 essays that were sent to the competition contained some anti-Semitism and 13% seemed obsessed by it.¹⁹¹ Nazis exploited anti-Semitism in different venues and employed it to appeal for a wide audience coming from different socio-economic backgrounds. For instance in a pamphlet aimed at engineers, Nazis denounced “the suffocating Jewish materialist embrace of our life elements that held back advanced technology”.¹⁹² In some other rural campaigns Nazis claimed “German blood and soil” was exploited by Jewish moneylenders. Nazis promised to save the “essentially” German middle class “crushed between international socialism and Jewish stock market capital.”¹⁹³

Hitler himself made effective use of the deep undercurrent of anti-Semitism in Germany, making the Jews scapegoats for all Germany's evils, whether in the form of aggressive capitalism or revolutionary communism. Above all he made a permanent and intentionally damaging connection between the regime and the Jews, developing the concept of the “Jew Republic”.¹⁹⁴ In *Mein Kampf*, he created the stereotype of the Jew as a parasite and pollutant; “culturally he contaminates art, literature and the theater, makes a mockery of national feeling, overthrow all concepts of beauty and instead drags men down in to the sphere of his own base nature”. In one of his speeches he fantasized about hanging the Jews of Munich from lamb posts until their bodies

¹⁸⁸ Fischer, *The Rise*, 58.

¹⁸⁹ Mann, *Fascists*, 141.

¹⁹⁰ Fischer, *The Rise*, 59.

¹⁹¹ Mann, *Fascists*, 144.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹⁹⁴ Lee, *Dictatorship*, 165.

rotted.¹⁹⁵ Like Alfred Rosenberg Hitler deliberately associated unpopular Marxism with the Jews. In *Mein Kampf* he wrote;

What gave Marxism its astonishing power over the great masses is by no means the formal written work of the Jewish intellectual world... And this work was not written for the great masses, but exclusively for the intellectual leadership of that Jewish machine for world conquest.¹⁹⁶

Other prominent Nazis echoed similar views about the Jews. Dietrich Eckart writes on the Jewish question claimed that the secret Jews want the de-spiritualization of the world and this meant the very end of it. During the Bavarian Soviet rising in 1919 he published a tract which argued that socialism and Bolshevism were essentially Jewish inspired and led but so was capitalism.¹⁹⁷ Alfred Rosenberg was another prominent Nazi who exploited anti-Semitism for political purposes. His anti-Semitism added the Bolshevik revolution to the list of evils that Jews had brought to Germany. Even though there may have been an element of cynical opportunism in his anti-Semitic writings, he had in effect created the conspiracy of Jewish Bolsheviks and Jewish bankers closing in on Germany.¹⁹⁸ In 1930 Joseph Goebbels made clear why the National Socialists oppose the Jews with the following words;

Why do we oppose the Jews? We are enemies of the Jews because we are fighters for the freedom of the German people. The Jew is the cause and the beneficiary of our misery. He has used the social difficulties of the broad masses of our people to deepen the unholy split between Right and Left among our people. He has made two halves of Germany. He is the real cause for our loss of the Great War. The Jew has no interest in the solution of Germany's faithful problems. He can not have any. For he lives on the fact that there has been no solution.¹⁹⁹

So during the rise of the Nazi Party the Jews were subjected to diatribes and vilifications that they were both capitalists and Bolsheviks, that they were both concealing their true identities as Jews and that they are different and that they are afraid to fight and that they fight for revolutionary causes. However irrational and conflicting those accusations about the Jews, anti-Semitism which had deep historical roots in German society apparently appealed to a substantial part of the German people and employed by Hitler for his quest to dismantle the first German democracy.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 204.

¹⁹⁶ Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg, *Sourcebook*, 131.

¹⁹⁷ Fischer, *The Rise*, 149.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 59.

¹⁹⁹ Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg, *Sourcebook*, 138.

CHAPTER FIVE

Social Darwinism, Eugenic Ideas and German Nationalism

The other important yet indirect reason that strengthened the Nazis, hence weakened democracy was the Social Darwinist world view that was prevalent in Germany. Social Darwinism has been incorporated in to the Nazi rhetoric and employed by Hitler to appeal to the radical parts of the German society. But this phenomenon was in no way confined to the Republican period; it had deeper roots in Kaiserreich. The “Origins of Species” appeared in German in 1860 and immediately met with acclaim even in non-biological spheres. It coincided with Bismark's military successes in the battlefield. Within a few months after Königgratz some commentators started to celebrate Prussia's victory as a consequence of the laws of nature.²⁰⁰

5.1 The Public Debate About Social Darwinism in Kaiserreich

Social Darwinism had different varieties. There was the evolutionary Social Darwinism which stressed the ideas of mutual aid as well as competition. It was popular among the liberals and the left during 1860s and 1870s. But during 1890s the first variant started to be replaced by a second one which was stressing the importance of the survival of the fittest.²⁰¹ Figures like Earnest Haeckel, who served as a professor of biology at the University of Jena from 1862 to 1909 put Sparta, where the all newborn children were subjected to careful examination and those who were weak or sick were killed, before the German people as an example to follow. Writers like Houston Chamberlain depicted all history as the race history and proposed a narrative based on a continuous struggle between the races and the superiority of Teutonic one.²⁰² Friedrich Ratzel from the University of Leipzig applied the concept of Lebensraum to Foreign Policy in which the struggle for existence meant the struggle for space and history involved constant struggle for the adjustment of Raum to the population. For him, true realpolitik was thus the art of securing for one's growing volk the indispensable soil for the

²⁰⁰ Knox, *Origins of the Dictatorships*, 125.

²⁰¹ Evans, *Rereading*, 120.

²⁰² Knox, *Origins of the Dictatorships*, 129.

future.²⁰³ Groups like German Racist Defense and Defiance League propagated ideas based on the hierarchical structure of humanity and its accordance with biological law.²⁰⁴

Generally speaking, before the First World War, Social Darwinist ideas had penetrated in three major areas of public debate in Germany. First one was the Social Democratic labor movement where the evolutionary concepts were being applied to historical change in a way which reinforced the movement's already existing tendency to political immobilism. Majority of the Social Democrats convinced themselves that there was a scientific law of evolution which would bring the end of capitalism and the Social Democratic Party would come to power without doing much for it.²⁰⁵ Second one was the Pan Germanism. Pan Germans managed to fuse Gobineau's racist ideas with Social Darwinism. They propagated the view that the inherent tendency in history was towards cultural degeneration but decisive intervention could still reverse it. From this fusion born a campaign to increase German birth rate alongside uniting the ethnic Germans across Europe and providing them with Lebensraum. A vision of international relations as the struggle for the survival of the fittest between Latins, Slavs and Teutons was also propagated by the Pan Germans.²⁰⁶ The third public area where the Social Darwinist ideas were pervasive was the debate about the so called racial hygiene. Even before the Great War, the German criminologists and forensic psychiatrists have already been thinking along the biological lines. They were increasingly pointing compulsory sterilization as a solution to the problems that the “racial degenerates” posed.²⁰⁷

5.2 Eugenism in Weimar Republic

As it was mentioned above, during the Wilhelmine Germany, the vision of international politics as an arena of struggle between different races for supremacy or survival had become common currency in Germany's political elites.²⁰⁸ By the eve of the First World War, those ideas spread to different fields like medicine, social work, criminology and

²⁰³ Ibid., 130.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 285.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 132.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 133.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 136.

²⁰⁸ Evans, *The Third Reich*, 35.

the law. Social deviants such as prostitutes, alcoholics, petty thieves, vagrants and the likes were increasingly regarded as hereditarily tainted and many experts started to call for their forcible sterilization.²⁰⁹ Around the same time the concept of racial hygiene started to become popular and people were started to be categorized as either valuable or worthless.²¹⁰

Republican years witnessed the reinforcement of these negative views on the so called worthless stock of the nation. Eugenism which is the branch of applied genetics that dreamed of creating a human super race by selective breeding and the elimination of the unfit, took off.²¹¹ Mental deficiency, physical disability, chronic alcoholism, petty criminality and even moral idiocy were all associated with heredity during the Weimar Republic where those views became dogmas.²¹² During 1920s medicine began to conquer epidemic diseases. Previously fatal diseases like Tuberculosis and Cholera had been defeated and now, the “experts” argued it was time to eradicate hereditary diseases and asocial behavior.²¹³ An influential 1920 pamphlet by two “racial hygiene” experts Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche offered the destruction of “life unworthy of life” by doctors acting for the Volk as a collective biological entity.²¹⁴ In 1924 the Justice Ministry of Bavaria established a Criminal Biological Service to collect anthropometric, medical, moral and psychiatric data on prisoners, their families and their associates. The goal was to identify “incorrigibles” so that they could be sent to preventive detention. Based on the assumption that morality is rooted in biology, the Bavarian criminal biological research seemed to prove that assumption, a proof that in turn, reinforced hereditary notions and acceptance of eugenic solutions.²¹⁵ One of the most problematic aspects of those eugenic definitions was their arbitrariness. Concepts like feeble mindedness or hereditary alcoholism were very vaguely defined. Feeble mindedness was diagnosed through social as well as intellectual criteria; the term was easily extended to cover those who committed criminal or quasi-deviant acts. Hereditary alcoholism was another category that could easily be stretched out to

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 37.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 38.

²¹¹ Hobsbawm, *Extremes*, 118.

²¹² Evans, *The Third Reich*, 143.

²¹³ Peuker, *Classical Modernity*, 103.

²¹⁴ Knox, *Origins of the Dictatorships*, 295.

²¹⁵ Nicole Rafter, “Criminology's Darkest Hour: Biocriminology in Nazi Germany”, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 41. no.2 (2008), 292.

include criminals. Women who became pregnant without getting married were almost by definition regarded feeble minded.²¹⁶

Such ideas were pervasive in the Weimar Germany and in no way have only been confined to the Nazis. Humanistic, liberal and socialist writers on public health had sought for radical new ways of improving the national genetic stock through measures like prevention and eradication. There were proposals ranging from voluntary preventive counseling about hereditary conditions to mass sterilization of those with supposed hereditary diseases.²¹⁷ The left wing intellectual Helene Stöcker was indicative of the predominant ideas regarding Eugenicist trends in Germany. She expressed her opinion on the issue with the following words;

Outlawing of contraception implied society surrendering control over nature... As human kind has subjected all other things to its rational insight, so it must become increasingly master over one of the most important matters for humanity; the creation of a new human. One will have to find means of preventing the incurably ill or degenerate from reproducing.²¹⁸

The crucial point about the Social Darwinist and Eugenic ideas in Weimar Republic was that they helped reconcile those who used it and for whom it had become an almost automatic way of thinking about society, to accept the policies which Nazis advocated and in many cases to collaborate willingly in putting them in to practice.²¹⁹

As the Eugenic ideas entrenched in society the racist interpretations became widespread. Racist ideas about the black people were rampant in the Weimar Germany, especially by the dawning of the Jazz age and presence of the African Americans in that industry in the United States. Leading racial biologist during the Weimar years, Alfred Ploetz put forward racist ideas in the American context. He claimed Yankees and other “superior” inhabitants refused to interact socially with Blacks because they felt embarrassed by the latter's lack of moral inhibition, their defective intelligence and their foolish behavior. He saw Blacks as excluded because of their inferiority in intellectual and moral terms.²²⁰ The spread of racist mode of thinking during the early

²¹⁶ Ibid., 296.

²¹⁷ Knox, *Origins of Dictatorships*, 139.

²¹⁸ Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 86.

²¹⁹ Evans, *Rereading*, 137.

²²⁰ Y. Michal Bodemann, “Ethnos, race and nation: Werner Sombart, the Jews and classical German sociology”, *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 44, Issue. 2 (2010), 121.

20th century was even welcomed by some sociologists like Werner Sombart who stated that the merit of the race theory was that it had freed the sociologists from the domination of the materialist conception of history and provided them with a new point of view.²²¹ Even though Sombart, contrary to many of his contemporaries, was manifesting positive views about the Jews, he also looked at the “Jewish Question” through the prism of race. He was at pains to demonstrate that among Jews intermarriage was virtually non-existent for over 2000 years and that, to the present Jews had preserved the purity of its ethno racial stock.²²²

5.3 Völkisch Nationalism in Kaiserreich

All those Social Darwinist and Eugenic ideas were interacting with another phenomenon which added an additional fuel to their radicalism; namely the German nationalism. At the beginning of the 19th century, France and Britain had already been united nations which were located on the west of the German people, Germans saw in politics only weakness and fragmentation. They could not find a stereotype in religion because of the confessional divisions between a largely Protestant North East and a largely Catholic West and South East. How could such diverse regions be brought together? In the absence of institutions which might determine appropriate behavior, Germans had to manufacture their own concept of nationality.²²³ In practice the nation came in to being by blood and iron as a result of the wars that had waged by the Iron Chancellor. Some experts like Geoff Eley claimed that there was always a cynical side of German nationalism especially with regards to the Prussian politics. As he put it;

An essentially unreformed Prusso-German state presiding over a massive process of economic modernization and seeking to preserve its traditional structures of authoritarian rule against the disruptive social and political effects of that process. Bismarck's colonial policy and *popular nationalism* were consistently exploited as a long term integrative factor that was supposed to stabilize an anachronistic social and power structure.²²⁴

Whether it was a deliberate policy implemented by the ruling elite or an organic development from the grassroots or both, starting from the 19th century, each successive generation of patriots believed that their predecessors had not been

²²¹ Ibid., 128.

²²² Ibid., 135.

²²³ James, *A German Identity*, 10-11.

²²⁴ Eley, *Bismarckian Germany*, 6.

sufficiently near to the people, in other words not sufficiently völkisch.²²⁵ The Völkisch movement which had developed after the war consisted of people eager to cultivate and exploit nationalist extremism and racial awareness. They emphasized the features that were distinctive of German race and the need to eliminate the corrupting influence of others.²²⁶

It should be mentioned here that 19th century was one of the centuries with the greatest number of people moving from one place to the other. Therefore the emergence of the non-traditional radical rightwing movements with strong xenophobic tendencies was a general European phenomenon, not only a German one. Men and women migrated not only across oceans and international frontiers, but from country to city, from one region of the same state to another, in short from “home” to the land of strangers. The late 19th century pioneered mass xenophobia, of which racism; the protection of the pure native stock against contamination, by the invading subhuman hordes, became the common expression.²²⁷

Traditional conservative forces in Germany had sought since 1890s to establish and invigorate “new right groups” which were claiming to locate their authority in the Volk rather than in the state or the person of a monarch.²²⁸ Basing their support on the middle classes the nationalist lobby groups, such as Pan German League, The Colonial Society and The Navy League have sprang up during the last decade of the 19th century.²²⁹ Alldeutsche which was founded in response to Chancellor Caprivi's abandonment of the colony of Zanzibar to Britain, and like minded groups gave voice to an increasingly powerful radical nationalism, a fanaticism in the name of the overriding claims of Volk and race that increasingly undermined the traditional authority.²³⁰ Heinrich Class of Alldeutsche was one of the most vocal supporters of this newly emerging new right which was virulent in its support for war and in its defiance of the Kaiser. In his book titled as “If I were the Kaiser: Political Truths and Necessities”, he explained his position with the following words;”Whoever loves his nation and seeks to hasten our present illness to its crisis will yearn for war, the awakens of all the good, healthy,

²²⁵ James, *A German Identity*, 49.

²²⁶ Evans and Jenkins, *Years of Weimar*, 54.

²²⁷ Hobsbawm, *Extremes*, 119.

²²⁸ Hiden, *Republican*, 189.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 167.

²³⁰ Knox, *Origins of the Dictatorships*, 98.

robust forces in the Volk. War was the doctor of all souls.”²³¹

Youth organizations played an important part for the dissemination of such new form of völkish ideas to the youth. An important predecessor of postwar youth organizations was the Wandervogel movement, organizing hiking and work camp parties from around 1900. Its leaders were adults, encouraging young people to seek activities and ideas that would express the romantic and idealistic soul of the German nation. From this emerged small political youth organizations that after 1918 expanded and became more völkisch, anti democratic and militaristic.²³²

In their quest for influence such nationalist groups had used Imperialism and Weltpolitik as tools to obtain the support of the German people and to a large extent they succeed. Imperialism was not simply a method by which the ruling classes diverted pressure from below in order to retain their power and their system of rule. Nor was it a method that they employed for legitimization. Imperialism was not an artificial product, initiated and driven on from above, but a mass phenomenon. The Navy League corresponds to a general atmosphere in German society which was clearly demonstrated by the popularity of sailor suits and naval clothing. Likewise, Weltpolitik was not just the policy of the ruling elite, it was the policy of Germans. The fleet was the Kaiser's fleet but also it was the fleet of the German people. The German middle classes became imperialistic voluntarily and of their own free will and allowed themselves to be gripped by a lust for power and space.²³³

5.4 Nationalism in the Weimar Republic

After the fall of the monarchy following the First World War, the new Republic's constitution defined the German nation as a union of tribes and German blood defined citizenship. General self perception of Germans during the Weimar period was one of superiority vis a vis the nations around them, especially to the supposedly less civilized nations to the east and to Semites.²³⁴ The political parties in the Weimar Germany were well aware of these nationalistic tendencies among the German people. This was

²³¹ Ibid., 121.

²³² Mann, *Fascists*, 151.

²³³ Evans, *Rereading*, 32.

²³⁴ Mann, *Fascists*, 184.

apparent in the way that they changed their names during the Republican era. The German Conservative Party renamed itself the German National People's Party (DNVP) and the National Liberal Party became the German People's Party (DVP). The inclusion of the adjective "People's" was not intended to mollify specifically working class aspirations, but instead to appeal to notions of völkish solidarity.²³⁵ During the Republican era the gap between nationalist dreams and imaginings and political reality was far greater than it had been in the Kaiserreich. On the one hand, those nationalist yearnings had been excited by the war, which had seemed to promise everything to Germans. Fighting drove up German expectations. On the other hand, all these hopes had been dashed in 1918. Republican reality meant the frustration of the Kaiserreich's aspirations.²³⁶

The counter revolutionary right wing in general and Nazis in particular in the Weimar Germany drew on a tradition and action that went back much earlier than the volatile events of 1918. Its attitudes and expectations owed much to the militant nationalism of the Pan Germans, to imperialist dreams of world power, to Germany's colonialist propaganda and colonial adventures which became more prevalent in the late Wilhelmine period.²³⁷ Nationalism offered a powerful instrument to those who wished to destroy the Republic. It pointed out everything the Republic could not be: a culturally homogenous state, a prospering economy, a great power in the international arena.²³⁸ What was alarming for the Republic was the general perception among the nationalist circles that patriotism and the Republic are two opposite poles. Thomas Mann in his 1922 address to the German youth stated his concerns about this issue very clearly;

There have been times when the national idea was far from coinciding with the monarchical and dynastic, when they were in irreconcilable opposition. Patriotism and Republic, so far from being opposed, have sometimes appeared as one and the same thing and the cause of freedom and the fatherland had the passionate support of the noblest youth. Today the young, or at least considerable and important sections of them, seem to have sworn eternal hatred to the Republic.²³⁹

²³⁵ Fischer, *The Rise*, 45-46.

²³⁶ James, *A German Identity*, 111-112.

²³⁷ Peukert, *Classical Modernity*, 67.

²³⁸ James, *A German Identity*, 112.

²³⁹ Kaes, Jay and Dimenberg, *Sourcebook*, 107.

5.5 Nazi Social Darwinism and Nationalism

The Nazis exploited both Social Darwinism and German nationalism and usually mix them one another. In the 1920 Nazi Party Program, it said “only those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation”. In a speech in 1923 Hitler explained and revealed his eugenic understanding of nationalism:

Nationalism is above all inoculation against a bacillus and the anti-Semitic concept is the necessary defense, the anti-body if you like against a pestilence which today has a grip on the whole world. There is only one differentiation, one is either German or anti-German.²⁴⁰

The Nazi propaganda centered on strong nationalism. He made this point clear by stating that German people must be educated consciously and systematically to fanatical Nationalism. The electorate was told that Germans were racially and culturally superior, destined to rule over other nations. The party promised territorial expansion in to a Greater Germany that would liberate millions of Germans living under foreign domination. It unleashed all kinds of prejudices against the perceived “others”. It described the Russians as bestial but backward, unable to resist the power of modern Germany while the French and British were civilized but decadent, probably unwilling to fight.²⁴¹

Fundamental to all Hitler's policies was his absolute belief in the superiority of the Aryan race and the need to prepare the German people for its role as master of Europe. He categorized mankind in to three separate groups: founders of culture, bearers of culture and destroyers of culture. The Aryans of course formed the highest group.²⁴² In a speech in 1923 he said:

It has ever been the right of stronger to see his will prevail. Indeed, all of nature is one great struggle between strength and weakness, an eternal victory of the strong over the weak. The nation which would violate this elementary law would rot away.²⁴³

Racialism was central to Hitler's ideological vision and National Socialist Party policy and behavior from the outset. His early speeches blamed the Jews for Germany's defeat

²⁴⁰ Mann, *Fascists*, 142.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 178.

²⁴² Lee, *Dictatorships*, 201.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 194.

and associated them with international finance capital, but under the influence of Rosenberg and Eckart, he soon came to regard Soviet Bolshevism also as a Jewish phenomenon. By 1922, Ian Kershaw remarks, the racial dialectic was central to Hitler's thinking and as Karl-Dietrich Bracher comments, racist anti-Semitism was the one basic principle to which Hitler subscribed deeply, blindly and ruthlessly.²⁴⁴

In 1915 the biologist Haeckel argued that the theory of selection teaches us that organic progress is an inevitable consequence of the struggle for existence. Hitler took this a stage further and based his whole ideology on the premise of struggle which he saw as the father of all things. From this emerged the right of the strong to triumph over the weak.²⁴⁵ In the first volume of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had declared that every cultural achievement is almost exclusively the product of Aryan creative power. For him, the Aryan is the Prometheus of mankind, the bold creator of humanities and the arts whereas the Jew is the parasite, an inevitable liar and the cause, through interbreeding miscegenation of physical and racial deterioration in Aryan stock. Germany needs laws, said Hitler, to prevent the breeding of inferior races, since inferior always outbred the superior, and to forbid the mating of Jews with the superior race. The old German Empire by neglecting the problem of preserving the racial foundations of our national life, Hitler remarked, made mongrels of its people.²⁴⁶

Leading Nazis tried to convince the Germans that selective breeding is not alien to the German culture but an integral part of it. One of the prominent Nazis R.W Darre in his article which was published in 1932 wrote the following lines about this issue;

The fact that today's German sees any effort to couple breeding questions with those of the public good as contrary to idealism is in itself a peculiarity in intellectual history. What these Germans now condemn was for centuries considered by our people to be an expression of custom and morality. It is perhaps even more peculiar that this is happening in a people who as recently as about a century ago would not permit an apprentice to become a master unless he could show proof of his unobjectionable descent, nor could he retain the rank of master if he chose a girl of unknown or undesired origin as his wife.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ Fischer, *The Rise*, 65.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 203.

²⁴⁶ Rafter, 294.

²⁴⁷ Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg, *Sourcebook*, 134.

CHAPTER SIX

The Weimar Constitution

It is very useful to start this chapter with the role of the constitution in the rise of Hitler during the final phase of the Weimar Republic in order to demonstrate the significance of the subject. After his release from Landsberg Castle, one of the most important political lessons Hitler had managed to draw from the failed putsch attempt was that he could only come to power in Germany by political and democratic means. His political rise began with the elimination of the Reichstag as well as of the Reich President, making use of the extraordinary rights of the Reich President, stated in the Weimar constitution, reserved for him exclusively in a state of emergency. Then Hitler succeeded in being authorized to use the President's extraordinary powers permanently for at least four years and then succeeded to make them permanent.²⁴⁸

6.1 General Perception of the Weimar Constitution Among the German People

Mark Hewitson stresses one of the most important dimensions of how a new constitution would be perceived by the German people;

Since national unity had only been achieved through political arrangement and compromise, reform of the Reich's constitution did not simply political dislocation, but appeared to many observers to *endanger the nation state* itself. The possibility of returning to supposed disorder and weaknesses of the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was one of the commonest expressed fears of German political commentary.²⁴⁹

In the radicalized political atmosphere of the Weimar Germany, it was almost impossible for the new constitution to escape from criticism. The criticism of parliamentary democracy was based on the belief that, like the Treaty of Versailles, the Weimar constitution had been the product of defeat and of alien influences as well and it was somehow part of the dictated terms imposed on Germany by her enemies. Many conservatives perceived the new constitution as a mechanical device which would

²⁴⁸ Yu-chung Shen, "The anomaly of the Weimar Republic's Semi Presidential Constitution", *Journal of Politics and Law*, Vol. 2, no.3 (2009), 39.

²⁴⁹ Hewitson, *French Third Republic*, 214.

“strangle the free expression of the true German spirit”. After the Nazis came to power, the Weimar period which was symbolized by its constitution was frequently referred as the Systemzeit, the time of the system. It was mentioned that it was imposed from outside and had no roots in the German soul and soil.²⁵⁰ As a result of this perception, one can say that it was not widely accepted by all the German people. For instance, in order to engage the cooperation of the German States, the Federal Ministry of the Interior issued general guidelines for the celebration of August 11 as the Constitution Day. As a response, claiming that these federal directives violated state authority, Bavaria dismissed Constitution Day as incompatible with the destitution of the times. Bavarian envoy in Berlin explained in 1923 that “one affirms the constitution in Bavaria but one doesn't affirm it happily”.²⁵¹

6.2 Weaknesses of the Weimar Constitution and Its pre-Weimar Roots

Before turning to the shortcomings of the Weimar Constitution, one should keep in mind that the central notion of the 19th century German constitutionalism; a strong executive above the Parliament balancing the popular passions expressed through the legislature, was very much ingrained in to the minds of even left liberals such as Hugo Preuss. Even Max Weber who advised Preuss in the drafting of the constitution had long regarded parliamentarism mainly as a tool for selecting and training great leaders.²⁵²

The constitution which came in to being in July 1919 was a compromise. It was the work of right wing of those belonging to SPD.²⁵³ Its base was the previous constitution modified by the October reforms and given a republican superstructure. Article 1 of the new constitution even affirms, “German *Reich* is a Republic”.²⁵⁴ In place of the Kaiser, there was a Reich President who was to be elected by popular vote.²⁵⁵ In that sense, Harold James argues, Weimar had failed to create a political style. Even though Germany had a republican form of government, the central state was still called the

²⁵⁰ Joll, *Europe*, 270.

²⁵¹ Achilles, 680.

²⁵² Knox, *Fascists*, 255.

²⁵³ Simeon E. Baldwin, “The Salient Points in the German Constitution of 1919”, *Michigan Law Review*, Vol. 18, no.8,(1920), 736.

²⁵⁴ Lee, *Weimar*, 7.

²⁵⁵ Evans, *Third Reich*, 80.

Empire, with a Reich Chancellor, Reich government, Reichstag and Reich postal services.²⁵⁶ It should be noted that the absence of referendum to the people for the new constitution was in line with the long established German custom that no imperial statute became of force until it was promulgated by the emperor. It was the emperor who spoke in the name of the empire and that's why it was his assurance that gave law the force.²⁵⁷

The theoretical framework of the constitution was democratic. It was drafted by the liberal minded Jurist Hugo Preuss who tried to combine the first ten amendments of the constitution of the United States and the French declaration of the rights of man. Besides, other two prominent figures, Max Weber and Conrad Haussman, at the end were all bourgeois liberals who remained deeply committed to the social and cultural liberal values of the German Bildungsbürgertum.²⁵⁸ Constitution stated that the political power emanates from the people and the electoral system was based on universal suffrage by man and woman over 20 years of age.²⁵⁹ The idea of cabinet government was borrowed from England and France, strong popular President from the United States and referendum from Switzerland.²⁶⁰ However, the constitution of the Republic revealed a major contradiction between theory and practice. In theory it comprised the most advanced democracy in Europe, enshrining a wide range of liberal principles while retaining a degree of stability and continuity with the past. But in practice, the relationship between the individual components of the constitution was fundamentally flawed.²⁶¹ The President who was elected for seven year term, was not the head of the government, that was the Chancellor who was a party figure responsible to the parliament.²⁶² Making an executive dependent on Reichstag majority, made coalitions fragile and placed extra strains on the head of the government.²⁶³ The result was that what started out as a parliamentary regime was captured by the conservative right and converted in to an authoritarian one.²⁶⁴ This apparent contradiction between the role of the Reichstag and the President was a deliberate choice of the constitution's drafters.

²⁵⁶ James, *A German Identity*, 122.

²⁵⁷ Baldwin, 737.

²⁵⁸ Jones, *Culture and Politics*, 80.

²⁵⁹ Evans, *Third Reich*, 17.

²⁶⁰ Knox, *Fascists*, 56.

²⁶¹ Lee, *Weimar*, 17.

²⁶² Johnson, *Modern Times*, 110.

²⁶³ Hiden, *Republican*, 44.

²⁶⁴ Lee, *Weimar*, 17.

On the one hand, the Reichstag was to be the central institution of government, the expression of the sovereign people's will and the organ responsible for legislation. On the other hand and partly to offset fears that a parliament with a socialist majority might become dominant, the Reich President was given considerable powers like supreme command of the armed forces, the power to appoint and dismiss governments, to dissolve the parliament and the power to rule by decree.²⁶⁵

Weimar Constitution was in many respects not very different than its counterparts in other parts of Europe. Due to the bourgeois political struggle against the autocratic monarchs and their personalized system of rule during the 19th century, the new constitutions contained articles overwhelmingly distrustful of the executive authority.²⁶⁶ But on the other hand, due to its tradition of strong executive of the German constitutionalism, the new constitution contained the infamous article 48, the emergency powers that would allow the President to promulgate emergency decrees and bypass the Reichstag and the article 25 which gave the President the power to dissolve the Parliament without being demanded to do so by the Chancellor. The article 25 was codified as a measure against French Third Republic type absolute parliamentarism but the article 48 had its roots in the previous German constitutions.²⁶⁷ The article 48 of the Weimar Constitution said:

The President may, if the public safety and order in the German Reich are considerably disturbed or endangered, take such measures as are necessary to restore public safety and order. If necessary he may intervene with the help of the armed forces. For this purpose he may temporarily suspend, either partially or wholly, the fundamental rights established in article 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124 and 153.²⁶⁸

Given the German constitutional tradition the existence of article 48 was no surprise. The immediate predecessors of article 48 of the Weimar Constitution, article 3 of the Prussian Constitution of 1850 and article 68 of the Constitution of 1871 had both contained provisions authorizing the executive to suspend some of its articles in the state of emergency.²⁶⁹ To better understand to what extent the idea of strong executive

²⁶⁵ Bessel, *War to Dictatorship*, 17-18.

²⁶⁶ Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 8.

²⁶⁷ Shen, 38.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

²⁶⁹ Marc Dewilde, "The state of emergency in the Weimar Republic legal disputes over article 48

had been penetrated in to the minds of the constitutional experts, one should remember that both positivist and anti positivist German legal experts at the time, during their discussions about the article 48 tended to refer to the President's dictatorship as an institution they considered legal and legitimate, not something as abnormal or illegitimate. They discussed the article 48 within the framework of constitutional dictatorship with an age old tradition going back to Rome or even beyond.²⁷⁰

But the idea of a strong President was also related with the difficult conditions in which the new republic found it self. A social revolution which had shaken the country was accompanied by a short period of civil war. As a result a parliamentary democratic republic was established by the collaboration of SPD and the High Military Command. Under these circumstances a powerful president was thought necessary by the great majority of the then active politicians in order to manage the dangers posed by domestic and international developments.²⁷¹ It should also be mentioned here that Hugo Preuss, who drafted the Weimar constitution, mainly influenced by the experience of the French Third Republic with a paralyzing parliamentarism and he was eager to avoid the same situation in the First German Republic. Contrary to the general perception of the article 48, Preuss thought that Reich President must be strong in order to defend a functioning parliamentary government. He deliberately drafted the constitution in a way that the President could suspend only part of the human rights for a certain period of time but was not allowed to enact laws which would change the basic essence of the constitution. Only in abnormal times he should be constitutionally made capable to master extraordinary situations.²⁷² But the tragedy of the Weimar Republic was that it rarely witnessed normal times. Almost its entire life span was marked by extraordinary developments.

This problematic article of the Weimar constitution, article 48, had used first time not by the right wing politicians, as one might expect but by the Social Democrats and not only against the threats emanating from the radical right but also from the radical left. It was the Republic's first President Friedrich Ebert who made the extensive use of the article 48. He employed this tool against the Kapp and Munich putsches on the right

of the Weimar Constitution”, *Legal History Review*, Vol. 78, no.1(2010), 141.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 139.

²⁷¹ Shen, 36.

²⁷² Ibid., 38.

and Spartacist, Ruhr and Saxon threats on the left.²⁷³ What was dangerous for the Weimar democracy was the decision of Ebert and Chancellor Wirth to follow the example of German war economy and to assert that public safety and order which was mentioned in article 48 could be seriously disturbed and endangered not only by political but by also financial and economic crisis. Their widening of the scope of article 48 proved critical for the Weimar democracy because it left nothing to prevent executive legislation in other domains as well.²⁷⁴ It was unfortunate for SPD and Ebert not to be able to find an alternative to the removal by Presidential decree and by force, of the legally constituted ultra left state government in Saxony in 1923. This was a failure that set a fatal precedent for the similar removal of the legally constituted Social Democratic government in Prussia by the far right under Reich Chancellor Franz Papen.²⁷⁵ Ebert used the article 48 not only for emergencies but also during the non emergencies when passing a legislation through the Reichstag would have been too difficult. As a result of Ebert's excessive use and occasional misuse of the article 48, the article's application was widened to a point where it became a potential threat to democratic institutions.²⁷⁶ President von Hindenberg too, took refuge in article 48, after the fall of the Reich Cabinet in Spring 1930. He appointed a minority cabinet which governed through the emergency decrees. In the following years, the practice of emergency government was continued, leading to an increasingly authoritarian regime and the gradual erosion of Weimar's democratic institutions.²⁷⁷ Between 1925-1931, 16 emergency decrees were issued, in 1931 there were 42 and in 1932 alone the number stood at 59.²⁷⁸

Another feature of the constitution which played into the hands of far right was the article of federalism that was inserted in to the new constitution. The new constitution of the Republic maintained the previous constitutional arrangement of a separate chamber for federal states and the Bundesrat of the Kaiserreich was replaced by the Reichsrat of the Republic.²⁷⁹ Before the Republic was established in 1918, the principle, governing the relationship between local and central authorities had been that

²⁷³ Lee, *Weimar*, 54.

²⁷⁴ Dewilde, 140.

²⁷⁵ Evans, *Rereading*, 102.

²⁷⁶ Evans, *Third Reich*, 80-81.

²⁷⁷ Dewilde, 139.

²⁷⁸ Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 21.

²⁷⁹ Baldwin, 743.

of subordination.²⁸⁰ During the Republic the central state was even stronger in relation to the lander than the Kaiserreich had been. Especially it had more extensive powers of taxation and in theory it controlled the army.²⁸¹ Reichswehr thus became the first German, as opposed to Prussian or Bavarian, army in modern German history. Many of the old prerogatives were abolished; Bavaria and Württemberg no longer could maintain their own postal and railway administrations.²⁸² But the constitution makers were very apprehensive about preserving a united front of all parties against the Allies and hence allowed the States to continue in existence. But the constitution was codified in such a way as to make them as powerless as possible. The result was, according to A.J.P Taylor, the Reich governments of the Left, anxious to avoid constitutional disputes dared not to interfere with the state governments of the Right, however Reich governments of the Right didn't hesitate to overthrow state governments of the Left. The constitution became the tool for crippling democratic elements in Germany.²⁸³ The dualism of power that was attributed to the federalism started to make itself felt after the fall of the Social Democratic government of Müller. A serious crisis erupted between the Reich Chancellor Brüning and the Prussian Minister of Interior Carl Severing who resolutely defended his position that membership of the civil service or the holding of the public office was incompatible with membership of either Nazis or KPD. Even the Prime Minister of Prussia Otto Braun offered to resign following the crisis which was rejected by Hindenburg.²⁸⁴

The final aspect of the Weimar Constitution that needs to be dealt in this chapter is Proportional Representation. Proportional Representation was perceived as another weakness of the new Weimar Constitution. The newly established constitutions in Europe contained the Proportional Representation as their electoral systems. The main idea behind this electoral model was to form a legislature which would closely express the popular will.²⁸⁵ Germany adopted this model as well. It allowed large number of small parties to enter the Parliament. Given the resulting high levels of fragmentation, it

²⁸⁰ Anthony McElligott, "The collapse of Weimar", *History Today*, Vol. 43, No. 5(1993), 18.

²⁸¹ James, *A German Identity*, 112.

²⁸² Bessel, *War to Dictatorship*, 17.

²⁸³ Taylor, *German History*, 217.

²⁸⁴ Hiden, *Republican*, 93.

²⁸⁵ Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 8.

was very difficult to build a stable majority.²⁸⁶ Especially the absence of national threshold made things worse for the Republican politicians who find it extremely difficult to put disparate parties with no history of cooperation together and getting them to make concessions for the common good of the German people.²⁸⁷ Proportional Representation is doubtless the most effective method of assuring that all kinds of opinion find expression, but it works best in times of political and social peace and in situations where there is general acceptance of rules of political intercourse and competition. Neither of these conditions obtained in the interwar Germany.²⁸⁸

Even though the shortcomings of the Weimar Constitution were clear, one shouldn't blame all Germany's evils on the constitution. As Geoff Layton put it;

What of course, the constitution could not control were the conditions and circumstances in which it had to operate. In this sense it is just unrealistic to imagine that any piece of paper could have made provisions for all the possible consequences arising from Germany's immense problems and its divergent social and political forces.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ Sibylle Lehmann, "Chaotic shop talk or efficient parliament? The Reichstag, the parties and the problem of governmental instability in the Weimar Republic", *Public Choice*, Vol.144, no.1 (2010), 88.

²⁸⁷ Lee, *Weimar*, 18.

²⁸⁸ Craig, *Germany*, 416.

²⁸⁹ Layton, *Bismarck to Hitler*, 86.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Military

7.1 Dominant Position of the Military in Kaiserreich

During the Bismarckian Germany, in the eyes of the military leaders the army was not an institution which's policies can be disputed but a Church which needed worshippers. Especially after 1866-71, the officer class enjoyed by general consent higher prestige than any other group in Prussia. Railway clerks dropped their usual bad temperaments and the civilians had to address them as "noble sir".²⁹⁰ To the high ranking soldiers in the military cabinet and the general staff, the War Minister's Parliamentary function was a potential threat to the inviolability of their office. They sought to render it powerless. In 1883 with Bismarck's help, they succeeded. From that day on their irresponsibility have started to grown.²⁹¹ In Bismarck's time it is generally agreed that the soldiers were kept in their place not by any constitutional provisions but by Bismarck's personal influence, with the Wilhelm I, after Bismarck's period, the situation was reversed and the Chancellor started to be kept in place by the influence of soldier.²⁹² In the Kaiserreich even though the army was multifaceted and its major offices of General Staff, War Ministry, War Office, Navy Office and Admiralty Staff were diffused, in one respect they were sufficiently united; resisting any reform that can undermine the importance of the military.²⁹³

Indeed it was inevitable for the military's political role to grow due to the dawning of a technological age in warfare. In a technological age, the questions of national security seemed to depend upon the expert knowledge about weaponry, logistics and relative national capacities for mobilization which were beyond the full comprehensive knowledge of civilian statesman.²⁹⁴ However as the Schlieffen Plan demonstrated, in Germany this expert knowledge had been translated in to a monopoly of decision making over the issues of national security by the military. The position of the German

²⁹⁰ Knox, *Origins of the Dictatorships*, 75.

²⁹¹ Craig, *Germany*, 53.

²⁹² Taylor, *German History*, 135.

²⁹³ Herwig, *Industry*, 68.

²⁹⁴ Craig, *Germany*, 107.

nation state which was located in a central and “encircled” position in Europe led the German leadership in to a defensive mentality which had manifested itself in an increasingly offensive foreign policy with the specific emphasis on military superiority and preparation for war.²⁹⁵ As early as 1871 the Chief of the Prussian General Staff, Helmuth von Moltke, had begun to plan for a two front war against France and Russia, hitting Russia first. When Alfred Count Schlieffen became chief in 1891, he proposed to reverse the sequence and strike at France first.²⁹⁶ Schlieffen Plan was basically a master plan for German mobilization by the efficient usage of the railway systems, which involved the violation of Belgian neutrality. The plan made it inevitable that Germany would start the war that she herself was afraid to wage and would brought disadvantages to her as a result of being labeled as the aggressor. But since Schlieffen was the expert and sure that the war would be a short and quick one, he overlooked the challenges that have been associated with his plan. Civilian politicians, Hohenlohe and Bülow couldn't raise any objections to the plan, by the time Bethmann Hollweg became the Chancellor, it was regarded as something that was no longer subject to political interference.²⁹⁷

To what extent the army consolidated its power in Germany was demonstrated in 1913 during the Saverene affair. In Saverene the arrogance of the German officers of the garrison provoked quarrels with the townspeople, the officer in command defied the law and on his own authority arrested and imprisoned some of the inhabitants. All Germany was stirred but at the end , Colonel von Reuter, the commander at Saverene was acquitted by a court martial.²⁹⁸ It was a clear demonstration that military as an institution was above the law.

Especially after the collapse of the Bülow block in the Parliament and failed attempts to broaden his parliamentary backing, Chancellor Bethmann became increasingly dependent upon non-parliamentary forces like the army. One of the most significant consequences of this was the growing militarization of the Wilhelmine society. Military values and style influenced all sectors of the society; a reserve officer's commission in a

²⁹⁵ Stephenson, *Sonderweg*, 80.

²⁹⁶ Joffe, *Frederick to the Federal Republic*, 101.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 317.

²⁹⁸ Taylor, *German History*, 190.

good regiment was something that was to be desired by every bourgeois businessman, a new group of industrialists started to rule their firms as if they were fortress commanders and even the right wing Socialists were capable of striking military postures.²⁹⁹ Germany was in many ways one of the most militarized societies in the world at the end of the 19th century. The factory towns grew up around the barrack cities of the Hohenzollern soldier kings. The continuous military drills affected the business classes with their profound stress on discipline. Uniforms were everywhere. To raise their prestige, members of the government used the military dress. Bismarck dressed as a cavalry general whereas Bethmann Hollweg during his first appearance in the Reichstag dressed as a major.³⁰⁰

By the late 1918 military managed completely to take over the reins in Germany and Kaiser was marginalized from government and military planning. The civilian administration had abdicated responsibility to the military, which with the declaration of war had taken over domestic administration in accordance with the Prussian Law of Siege of 4 June 1851.³⁰¹

7.2 Reichswehr During the Weimar Republic

It is a crucial point to note that unlike the Russian revolution, the German revolution of 1918 did not change the internal character of the German army. As Telzrow put it;

Unlike Russian revolution where the communists spilled the blood of royalty and delightfully shot Tsarist army officers, the German revolution maintained the strange sense of decorum that characterized the unit mutinies a month earlier. They wouldn't repeat the brutality that the Bolsheviks had visited upon the Tsar and his family. These revolutionaries displayed their anger by merely cutting off officer rank insignia rather than restoring to lynching, as was the fashion in Russia.³⁰²

The Reichswehr was composed of men who had survived the rigorous cuts imposed on the army at Versailles and was officered by those who had formerly served in the Imperial Army. Like the Freikorps, it was nationalist and monarchist and remained loyal to the memory of Kaiser.³⁰³

²⁹⁹ Craig, *Germany*, 288.

³⁰⁰ Johnson, *Modern Times*, 109.

³⁰¹ Bessel, *War to Dictatorship*, 13.

³⁰² Telzrow, 35.

³⁰³ Evans and Jenkins, *Years of Weimar*, 95.

In the words of the English historian J.W. Wheeler-Bennett in his “Hindenburg the Wooden Titan”;

The army of which Hindenburg found himself Commander in Chief in 1925 resembled its imperial predecessor in one particular aspect. It was above politics because it dominated them. With zealous care it had been removed from political control and no disruptive influences existed within ranks. It never played politics but no government could stand a week without its support. In the words of Gröner, the Reichswehr become a factor which no one could pass over in political decisions.”³⁰⁴

One of the biggest problems of the new Republic was its failure to win the support of the army. When Colonel Wilhelm Reinhard, one of the first free corps commanders, was asked by a journalist whether he had called the government a rabble and the new flag a Jew flag, he cheerfully gave the following answer;

I make no bones of the fact that I am a monarchist . My God, when one served his king and his country faithfully for thirty years, he can't suddenly say “starting tomorrow I am Republican. But you don't have to be afraid. I don't believe it is possible to set up a monarchy again in a minute. The Allies wouldn't let us do that in any case. But what will happen in ten years time...”³⁰⁵

The army's distance against the new republic was clearly revealed by General Hans von Seeckt's neutrality during the Kapp Putsch. It showed that army would defend the Republic only against the attacks coming from the left but not from the attacks coming from the “national” opposition. This point was further substantiated when General Seeckt was appointed to restore order in Ruhr during the Spartacist troubles on March 1920. This he did by dispatching free corps.³⁰⁶ In practice this meant a detachment from and indifference towards the republican constitutional order. The army considered itself loyal to the German state but not specifically to the democratic republic.³⁰⁷ The army's monarchism was also demonstrated by General Seeckt's behavior in military drills. In 1926 press disclosed that the General had allowed Prince Wilhelm of Prussia who was the son of the former crown prince to participate army maneuvers in uniform of the old imperial first foot guards. Even though the process ended with the resignation of von Seeckt, it was enough to reveal the monarchist tendencies inside the army.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 97.

³⁰⁵ Craig, *Germany*, 408.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 431.

³⁰⁷ Fischer, *The Rise*, 18.

³⁰⁸ Evans and Jenkins, *Years of Weimar*, 97.

Apart from its inaction during the troubles emanating from the right against the Republic, military contributed to the downfall of the Weimar Republic also by creating one of the most effective propaganda tools that was widely used by the Nazis; the stab in the back myth. Germany was defeated in the First World War, but the defeat was not an outcome which the German military culture can live with. With its reputation at stake, the army embarked on a task of erasing its own preeminent part in Germany's misadventures. In a carefully staged appearance in November 1919 before the Reichstag Committee of Inquiry, Hindenburg read a carefully prepared statement that ascribed to a drastically misquoted "English General" the claim that the German army had been "stabbed in the back". The myth successfully eliminated the need to examine Germany's strategic blunders, from Schlieffen Plan to the submarine folly and from Ludendorff's irrational offensives to the panicked request for an armistice.³⁰⁹ The newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* was the first to use the term when it reported "As far as Germany army is concerned, the general view is summarized in these words: it was a stab in the back by the civilian population".³¹⁰ Conan Fischer described with the following words the danger of putting forward such an argument;

It was a relatively short step from the general accusation that Germany had been stabbed in the back to the more specific contention that the republicans had brought defeat on the country and that, had the imperial army been allowed to prosecute the war unopposed, then Germany would have won. The assertion that Germany divided (allegedly by Jews) had lost, but that Germany united was invincible was to inform and make credible the National Socialists' rhetoric in the realm of foreign policy.³¹¹

The myth was so powerful that when the Germans troops made their formal entry in to Berlin, even the Socialist Ebert said "I salute you who returned unvanquished from the field of battle" and thereby contributed to the myth that the German army had been stabbed in the back rather than defeated by the enemy.³¹²

The military models of conduct had been widespread in German society and culture before 1914 but after the war they became all pervasive.³¹³ What was crucial for the military strategic thinking in the beginning of the 20th century was the realization of the German army of the changing nature of war from partial to a total one. Since the coming war would be a total war, it would require the total mobilization of the society.

³⁰⁹ Knox, *Origins of the Dictatorships*, 282.

³¹⁰ Evans and Jenkins, *Years of Weimar*, 8.

³¹¹ Fischer, *The Rise*, 18.

³¹² Joll, *Europe*, 245.

³¹³ Evans, *Third Reich*, 72.

Military leaders like Schleicher and Groener were contemplating a variety of means of reaching a merger between military and society. First they tried to achieve their goal by cooperating with the Republican institutions, but in 1928 after the public controversy over the construction of new battle cruisers they were convinced that SPD would never acquiescence the sort of expansion that the armed forces demanded. SPD was making its position clear by the election slogan of “not armed cruisers but food for the kids.”³¹⁴ From then on German army started to look for other forms of government which would give them the opportunity to bypass the Parliament. By 1929-1930 the opponents of Muller's Grand Coalition were able to count on the backing of the army.³¹⁵ After the fall of the Muller's Grand coalition under the strains of the Great Depression, the army started to unleash itself from the shackles of democracy. It got the right to report directly to the President, instead of going through the cabinet.³¹⁶

Another alarming development for the Republic was the growing penetration of the Nazi propaganda in to the German army. Ever since the Ulm Trail of 1930, when three lieutenants were tried for disseminating Nazi literature among their fellows, Nazism had made steady progress among the junior ranks who were attracted by the nationalist rhetoric of the movement.³¹⁷ German military shared with the Nazi Party in particular, a fundamental rejection of Bolshevism, as well as distaste for the extreme form of democracy which they believed ruined the Weimar Republic.³¹⁸ A clear indication of army's political inclination was the posting of Adolf Hitler, who started to work for the army after November 1918, as an educational officer to a Munich regiment with the main task of combating dangerous ideas like pacifism, socialism and democracy. Such was the army's perception of its role in the democratic republic it was supposed to protect.³¹⁹ It shared with the reactionary right in general a desire for the restoration of the authoritarian state and the repudiation of the Treaty of Versailles. However, unlike the reactionary right leaders like Wolfgang Kapp and Adolf Hitler, it was wise enough to acknowledge that the Germany was defeated and the Allies wouldn't not let Germany to realize that objectives soon. Hence it was willing to postpone its programme for few

³¹⁴ Knox, *Origins of the Dictatorships*, 293.

³¹⁵ Peukert, *Classical Modernity*, 227.

³¹⁶ Evans, *Third Reich*, 247-248.

³¹⁷ Craig, *Germany*, 567.

³¹⁸ Hiden, *Republican*, 193.

³¹⁹ Shirer, *The Rise and Fall*, 34-35.

years.³²⁰

During the Republican period, until it was subdued by Hitler, the army continued on its long tradition of seeing itself above the politics. Its inaction during when the Republic was weakest and needed help was a clear indication of its hostility to the new form of German government. The yearning for Monarchy, demonstrated by von Seeckt's attitudes, the enormous brutality the Freikorps, composed of ex-army members, employed against the leftist uprisings were all clear manifestations of the army's hostility against Weimar democracy.

³²⁰ Taylor, *Germany*, 226.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Judiciary and The Civil Service

8.1 Continuity in Civil Service

During the tumultuous days of the establishment of the Weimar Republic, both Reich and the State governments had agreed that a radical reform of the civil service which included the dismissal of all officials who had served the Empire or the local dynasties would be impractical and would merely increase the disorder and confusion. The challenges which the Germany's new rulers were facing were enormous. The new Germany had to deal with the largely unplanned and sudden demobilization of roughly six million soldiers who flooded in to Germany between November 1918 and January 1919, the sudden termination of wartime production, huge levels of war related debt, catastrophic shortages of coal and food during when Allied naval blockade was still going on, declines in labor productivity, Polish insurrections which would led to most of the provinces of Posen and West Prussia becoming part of the new Polish state, the loss of Alsace Lorraine, a very deep refugee problem as Germans flooded in to the German Reich from the lost territories to France and Poland and an industrial unrest and radical protest that erupted in Berlin, Ruhr, Munich and number of other German cities. Given such an explosive situation, it is hardly surprising that the Council of People's Representatives did its best to keep the wheels of state administration turning.³²¹

Foreign Ministry was a salient example of this continuity. In the Kaiserreich, membership in one of the student fraternities like the Borussen in Bonn had been regarded as an important precondition of entry in to the diplomatic service.³²² On April 1, 1923 SPD newspaper Vorwärts launched an attack on the substance and the tenor of the German Foreign Policy. The paper claimed that Foreign Ministry was dominated by erstwhile members of university dueling fraternities, notably by Bonner Borussen. Of 18 recent promotions to the rank of diplomatic councilor, 17 reportedly were former

³²¹ Bessel, *War to Dictatorship*, 19.

³²² J.C.G. Rohl, "Higher Civil Servants in Germany, 1890-1900", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 2, no.3(1967), 107.

Bonner Borussen. The diplomatic corps allegedly had witnessed little if any democratization since the revolution.³²³ The continuity of the civil service staff was also reinforced by the Weimar Constitution which gave all the members of the state service a guarantee of their well earned rights and recognized their political opinion and expression and association as long as this didn't conflict with their loyalty to the state.³²⁴ Weimar Constitution contained an article regulating the vested rights of civil servants which were defined as inviolable. However what was less clear whether or not the civil servants' oath of loyalty committed them to the defense of the Republican form of government.³²⁵

However the deeply entrenched position and influence of the civil service in the Weimar Republic had its roots in the Kaiserreich. Prussia had been created as a civil service state; Beamtenstaat and the reforms of the early 19th century only helped to consolidate the dominant position of the civil service. Their views crucially determined the development of Prussian Germany.³²⁶ The civil servants' dominant position was revealed when the Chancellor Hohenlohe tried, in vain, to appoint a chemist from Göttingen University, Prof. Post to the Ministry of Trade. He was rebuffed by the Imperial bureaucracy on the ground that the professor was an outsider. Finally this made Hohenlohe to state that;

If the Reich Chancellor and even His Majesty fail in the attempt to appoint an able and decent man to the Prussian bureaucracy, then I must concede defeat and record with dismay that the bureaucracy is more powerful than the Kaiser and the Chancellor.³²⁷

Wilhelmine Germany was a bureaucratic state in which the higher civil service ran everything and influenced so much power.³²⁸ Generally speaking, non-Prussians who were suspected of Liberalism or particularism found entry to the civil service very difficult.³²⁹ Given such a background it is no surprise that the Weimar judicial system also reflected a strong sense of continuity with its predecessor in the Kaiserreich. After

³²³ Conan Fischer, "Continuity and Change in the Post-Wilhelmine Germany from the 1918 Revolution to the Ruhr Crisis", in *Wilhelminism and Its Legacies: German Modernities, Imperialism and the Meanings of Reform, 1890-1930*, ed. Geoff Eley and James Retallack (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003; henceforth *Continuity and Change*), 203.

³²⁴ Craig, *Germany*, 420.

³²⁵ Hiden, *Republican*, 170.

³²⁶ James, *A German Identity*, 68.

³²⁷ Rohl, 105.

³²⁸ Evans, *Rereading*, 48.

³²⁹ Pulzer, *Germany 1870-1945*, 36.

the German revolution the entire judicial system of the Wilhelmine period was transported unchanged to the Weimar era. The civil and criminal law codes were almost entirely unamended and attempts to liberalize them, such as abolishing the death penalty had failed. Most of the judges had formed their fundamental values and attitudes in the age of Kaiser Wilhelm II.³³⁰ Positivism, the autocratic nature of Wilhelmine administration and the career structure of the Judiciary all combined to create a German legal tradition which was conservative.³³¹ This in turn led the judges to be highly conservative and in their eyes the purpose of the law was to uphold the existing institutions of the state and society rather than to act as an impartial referee.³³²

8.2 Court Favoritism for the Right

After years of treating Social Democratic and left liberal groups during the Wilhelmine period, as criminals, judges were reluctant to readjust their attitudes when the political situation have changed. They sided overwhelmingly with those right wing offenders who also claimed to be acting in the name of the abstract ideal of “Reich”.³³³ As the result of the early events that surrounded the establishment of the Republic demonstrated, like the Spartacist uprising in Berlin, red terror and the hostage shootings in Munich, Communists shared the same fate with the Social Democrats.³³⁴ The judges demonstrated clearly that they perceived political crimes committed for patriotic reasons as meriting only mild punishments, while the left wingers who had challenged the bourgeois order were awarded draconian penalties. For instance in 1920s, a Communist was sentenced to four weeks imprisonment for labeling the Weimar Republic as a robber's republic, while a völkish activist who called it a Jew's republic merely received a fine of 70 marks.³³⁵

A salient example of court favoritism for the cause of the reactionary right was the trial of Hitler for the attempted Beer Hall Putsch. A well known nationalist George Neithardt was appointed as the judge in this case by the Ministry of Justice. Neithardt allowed Hitler bully and insult prosecution witnesses and the state prosecutor failed to call a

³³⁰ Evans, *Third Reich*, 135.

³³¹ Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 33.

³³² Evans, *Third Reich*, 15.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 135.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 336.

³³⁵ Peukert, *Classical Modernity*, 223.

number of key figures whose testimony would have proven damaging to the defense case.³³⁶ At the end of the trial the judges had a difficult time in persuading the three lay members of the court; a stationer and two insurance agents, to pass a guilty verdict. They consented in the end but only on the understanding that Hitler would serve only part of any sentence passed.³³⁷ Article 81 of the German penal code said whosoever attempts to alter by force the constitution of the German Reich or of any other German state shall be punished by lifelong imprisonment but Hitler was sentenced only to 5 years imprisonment in the old fortress of Landsberg.³³⁸ Hitler and his associates got away with lighter sentences. What was more important, the court grounded its leniency in the fact that, it declared, the participants in the putsch were led in their action by a pure patriotic spirit and *the most noble will*.³³⁹ Another example of court favoritism for the right wing reactionaries was the lenient treatment of the judiciary vis-à-vis the people who were involved with the Kapp Putsch. After the failed attempt, the government charged 705 people with high treason, only one, a police president of Berlin, received a sentence; a five years of “honorary confinement”³⁴⁰ With regard to the Ulm trial where three young German army officers got caught while disseminating Nazi propaganda items, the judiciary again sided with the reactionary right. The soldiers were found guilty of conspiring to commit high treason and given the mild sentence of eighteen months of fortress detention.³⁴¹

In the end those responsible for every one of the left wing murders were brought to court, ten were executed and twenty eight others received sentences averaging fifteen years. Of the right wing murders, 326 never solved, fifty killers confessed but of these more than half were acquitted despite confession and twenty four received sentences averaging four months. Thanks to the court favoritism the right in short, could practice violence with little fear or legal retribution.³⁴²

³³⁶ Evans, *Third Reich*, 195.

³³⁷ Evans and Jenkins, *Years of Weimar*, 62.

³³⁸ Shirer, *The Rise and Fall*, 78.

³³⁹ Evans, *Third Reich*, 196.

³⁴⁰ Shirer, *The Rise and Fall*, 60.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 141.

³⁴² Johnson, *Modern Times*, 126.

8.3 Disaffection of the Civil Servants and Their Support for Nazis

Apart from their rejection of transferring their loyalties from the Wilhelmine Reich to the Republic, the civil servants were disaffected from the republic because of the economic reasons. Even well before the onset of the Great Depression, the economic situation which was marked by inflation drove the government to drastically reduce government expenditure. This has led to a wave of dismissals in the state sector. This led the civil servants finally to rose up and in February 1922, for the first and last time in German history major civil servants went in to a strike.³⁴³ The Finance Minister Hans Luther took urgent measures to curb inflation and balance the budget, which included the sacking of 900.000 civil servants and public employees.³⁴⁴ As a result, anxiety and disillusion with the Republic became widespread in the civil service, which was only earning 44.5% of their prewar real income in 1923.³⁴⁵ Especially during the Great Depression, between 1930-32 Chancellor Brüning's policy of reform badly affected the school teachers. By 1932 over 6600 teaching positions were eliminated in the Prussian elementary school system alone.³⁴⁶ Prussian Schutzpolizei which was the nearest thing there was to a republican guard during the Republican era was disappointed from the Republic again due to the economic conditions. They saw their post retirement rights withered away under the impact of cuts in the state budgets.³⁴⁷ In their day to day dealings and decisions, where their discretion permitted, civil servants favored solutions sprang from social and political ideals other than those for which Republic stood.³⁴⁸ In the words of the German historian Martin Broszat; "They had been unable to reconcile with the party state of the Weimar Republic their traditional conception of the "servant of the state" as the guardian and the representative of a disciplined society."³⁴⁹

All these points of resentments induced the civil servants to support the Nazis. American sociologist Theodore Abel examined a sample from 581 essays in the "Why I became a Nazi competition". In his sample civil servants were easily the most

³⁴³ Bessel, *War to Dictatorship*, 22.

³⁴⁴ Evans and Jenkins, *Years of Weimar*, 62.

³⁴⁵ Evans, *Third Reich*, 243.

³⁴⁶ Marjorie Lamberti, "German school teachers, National Socialism and the politics of culture at the end of Weimar Republic", *Central European History*, Vol. 34, No.1(2001), 56-57.

³⁴⁷ Evans, *Rereading*, 76.

³⁴⁸ Peukert, *Classical Modernity*, 225.

³⁴⁹ Lee, *Weimar*, 20.

overrepresented occupational group, four times as likely to be Nazis as Germans as a whole. Among the 54 full time Nazi Gauleiter up to 1928, 56% had previously worked as civil servants or as state employed teachers, rising to over 60% thereafter, five times the representation of other persons comparable social status.³⁵⁰ One explanation says Weimar civil servants were ripe for the picking by the Nazis because they already preferred the executive to the legislative part of the state. The interests of the state were higher than party political interests for them. When democracy started to weaken, their self perception of the guardian of the state waxed stronger, enabling civil servants to usurp the role of politicians in the post 1930 authoritarian governments of Brüning, Papen, Schleicher and fomenting Nazi sympathies in the service.³⁵¹

Strong civil servant support for the Nazis was no surprise given Nazis' special emphasis on propaganda that would appeal to this sector of the German society. The Nazis claimed they were not content simply to preserve existing privileges and benefits for the civil service but they would do everything they could to reestablish all the rights that have been taken from the *Beamtentum*. Nazi propaganda aimed at civil servants also constantly stressed the erosion of civil service status under the Weimar system.³⁵²

After the Second World War the Nazi sympathies of the Weimar civil servants were reiterated by General Lucius Clay, the American Military Commander with the following words;

Our major administrative problem was to find reasonably competent Germans who had not been affiliated or associated in some way with the Nazi regime... All too often it seems that the only men with the qualifications are the career civil servants a great proportion of whom were more than nominal participants, by our definition, in the activities of the Nazi Party.³⁵³

The civil service and the Judiciary played a significant role in the collapse of the first German democracy. Both had deep roots of conservatism dating back to the period of the Kaiserreich. Especially the favoritism of the courts for the right wing thugs which provided the enemies of the Republic the free hand that they needed and the Nazi sympathies of the civil servants were crucial factors that brought the fragile democracy to its knees.

³⁵⁰ Mann, *Fascists*, 163.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 164.

³⁵² Childers, 348.

³⁵³ Tony Judt, *Postwar, a history of Europe since 1945* (London: Vintage, 2010; henceforth *Postwar*), 56.

CHAPTER NINE

The Party Politics

9.1 Political Parties and Social Milieus in Kaiserreich

The political milieu out of which the Weimar political parties emerged had been in existence since the early days of Bismarckian era. These milieus, with their party newspapers, clubs and societies, were providing their members with a way of life that was rigid and homogenous.³⁵⁴ Some sociologists like Rainer Lepsius regarded this rigid milieus as a heritage acting as an obstacle for the integration of the different social groups in to the new German Republic due to the widely exercised practices that led to the isolation of group members from the institutions and values of the Imperial Germany.³⁵⁵ The political system set up in 1871 only widened the existing cleavages in the German society, political parties were organized around discrete, particularistic social groups and national political structures were not strong or responsive enough to overcome social divisions.³⁵⁶ From Bismarck's time onwards German political parties exhibited two major weaknesses. First they tended to focus on particular and relatively narrow socioeconomic groups. Workers, large landowners, large industrialists and Catholics all had their own political parties specifically working for their own interests. Instead of reconciling the interests of different groups in the German society or working for a national unity, the parties reflected and even deepened the divisions within the society. Second, especially the bourgeois parties in Germany never fully adopted themselves to the era of mass politics. Instead they retained an elite organizational style and failed to develop strong grassroots organizations.³⁵⁷

Broadly speaking there were four major political camps at the end of the 19th century in Germany, each corresponding with its own social milieu. The conservative camp had its roots in East Elbian agrarian society, which was Protestant and dominated by big landowners. The national liberals received support from urban areas which are

³⁵⁴ Evans, *Third Reich*, 85.

³⁵⁵ Stephenson, *Sonderweg*, 82.

³⁵⁶ Sheri Berman, "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic", *World Politics*, Vol. 49, no.3 (1997) 410.

³⁵⁷ Berman, 420.

Protestant and populated by the middle class. The Center Party was associated with Catholics from all social classes. The Social Democrats were originally rooted in the older industrial districts in the Ruhr.³⁵⁸

9.2 Political Parties in Weimar Republic

All the older parties bore the legacy of the prewar semi authoritarian Kaiserreich. Since the Reichstag had not controlled the executive, its parties had not been ultimately responsible for policy. They had little experience in compromising with each other in order to produce a policy outcome since the Kaiser's ministers had made the necessary deals.³⁵⁹ Weimar's six party system was essentially a continuation of the five party system that had existed under the empire, with the addition of the Communists.³⁶⁰ Hence the political instability of the 1920s and 1930s owed more to structural continuities with the politics of Bismarckian and Wilhelmine eras rather than to the novel provisions of the Weimar Constitution.³⁶¹

It would be very useful to describe the divided atmosphere of the Weimar political scene before elaborating on the Weimar political parties in order to better understand under what kind of political atmosphere that those parties have been operating in. There were Protestants and Catholics with memories of the Reformation and the Thirty Years War. Liberals, even though a dwindling group, still insisted on being represented with two different parties. Bavarians and the Prussians had serious differences between each other. This was one of the main problems of the Republican Germany that there were too many particularisms and too few grounds for consensus.³⁶² In such a divided political atmosphere, for instance even the attempts to pass a national holiday bill created a passionate debate. The Reichsrat decided in favor of Constitution Day, the Reichstag debated the issue with great emotional zeal only to end up postponing a final decision. Many historians interpreted the chronic political deadlock over the national holiday bill as a symptom of the social and political fragmentation of the Weimar

³⁵⁸ Peukert, *Classical Modernity*, 147.

³⁵⁹ Mann, *Fascists*, 192.

³⁶⁰ Evans, *Rereading*, 57.

³⁶¹ Evans, *Third Reich*, 85.

³⁶² Stephenson, *Sonderweg*, 96.

society.³⁶³

One of the most important factors that had contributed to the weakening of democracy in the Weimar Republic was the pathetic situation that the so called “Weimar Coalition Parties” found themselves in. When one observes the situation of the Weimar Coalition Parties, one could easily come to the grim conclusion that rather than invigorating the democracy, they contributed to its downfall. The three parties which comprised the Weimar coalition entered the government with different intentions. The Social Democrats looked for the ways to defend the gains of the revolution and to secure a strong position for the organized labor in the new republic. The Liberals wanted to act as a break on socialist initiatives on the one hand and support parliamentary democracy on the other. Center Party was concerned to protect private property and the position of the Catholic Church as well as the federal structure of the Reich.³⁶⁴

Social Democratic Party was reluctant to admit that it no longer regarded revolution a necessity because it was fearing that KPD would accuse it of abandoning the working class. So it clung to the rhetoric of Marxism. But the fatal ills of SPD were complacency and parochialism. Instead of making an effort to transform the party into one that could appeal to all classes and rally them to the defense of the Republic, it acted as if it owed responsibility only to the working class.³⁶⁵ The Social Democrats starting from 1930s tolerated a deflationary economic strategy which included severe cuts in welfare benefits, they also accepted a growing propensity to invoke decree laws under article 48 of the constitution. The SPD justified its stance as toleration of the lesser evil, Hitler being the greater but experience of Brüning's lesser evil brought increasing numbers of Germans to the end of their patience³⁶⁶ What was unfortunate for the Socialists was the fact that they were out of the government during the relatively stable years of the Republic, from mid to later 1920s and only came back to enter the government in 1928 to face the economic crisis.³⁶⁷

Democratic Party was sliding more and more towards the right. From the beginning

³⁶³ Achilles, 677.

³⁶⁴ Bessel, *War to Dictatorship*, 19.

³⁶⁵ Craig, *Germany*, 500-502.

³⁶⁶ Fischer, *The Rise*, 27.

³⁶⁷ Stephenson, *Sonderweg*, 83.

DDP had a hard time to explain to the people what it stood for and why. After the party had started to lose its position in the Parliament and its Reichstag representation fell to 25 seats, the internal homogeneity of the party was lost and a drift to right was started in 1924. As the republic entered its last phase, DDP was even flirting with the Young German Order; an anti-republican, anti-Semitic offshoot of the Youth Movement.³⁶⁸ The other liberal party DVP can be characterized as the party of the national liberal bourgeoisie. It was the parliamentary stronghold of big industry with well known industrialists as its representatives in the Reichstag.³⁶⁹ One of the many tragedies of the Weimar Republic was that the liberal democracy of the constitution was not underpinned by a strong and cohesive liberal party. To the left of center, DDP represented political and social freedoms while DVP, on the right merged liberal economic theory with rationalism and authority. These two parties rarely collaborated.³⁷⁰ Neither of them was able to get the support of the middle classes which should have been their natural constituency. In part this was because they were never able to appeal to the diverse social and economic interests which constituted the material base of the middle classes. The result was a devastating change in voting behavior, as after 1928, the DDP and DVP lost almost all their electoral support to Nazis.³⁷¹

And the final one of the Weimar Coalition parties was the Center Party. The Center Party was first a potential ally of SPD. In their different ways, both parties had struggled against the inequalities of the Imperial Germany. But the most significant flaw of the Center Party was its readiness to compromise with more authoritarian circles in Germany in order to save Church's place in the new republic. Its swing to the right occurred in two stages. In 1928 Monsignor Kaas took over from Wilhelm Marx as party leader, emphasizing the party's clerical attachments and undermining its ability to reconcile the moderate parties on secular issues. Then after 1930, the Center displayed an unfortunate willingness to adapt to Presidential dictatorship. Once Müller had withdrawn the SPD from government, Brüning was content to rely upon President Hindenburg to issue emergency decrees under article 48 of the constitution. Thus after playing a key role in upholding democracy, the Center delivered the first blows against

³⁶⁸ Craig, *Germany*, 504.

³⁶⁹ Arends and Kümmel, *Conditions*, 197.

³⁷⁰ Lee, *Weimar*, 22.

³⁷¹ Lee, *Dictatorships*, 162.

it.³⁷²

The conservative DNVP played its part in the destruction of democracy in Weimar as well. It was a right wing party which contained elements from the old conservative parties and some of the racist and anti-Semitic groups like Pan German League.³⁷³ It had realized that to assume the responsibilities of government was a sharp decline in popular support. Compared with the result in December 1924, the DNVP lost nearly one third of its vote in May 1928. As a result the party joined the radical opposition to the republic. Under the leadership of Alfred Hugenberg Germany's conservatives started a course that would lead to a coalition with Hitler.³⁷⁴ The party's core of support in the East Elbian landowning class was neither an opposition that is loyal to the Republic nor fond of an idea of a democratic Germany. As long as DNVP has been operating within the margins of Weimar politics, this was not posing a great threat to the Republic but when it has started to align itself tactically with the Nazis from 1929, it would prove faithful.³⁷⁵

In its early years the Weimar Republic had held together because the formerly anti-system parties, the Socialists and the Catholic Center Party, had joined with some of the bourgeois parties in a broad coalition. When the Socialists left the coalition, if the bourgeoisie parties been genuinely liberal and conservative in the broadest sense, they might have widened their appeal. But instead, like their predecessors, their leaderships chose to stick on their narrow support bases.³⁷⁶

Two parties had actively worked for the destruction of democracy in the Weimar Germany; Communist Party and the National Socialists. Extremists on both left and right saw the Weimar democracy not as an end in itself but the incidental means by which a new Germany was to be created, whether as a Socialist utopia or as the national community of a *volk*.³⁷⁷ According to the Communists, every German government was fascist, fascism was the political expression of capitalism and the Social Democrats were social fascists because they were the main supporters of

³⁷² Ibid., 162.

³⁷³ Layton, *Bismarck to Hitler*, 84.

³⁷⁴ Bessel, *War to Dictatorship*, 29.

³⁷⁵ Stephenson, *Sonderweg*, 82.

³⁷⁶ Mann, *Fascists*, 192.

³⁷⁷ Lamb and Phelan, *The Birth of Modernism*, 1995.

capitalism, taking workers away from revolutionary commitment and reconciling them to the Weimar Republic. For the KPD, anything which would help overthrow the fascist state and its social democratic supporters was welcome.³⁷⁸ The tragedy of the extreme leftist position was revealed in the rhetoric of the Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund (ISK), which was founded as one of the splinter groups that operated in the margins between SPD and KPD. ISK responded to the rise of fascism across Europe by openly disavowing parliamentary democracy. ISK leaders argued that their only opponents were all those reactionaries who support pure democracy.³⁷⁹ KPD leader Thalmann hoped that if Hitler were to achieve power, he would soon be overthrown by a proletarian revolution organized by KPD. In this sense, a fascist regime would be a temporary development. As far as Thalmann was concerned, there was no reason to cooperate with the other parties in preventing the accession of Hitler.³⁸⁰ The party, especially after 1928, displayed a tendency to borrow and adapt terms from the Nazis. Ernst Thalmann became at times “Führer” and the Nazis’ fondness for variations of Volk surfaced in Communist formulations such as Arbeitervolk.³⁸¹ But more important than this, KPD never forgot the experience of 1919. In December 1918, the Independent Socialists withdrew from the government, while the Spartacists, who started to call themselves Communists, demanded “Sovietization of Germany” and the continuation of the revolution. The SPD put down subsequent Spartacist demonstrations in January 1919 and during the ensuing violence the two prominent Communists, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were killed. A second Spartacist uprising was suppressed with much greater bloodshed in March and in April when the troops were sent to overthrow the Republic of Soviets which had just been proclaimed in Bavaria.³⁸²

The National Socialists never made any secret of their desire to dismantle parliamentary democracy and to abolish a wide range of the legal and civil rights which had been granted by or earned from government in Germany over the centuries. The SA and other elements of the movement broke the law and undermined the orderly working of society. They contributed to the atmosphere of tension, fear and hatred which

³⁷⁸ Evans, *Third Reich*, 243.

³⁷⁹ Bailey, 459.

³⁸⁰ Lee, *Dictatorships*, 163.

³⁸¹ Childers, 350.

³⁸² Lee, *Dictatorships*, 153.

pervaded into the Weimar's dying years.³⁸³ Unlike the other parties in Germany the Nazis did not have the constraints of regionalism, denominationalism and class divisions. By 1932 they were the only party which had following in every region of Germany. As Geoff Layton put it; “Nazis became Germany's first genuine Volkspartei, or broad based people's party.”³⁸⁴

Nazism was not only new, modern and dynamic but also it was traditional and conservative. Above all it was both revolutionary and reactionary since it wished to destroy the republic while at the same time promising a return to a glorious past.³⁸⁵

9.3 Political Language in Weimar Republic

A destructive practice for the Weimar democracy was the violent rhetoric and images that were employed by the Weimar political parties while they were addressing their political opponents. All over Germany, electors were exposed to violent images of giant workers smashing their opponents to pieces, kicking them aside, throwing them out of Parliament or looming over frock coated and top hatted politicians who were almost universally portrayed as insignificant and quarrelsome pygmies. Whatever the intention, the underlying message was that it was time for parliamentary politics to come to an end.³⁸⁶ Nazis was on the forefront of employing a violent rhetoric in politics. They advocated a policy of mixed ethnic and *political* cleansing. They said they would “do away” with, “eliminate”, “crush”, “the Marxist Capitalist Jewish extortion system” and “the black red internationalism” that kept German nation divided. They promised to “knock all their heads together” to secure social peace.³⁸⁷ Bourgeoisie parties also tried to generate a sense of middle class unity by attacking, with varying degrees of radicalism, the Marxist left and embracing the cause of German nationalism. In a typical DDP leaflet addressed to the German middle class in 1924, for example the party warned the bourgeoisie electorate about the Socialists and the Communists who wanted to ruin the Mittelstand and went on to claim credit for frustrating repeated Marxist efforts to expropriate the middle class since the revolution

³⁸³ Fischer, *The Rise*, 93.

³⁸⁴ Layton, *Bismarck to Hitler*, 142.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 142.

³⁸⁶ Evans, *Third Reich*, 291.

³⁸⁷ Mann, *Fascists*, 179.

of 1918. All parties actively engaged in recruiting rural support, sought to appeal to an assumed solidarity by focusing on the threats to the German peasantry from hostile social and political interests; the Marxists, the bankers, the Jews and the urban liberals.³⁸⁸ Pressures were intense to take sides in the polarized political environment so that those who wanted to avoid open political commitment found it nearly impossible. One of these was Wassily Kandinsky who reflected on the situation as follows; “This is really a stupid time. The Communists call everyone who doesn’t go along with them a fascist, the Nazis call a Marxist.”³⁸⁹

In such a violent atmosphere even the political gains which could easily be regarded as successes in other times could be presented as political failures by the opposing parties. An example of this was the political success that Stresemann won in Locarno. Let alone accepting the treaty as a foreign policy success, Nazis spread rumors that Stresemann's sister in law was married to the French Premier Poincare and suggested that assassination was the only appropriate reply to the “treason” of Locarno.³⁹⁰

The political parties with their long established traditions of sectarianism, lack of compromise and the divisive political language, undoubtedly contributed to the downfall of the very system, democracy that transformed their own position from almost irrelevance in Kaiserreich in to the participants of decision making and legislation process in the new republic. If one is looking for a tragedy in Weimar Republic, this stands as a good candidate.

³⁸⁸ Childers, 347-348.

³⁸⁹ Lidtke, 81-82.

³⁹⁰ Craig, *Germany*, 519.

CONCLUSION

Weimar Experience and Lessons For the Post Second World War Europe

As I tried to explain so far, the Kaiserreich had left a very significant anti-democratic legacy to the Weimar Republic illustrated by the latter's fragility of its democracy. The long term factors of authoritarian Prussian tradition, the effects of the Treaty of Versailles, the divisive cultural scene, anti-Semitism, social Darwinism, nationalism, the weak constitution, disposition of the military, judiciary and the civil servants to the right and the radical political scene all combined to create an atmosphere where the fragile republic found itself unable to function and vulnerable to the attacks from left and right. Under the pressure of those developments the Republic finally collapsed and replaced by one of the most brutal regimes that history has ever seen; Hitler's Third Reich. Now, in the conclusion part of my thesis, I am turning my attention to the lessons that Europe in general and Federal Germany in particular drawn from the tragic experiences of Weimar democracy.

The way to practice the profession of politics has not only undergone an enormous revolution after the Second World War, but the very foundations of Europe has been shaken because of the Second World War experience. That's why it is not always possible to distinguish specifically which lessons have been drawn from the heartbreaking experiences of Weimar democracy and the horrible experiences of the Second World War. Usually those lessons are related with one another as the two events, the tragic fall of Weimar Democracy and the Second World War, that gave birth to those valuable lessons were intricately interconnected. It would be useful to start this conclusion with the following quote from Tony Judt to better understand how the fear of “returning to the old demons” shaped the new Europe;

It was to head off a return of the old demons; unemployment, Fascism, German militarism, war and revolution, that Western Europe took the new path with which we are now familiar. Post national, welfare state, cooperative, pacific Europe was not born of the optimistic, ambitious, forward looking project imagined in fond retrospect by today's Euro-idealists. It was the insecure child of anxiety. Shadowed by history, its leaders implemented social reforms and built new institutions as a prophylactic, to keep the past at bay.³⁹¹

³⁹¹ Judt, *Postwar*, 6.

One of the most important changes of the post Second World War Europe was the transformation of the concept of democracy from a vice to a virtue. From Italy in the south to the Scandinavian countries in the north, parliamentary democracy became the standard model of political organization.³⁹² As a stark contrast to the European intellectual environment in which the Weimar Germany had to operate, the postwar Europe saw the Monarchs, Presidents and Judges to be discredited. Instead it was parliaments as the assemblies of the directly elected representatives of the undifferentiated mass of the citizenry which became the locus of the new political process. Failure of interwar democracy and the electoral rise of anti-democratic movements such as Nazism presented lessons that the new rulers of Europe were eager to learn. That's why the post war parliamentarism aimed at being inclusive rather than exclusive. The proportional representation, which was seen as the main weakness of the interwar democracies, started to be seen in postwar Europe in a new light in which it was perceived as a system that can guard against the danger of a single party dictatorship by providing space for several different political parties in the parliament.³⁹³ An important indication of the widespread acceptance of the idea of democracy was the establishment of European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which was established not by coercive power politics but by the conscious choice of the newly established or re-established democracies which wanted to consolidate democracy at home, as Andrew Moravcsik indicated, by “locking in” the domestic political status quo against their non-democratic opponents.³⁹⁴ Tony Judt explained the new appeal of democracy in post war Europe with the following words;

In the cold light of peace, the dull compromise of constitutional democracy took on a new appeal. What made people longed for in 1945 was social progress and renewal, to be sure, but combined with the reassurance of stable and familiar political forms. Where the First World War had a politicizing , radicalizing effect, its successor produced the opposite; a deep longing for normality.³⁹⁵

The post Second World War situation and the dawning of the Cold War inevitably shaped the new Federal German Republic. A fundamental shift occurred within the West German political culture during the post Second World War period by the efforts

³⁹² Martin Conway, “Democracy in Postwar Western Europe: The triumph of a political model”, *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 32, no.1(2002), 59.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁹⁴ Andrew Moravcsik, “The origins of human rights regimes: democratic delegation in postwar Europe”, *International Organizations*, Vol. 54, no. 2(2000), 243-244.

³⁹⁵ Judt, *Postwar*, 82.

of the occupations forces and above all by Konrad Adenauer, but it should not be forgotten that the geographical location had played its part as well. The Federal Republic was created in the most modern part of Germany. The new West German state was geographically located in such a place where the bedrock of authoritarianism; the Junker dominated East was left out of its territory. That's why it didn't have the problem of East Elbian anti-democratic conservative elements which its predecessor, the Weimar Republic had to deal with.³⁹⁶

Language of politics in Weimar Germany was radical, divisive and extreme. It was a pretty common practice to vilify one's opponents by using an inciting language. But the post war Europe had learned an important lesson from Weimar experience in this issue. The atmosphere of the new age was well reflected by an instruction booklet prepared by BBC for internal use in 1948. The booklet contained instructions which prohibited jokes about religion, effeminacy in men and sexual allusions of any kind.³⁹⁷ Since most parties and journals of Fascist and even ultraconservative persuasion were banned in many parts of Europe, except the Iberian peninsula, public expressions of political allegiance were mainly confined to the center and left of political spectrum.³⁹⁸ As a stark contrast to their predecessors prominent conservative Christian Democratic leaders like Maurice Schuman and Georges Bidault in France, Alcide de Gasperi in Italy and Konrad Adenauer in the German Federal Republic employed a moderate political rhetoric and emphasized the importance of reconciliation and stability.³⁹⁹ Antisemitism was one of the most salient examples of how a radical language had been employed as a political tool for the radical political parties to scorn their enemies. The Federal Republic's political scene saw, during the immediate post Second World War period, a new phenomenon; philo-semitism, until it had eroded in late 1970s.⁴⁰⁰ The philo-semitism of the immediate post war period was accompanied by a new sensitivity towards language. In 1949 First President of the Federal Republic Theodore Heuss said; "How can one even defend uttering the word "Jew" in the manner, suggestively

³⁹⁶ Michael Bernhard, "Democratization in Germany", *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 8, no. 2(2001), 397.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 229.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 198.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 80.

⁴⁰⁰ Frank Stern, "Antisemitic and Philosemitic discourse in Postwar Germany", *Folia Linguistica*, Vol.27, Issue 3 / 4(1993), 280.

repeated, that was so common during the Nazi period?”⁴⁰¹ During the 1950s the word “Jewess” disappeared from the everyday German language. When people spoke about the Jews, they felt compelled to use an elevated language in order not to run the risk of being labeled as an anti-Semite.⁴⁰² The other phenomenon that bear witness to the transformation of the political language in Germany was race and racism. One of the most fundamental aspects of post war education in Federal Republic was the fight against racism. As a result of this educational effort, the use of national stereotypes became unthinkable. Most Germans who were exposed to this new kind of education even denied their own identity; that they, like the other nations, constitute a recognizable distinct social group. Many German intellectuals claimed that German nation transcended the concept of nationhood.⁴⁰³ However this hasn't meant that the German nationalism has disappeared forever. It transformed itself in to peace movement in Germany which expressed a strong opposition both to the United States and the Soviet Union's policies which made Germany a major battleground during the Cold War. This new kind of nationalism which had manifested itself in the form of neutralism was part of a European phenomenon and contrary to the nationalism during the Weimar Republic it was mainly employed not by the Right but by the Left.⁴⁰⁴

Another development in the post war Europe which was closely associated with the changing language of politics was the constant stress on unity and the emergence of the politics of compromise. As the Fascists were out of the picture now the breadth of the political spectrum had narrowed and this, as opposed to the Weimar experience, led to a culture of power sharing and compromise within a parliamentary culture.⁴⁰⁵ One of the best examples that demonstrated this new mood for unity was the German Christian Democratic Party. Rather than a denominational one, the bourgeoisie politicians of the post war Germany took an important decision to establish a non-denominational Christian Democratic Party and bridging the divide between Catholic and Protestant Germans which had undermined the center right of German politics since the 19th

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, 281.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 282.

⁴⁰³ Lothar Kettenacker, *Germany since 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997; henceforth *Since 1945*), 174.

⁴⁰⁴ David Roberts, “Nationalism, Neutralism and the Peace Movement in West Germany”, *Social Alternatives*, Vol. 3, Issue 2 (1983), 33.

⁴⁰⁵ Conway, 60.

century.⁴⁰⁶ The fundamental principle of the CDU/CSU coalitions' electoral policy was that it represented "all the Germans not only Catholics".⁴⁰⁷ Given Weimar Germany's extremely radical experiences with disunity, this mood of unity and harmony have lasted longer in Federal Germany compared to the other countries in Europe. 1980s saw the dissolution of the social fabric in Britain by the neo-liberal economic policies of Margaret Thatcher and the incorporation of extreme racism in to the political mainstream in France. In contrast, the Federal Republic of Germany was very sensitive to social harmony, the incorporation of regional interests and compromise. All of those points were built into its formal and informal political systems which made the above mentioned developments in France and Britain almost unthinkable in Germany.⁴⁰⁸ The concern to contain conflict molded the entire political culture of the Federal Germany. Social Market legislation was aimed at reducing the risk of labor conflict or the politicization of economic disputes. By a co-determination law of 1951, large firms in heavy industries of coal, steel and iron were obliged to include employee representatives on their supervisory boards, a practice that was extended to include other sectors.⁴⁰⁹

As the politics of compromise started to reign in the Bonn Republic, the ideological differences between the parties, as opposed to the Weimar Republic, started to shrink in the post war period. SPD has embraced the market economy and number of influential figures in the CDU accepted greater intervention of state in economic and social policy. A good example of the politics of compromise took place in 1966 when a combination of a minor recession and a crisis in the mining industry created a fragile economic situation. As a response to this CDU and SPD joined together and formed a Grand Coalition which had lasted for three years to alleviate the situation.⁴¹⁰ The party politics have taken shape in a stark contrast to the party politics in the Weimar Germany. Article 21 of the Basic Law, Federal Germany Constitution, recognized the crucial role of the political parties in the formation of the political will of the people.⁴¹¹ As a stark

⁴⁰⁶ Mark Roseman, "Division and Stability: The Federal Republic of Germany", in *20th Century Germany, politics, culture and society 1918-1990*, ed. Mary Fulbrook (UK: Oxford University Press, 2001; henceforth *Division and Stability*), 180.

⁴⁰⁷ Frank B. Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany since 1815* (London: Continuum, 2003; henceforth *A History*), 580.

⁴⁰⁸ Roseman, *Division and Stability*, 196.

⁴⁰⁹ Judt, *Postwar*, 266.

⁴¹⁰ Roseman, *Division and Stability*, 189.

⁴¹¹ Kettenacker, *Since 1945*, 126.

contrast to Weimar period, the political culture of parities was centrist in the Federal Republic. Especially the well functioning federal structure of the Bonn Republic provided an opportunity to the parties for cooperation due to the arrangement that never left them fully out of the government.⁴¹² The SPD's transformation and the CDU's political stance were salient examples of centrist transformation of German politics. SPD, which failed to transform itself from a party with a narrow working class base, finally in the post Second World War period have managed to make that transition and had become a cross-class Volkspartei.⁴¹³ With the 1959 Bad Godesberg party programme it formally reduced the weight of the much of the Marxist ideology of the party.⁴¹⁴ SPD retained its centrist stance until the party slid in to the left again due to the changing social composition in Germany in 1970s.⁴¹⁵ CDU had undergone a similar transformation in the post war period. It established a trans-regional, cross-denominational base in German politics. It managed to get votes from different geographical locations and classes in Germany. On the economic policy, on social services and welfare and especially on the still sensitive topics of the East-West divide, the CDU under Adenauer was firmly entrenched as an umbrella party of the majority center; a new departure in German political culture.⁴¹⁶ Given the discreditation of the radical right and the marginalization of the Communists, it was no surprise for the politics of center to emerge as a major power in German politics.⁴¹⁷

As the politics of compromise have started to reign supreme in post war Europe, the politics of anti climax have started to emerge and the profile of the politicians have started to change. The inter-war period saw the politics of climax to be embraced by the people of the many European countries. Concepts like “Führer” and “Il duce” were not only widespread but also well accepted by the considerable part of the populations. But in the post Second World War Europe there was an inescapable air of anti climax. Instead of charismatic leaders Europe was ruled by predominantly middle aged and middle class men in suits whose regular rotation of ministerial offices seemed only to reinforce their relative anonymity.⁴¹⁸ The horrible experiences of the first half of the

⁴¹² Ibid., 127.

⁴¹³ Judt, *Postwar*, 269.

⁴¹⁴ Roseman, *Division and Stability*, 189.

⁴¹⁵ Kettenacker, *Since 1945*, 146.

⁴¹⁶ Roseman, *Division and Stability*, 267.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 183.

⁴¹⁸ Conway, 60.

20th century have led the Europeans away from extreme solutions and even away altogether from politics. A clear manifestation of this was replacement of politics by economics as the goal and language of collective action.⁴¹⁹

One of the most crucial lessons that have been drawn in the post Second World War Europe was the choice, as opposed to the inter-bellum period, to integrate Germany in to the new political settlement of Europe. The Treaty of Versailles and the failure of the Allies to integrate the defeated Germany in to the post WWI international political settlement was, as I tried to demonstrate, one of the most important factors that contributed to the fall of the German democracy. But this time Allies opted for integration of Germany to the new political and economic settlement of Europe in order to prevent recurrence of such a catastrophe. The initial American approach after the war was to make sure, to put it with the then U.S Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau's words that;

Every person in Germany should realize that this time Germany is a defeated nation. It should be brought home to the Germans that Germany's ruthless warfare and the fanatical Nazi resistance has destroyed German economy and made chaos and suffering inevitable and that the Germans can not escape responsibility for what they have brought to themselves.⁴²⁰

If the Germans did not evade responsibility this time, the Allies did not fail in their planning to integrate the defeated Germany in to the new European settlement. U.S Marshall Plan was the key not only for the European integration but also for the political and economic integration of Germany into Europe. The logic of the plan required the lifting of all restrictions upon Western German production and output so that Germany can once again contribute to the European economy which was going to have a vital role to play in the emerging Cold War.⁴²¹ As opposed to the problematic rationale of the Treaty of Versailles, the post war American rationale saw the war reparations as a phenomenon to do away with. The American Secretary of State, George Marshall made clear from the outset that his plan meant an end to French hopes

⁴¹⁹ Judt, *Postwar*, 236.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

of war reparations from Germany. His main objective was to develop and integrate Germany not to make it a “dependent pariah”.⁴²² As Kettenacker put it;

The reconstruction of Germany was judged to be more in the interest of long term security than the dismantling of a few more German plants capable of producing armaments. The reparations issue, which had overshadowed the whole of the Weimar Republic and contributed to the breakdown of the first German democracy, dissipated within a few years of the end of the Second World War.⁴²³

But in order to avoid the recurrence of the tragic events of the interwar period such as German resentment and the rise of Hitler, as a result of frustrated efforts to extract reparations from Germany, French had to be persuaded that the new political and economic situation would be for the benefit of France. Even though it was a painstaking process for the French, this time France gave its consent to the integration of Germany to new Europe. French Foreign Minister Bidault's January 1948 speech was indicative of the new French approach. He said;

On the economic plane, but also on the political plane one must propose as an objective to the Allies and to the Germans themselves, the integration of Germany into Europe. It is the only means to give life and consistency to a politically decentralized but economically prosperous Germany.⁴²⁴

Within the framework of this thesis, the weaknesses of Weimar Constitution are presented as one of the factors that had subsequently led to the downfall of Weimar Germany. Post Second World War period saw major lessons have been drawn from the weaknesses of the Weimar Constitution. Post war period, had not only brought changes to the West German Constitution but it was generally, a period of European wide constitution making, comparable to the earlier ones of 1917-23, the 1860s and the time of the French revolution. In particular there were new constitutions in France in 1946, in Italy in 1947 and in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949 which were incorporating republicanism, regionalism, nationalization and other forms of economic regulation, progressive taxation and stronger protections for civil liberties.⁴²⁵ Especially in Germany the belief in constitution developed in to a sort of secular faith. As opposed to the Weimar constitution, the Basic Law united the Left and the Right and has

⁴²² Ibid., 99.

⁴²³ Kettenacker, *Since 1945*, 14.

⁴²⁴ Judt, *Postwar*, 117.

⁴²⁵ Geoff Eley, “Legacies of Antifascism: Constructing Democracy in Postwar Europe”, *New German Critique*, Issue 67 (1996), 81.

produced a patriotism, (Verfassungs Patriotismus) not based on a king or a country but based on the constitution.⁴²⁶

There were some similarities between the constitutions of the Weimar and Bonn Republics. Both were federal capitalist systems based on a proportional representation system in the lower house and a regionally based upper house. In almost every branch of law, the Weimar was taken as a precedent.⁴²⁷ But there were some very important changes in the Bonn constitution which was called as Basic Law in order to demonstrate its transitional nature. The most crucial innovation of the Basic Law was the destruction of Prussia. Since Prussia was associated with negative phenomena like militarism, discipline, unquestioning obedience to authority and asceticism, the new rulers of Germany decided to dissolve it with the new Federal structure.⁴²⁸

An important set of reforms concerned the way in which the popular will was expressed. Electoral system underwent an important transformation in which the list voting of Weimar was replaced with a mixed two vote system and an electoral threshold of 5% was introduced to deny the small parties the entry to the Parliament.⁴²⁹ In the new constitutional arrangement the Bundestag could not casually unseat a Chancellor and his government, to do so it was obliged to have ready in advance a candidate for the succession with sufficient parliamentary votes to assure his success. The purpose of this new arrangement was clearly to prevent the recurrence of the crisis ridden atmosphere of the Weimar Republic's political scene.⁴³⁰ The Parliamentary Council specifically refrained from providing the President with actual influence over the formation of the cabinet. The President was given the right to nominate a candidate for the chancellorship but his office was not to have any significant influence on the nomination of the Chancellor.⁴³¹ It was the parliament which received the exclusive

⁴²⁶ Kettenacker, *Since 1945*, 120.

⁴²⁷ Roseman, *Division and Stability*, 181.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁴²⁹ Roseman, *Division and Stability*, 182.

⁴³⁰ Judt, *Postwar*, 266.

⁴³¹ Hans Mommsen, "The Origins of Chancellor Democracy and the Transformation of the German Democratic Paradigm", *German Politics and Society*, Vol. 25, Issue 82, No.2 (2007), 10

right to elect the Chancellor and the responsibility was placed in to the political parties which were obliged to provide the necessary majority.⁴³²

Another major change in the post war Europe was the emergence of stable welfare states through out the Western part of the continent. The financial problems which were associated with the Welfare state were the major reason behind the fall of the last truly democratic government; the Grand coalition of Müller during the Weimar Germany and the welfare funds were employed as instruments to reward the loyal and to punish the political enemies during the Weimar period. But the postwar European settlement reflected a powerful commitment to social welfare. The development of democracy went hand in hand with the re-emergence of stable welfare states in Europe with the assumption that people can only exercise democratic rights effectively provided a minimum standard of living.⁴³³ What was crucial this time, the welfare state, as opposed to Weimar Germany, was not employed as a politically divisive tool but reemerged as a truly socially redistributive one. As Tony Judt put it; “Far from dividing the social classes against each other, the European Welfare state bound them closer together than ever before, with a common interest in its preservation and defense.”⁴³⁴ With the return of the economic growth to Europe, the new welfare arrangements had started to be based on sustainable foundations. With the reemerge of strong Welfare States Europeans had found the opportunity to eat more, live better, longer and healthier. They were better housed and clothed than ever before. And maybe the most important point that they felt more secure.⁴³⁵

As the new welfare states have started to provide a degree of security to the Europeans, it should come as no surprise that postwar Europe, as a stark contrast to the Weimar Germany, had managed to have a better integrated bureaucracy to the democratic norms, playing a stabilizing social role and a strong middle class. Again, contrast to the dwindling numbers of the civil servants due to the poor economic situation in Weimar Germany, in the post war Europe many countries had a rapidly growing public sectors when measured by government expenditure and the number of public sector

⁴³² Ibid., 11.

⁴³³ Eley, 83.

⁴³⁴ Judt, *Postwar*, 76.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 76.

employees.⁴³⁶ The huge public projects like the ones envisaged under Monnet Plan in France provided the tool for the integration of bureaucracy to the new European political settlement. Specifically instrumental was the Marshall aid which provided the funds for such projects.⁴³⁷ As Martin Conway put it;

In the 1930s these bureaucrats had been frustrated by the immobilism and perceived corruption of parliamentary regimes and had often been attracted by fashionable projects of authoritarian reform. After the war, however, they found a more congenial home in the new state structures of Western Europe, where the dominant ethos of expert government and incremental reform flattered the ambitions of civil servants and accorded them considerable freedom of action. Thus, for example, technocrats such as Jean Monnet played an influential role in devising state led policies of economic modernization during the French Fourth Republic.⁴³⁸

What was crucial for the Federal Republic was the transformation of the civil service from its conservative and anti-democratic state to a new state which was respectful to democracy. This transformation was revealed during an interview conducted by Robert Putnam in early 1970s. In this study only 2% of the German civil servants agreed with the statement that said “basically, it is not the parties and the parliament but rather the civil service which guarantees reasonably satisfactory public policy in this country.” Only 9 % of them agreed with the statement that “the general welfare of the country is seriously endangered by the continual clash of particularistic interest groups.” 47 % of the German civil servants agreed and another 29% of them agreed with reservation to the statement that said “ generally speaking, in political controversies, extreme positions should be avoided, since the right answer usually lies in the middle”.⁴³⁹ In addition to the transformation of the attitudes of the civil servants vis-à-vis democracy, another crucial development was the 1975 ruling of the German constitutional court. About the recruitment of the civil servants the court ruled that rejection of the candidate was admissible on the basis of membership of a political party that pursues aims hostile to the constitution.⁴⁴⁰ This was a clear lesson drawn from the Weimar experience in which a significant proportion of the civil servants were members of the Nazi Party. As we saw the issue had even created a crisis between the Prussian Minister of Interior Carl Severing who stated that holding of office in bureaucracy was incompatible with a

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 70.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 96.

⁴³⁸ Conway, 75.

⁴³⁹ Robert D. Putnam, “The political attitudes of Senior Civil Servants in Western Europe: A Preliminary Report”, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol 3, No.3 (1973), 270.

⁴⁴⁰ Kettenacker, *Since 1945*, 120.

membership to the Nazi Party or KPD and the Reich Chancellor Brüning who hold the opposite view.

The postwar middle class in the Federal Republic was developed precisely in opposition to the legacies of the past stressing, for example the moral duty to disobey orders which are left to be contrary to the dictates of conscience. The concept of Bundesbürger; the citizen of the Federal Republic was especially associated with the left liberal circles.⁴⁴¹ Beginning from 1960s a sense of the need for more openness and freedom had been steadily developing in West Germany among the educated middle class Germans. A clear indication in that period of the changing behavior patterns of the middle class was an affair known as the Spiegel affair in 1962. During the incident the government had infringed the rights of press and deceived the Parliament during the process. As opposed to the reactions of the German middle classes during the Weimar and even the Kaisereich periods, this time the public reactions clearly demonstrated that the characteristic German middle class behavior of approving government action as long as it kept the peace was now being replaced by a commitment to constitutionality and civil liberty.⁴⁴² As a result of the crisis the then Foreign Minister Franz Josef Strauss had to resign and Adenauer's own prestige was heavily shaken and he was replaced a year later by Ludwig Erhard. Another example of an emerging politically conscious strong middle class was the fierce extra-parliamentary opposition, which included the Socialist German Student League and the labor unions, against the National Emergency Act that was proposed by CDU/CSU in 1960. This extra-parliamentary opposition expressed a heavy criticism against the provisions for restricting the civil liberties during a state of defense, state of tension and state of internal emergency that the act envisaged by stating that those are serious threats to democratic rights. They even compared the Act to the emergency decrees which had undermined the Weimar Democracy.⁴⁴³

Another divisive element of the Weimar society was the issue of culture. The culture was heavily politicized during the Weimar Republic where it was employed as a tool by both the conservative and the liberal intellectuals to further their political aims.

⁴⁴¹ Roseman, *Division and Stability*, 83.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 190.

⁴⁴³ Tipton, *A History*, 594.

Impressionist writers, expressionist and Dadaist painters all used their arts to disseminate their political views. In a way the post Second World War debates about culture were a continuation of the already existing tendencies during the interwar period. The criticism of the “corrupting” influence of the American culture which was widespread during the period of Weimar Germany, continued to be aired by different parts of the society in the post Second World War Europe. Among European cultural elites there was a widespread sentiment that they shared a common culture to which America posed a threat.⁴⁴⁴ In 1952, for example, the Christian editors of *Espirit* reminded their readers the dangers posed by the American culture with the following words; “We have from the outset, warned of the dangers posed to our national well being by an American culture which attacks the very roots of the mental and moral cohesion of the peoples of Europe.”⁴⁴⁵

In another way post war culture in Federal Germany was a break with the past. In contrast to the Weimar culture, the culture of the Bonn Republic was a culture deliberately stripped of politics. The abstract expressionism that was adopted in the immediate post Second World War period in West Germany stood for realism. It was a realism without politics, concentrating on the struggle for survival in postwar Germany. Especially the American interests funded exhibitions of abstract art because it was non-figurative and politically silent.⁴⁴⁶ For the West German leaders it was very important that whatever the younger generation was doing, it should be non-political. Helmut Schelsky's research “Skeptical Generation” showed that the younger generation was proceeding in the way that their leaders desired. Schelsky expressed that German youth moved beyond belief in any particular ideology and asserted that they were rejecting the politicized stance of Weimar and Nazi generations. He mentioned that West German youth had rejected the utopian ideas like “community” and “wholeness” which the previous younger generations during the Weimar Germany had keenly sought. Schelsky concluded that West German youth was non-politically democratic.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁴ Judt, *Postwar*, 225.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁴⁴⁶ Tipton, *A History*, 523.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 539.

In Germany, the immediate post Second World War period was a period of isolation for the German intellectuals who had chosen to focus on specifically German issues and dilemmas. It is noteworthy to remember that Germany's only major figure from the pre-Nazi intellectual world, Karl Jaspers only contributed to a singularly German debate by his 1946 essay on the question of German Guilt. But a development which was more important than this was the West German intellectuals' deliberate avoidance of ideological politics during the first postwar decade.⁴⁴⁸ This was a stark contrast to the heavy politicization of the German intelligentsia during the Weimar Republic. Therefore with non political intellectuals, non political youth and a non political cultural forms, the cultural scene of the Federal Republic was inevitably non political in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War period.

Anyone who studies the Kaiserreich and the Weimar Germany will immediately understand the role that military has used to play in the German society. The way the Prussian officers act vis-à-vis the civilian politicians, the fact that Hindenburg and Ludendorff ruled Germany between 1916 and 1918 as virtual dictators and the perception of General Hans von Seeckt of the army as a state within state are all reminders of the extent the German army had managed to wield power in the German politics during the German history. That's why the role that the new German army after the Second World War will play was crucial for the foundation of a new democratic Germany.

It has been claimed that the seeds of German rearmament were sown as it became clear to the American and British military leaders that German manpower would be a crucial factor in stopping any Soviet invasion of Western Europe.⁴⁴⁹ Before the establishment of the new German army, Bundeswehr, Adenauer concerned over the reaction of his own conservative base from left and right which remained skeptical to the idea of German rearmament.⁴⁵⁰ Especially his difficult time of overcoming domestic objections from among the German population and the parties in the Bundestag about the German rearmament was a clear indication of the changing perception of Germans of the role of

⁴⁴⁸ Judt, *Postwar*, 205.

⁴⁴⁹ Leo J. Daugherty III, "The tip of the Spear: The formation and expansion of the Bundeswehr, 1949-1963", *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 24, No.1 (2011), 148.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 160.

the military in the Federal Republic.⁴⁵¹ The Bundestag and an office inside Federal Republic's bureaucracy called Amt Blank were given the task of forming the Bundeswehr. The Amt Blank addressed the issues of the new army's democratic basis and disavowed the principles that led to the catastrophe of 1933-45.⁴⁵²

From the outset the Bundeswehr's charter stated that the new army was to reflect the democratic principles of the Federal Republic. The Basic Law, which was based on the clear rejection of Germany's military past and which laid out the principles that later incorporated in the Innere Führung (integration of the democratic principles in to the new army), was applied to the new German army.⁴⁵³ The basic concepts of the Innere Führung were education and training of the new army as a team while at the same time rejecting the severity of the past abuses under the Wehrmacht and its Wilhelmian and Weimar predecessors. As Leo J. Daugherty put it;

The Inner Führung sought to prevent members of Bundeswehr from becoming involved in the nation's politics as did members of the Reichswehr during the 1920s. In short the new German army was to be representative of the new Germany and not become a law unto itself as it did in the 1920s under Hans von Seeckt. As a result, enlisted men and officers alike were to be schooled in the principles of democracy and respect for the individual.⁴⁵⁴

With the American persistence the serious French objections to the German rearmament were to be overcome and throughout 1950s, Konrad Adenauer and his advisers, most notably Theodore Blank, had managed to form a military free of Prussian militarism and Nazi ideology.⁴⁵⁵

As the military was re-founded on democratic principles, the Bonn Republic took an important step towards democratization in the post Second World War era. With all these postwar changes a new Germany emerged which was marked by politics of unity and compromise, strong welfare state, a bureaucracy with democratic values, a moderate political language, a military molded in democratic principles and a strong middle class. Without disregarding the peculiar conditions of the Cold War on this transformation, I believe the German political elite and the people should be given

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 166.

⁴⁵² Ibid., 168.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., 169.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 169.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 176.

credit for learning from their past mistakes. The weakness which had led to the collapse of the Weimar Republic has been redressed in the Bonn Republic by the new German elite and the new German middle class, as we saw in the Spiegel Affair, has learned not to bow to the state authority when the democratic principles of the new Germany were violated by the German politicians.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

- Craig, Gordon Alexander. *Germany 1866-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- Evans, David and Jenkins, Jane. *Years of Weimar and The Third Reich*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1999.
- Evans, Richard J. *Rereading German history : from unification to reunification, 1800-1996*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Fischer, Conan. *The Rise of the Nazis*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.
- Fullbrook, Mary. *German national identity after the Holocaust*. UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2002.
- Hewitson, Mark. *National Identity and Political Thought in Germany: Wilhelmine depictions of the French Third Republic, 1890-1914*. New York: Clarendon Press, 2000.
- Hidden, John. *Republican and Fascist Germany : themes and variations in the history of Weimar and the Third Reich, 1918-45*. London: Longman, 1996.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century*. London: Abacus, 1995.
- J. Evans, Richard. *The Coming of The Third Reich*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2003.
- James, Harold. *A German Identity, 1770 to the Present Day*. London: Phoenix Press, 2000.
- Johnson, Paul. *Modern Times: The world from twenties to the nineties*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1983.
- Joll, James. *Europe since 1870*. London: Penguin Books, 1983.
- Judt, Tony. *Postwar, a history of Europe since 1945*. London: Vintage, 2010.
- Kaes, Anton, Jay, Martin and Dimendberg, Edward. *The Weimar Republic Source book*. ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- Kettenacker, Lothar. *Germany since 1945*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Knox, Mac Gregor. *To the threshold of power, 1922/33 : Origins and dynamics of the*

- Fascist and National Socialist Dictatorships*. New York: Cambridge, 2007.
- Layton, Geoff. *From Bismarck to Hitler: Germany 1890-1933*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995.
- Lee, Stephen J. *European Dictatorship, 1918-1945*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Lee, Stephen J. *The Weimar Republic*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Mann, Michael. *Fascists*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Mazower, Mark. *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*. New York: Vintage Books, 2000.
- Niewyk, Donald L. *The Jews in Weimar Germany*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2001.
- Peukert, Detlev J.K. *The Weimar Republic, the crisis of classical modernity*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1993.
- Pulzer, Peter. *Germany 1870-1945, Politics, State Formation and War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Shirer, William L. *The Rise and Fall of The Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*. New York: Touchstone Book, 1962.
- Taylor, A.J.P. *The Course of German History: a survey of the development of German history since 1815*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Tipton, Frank B. *A History of Modern Germany since 1815*, London: Continuum, 2003.

ARTICLES

- Achilles, Manuela. "With a passion for reason: celebrating the constitution in Weimar Germany." in *Central European History*. Vol.43/4. 2010.
- Arends, Folko and Kümmel, Gerhard. "Germany: From Double Crisis to National Socialism." in Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Jeremy Mitchell (ed.). *Conditions of Democracy in Europe, 1919-1939*. London: Mac Millan Press, 2000.
- Bailey, Christian. "The European Discourse in Germany, 1939-1950: Three case studies." in *German History*. Vol. 28/4. 2010.
- Baldwin, Simeon E. "The Salient Points in the German Constitution of 1919." in *Michigan Law Review*. Vol. 18/8. 1920.

- Berman, Sheri. "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic.", in *World Politics*. Vol. 49/3. 1997.
- Bernhard, Michael. "Democratization in Germany." in *Comparative Politics*. Vol.8/2. 2001.
- Bessel, Richard. "Germany from War to Dictatorship." in Mary Fulbrook (ed.). *20th Century Germany, politics, culture and society 1918-1990*. UK: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Bodemann, Y. Michal. "Ethnos, race and nation: Werner Sombart, the Jews and classical German sociology." in *Patterns of Prejudice*. Vol. 44/2. 2010.
- Childers, Thomas. "The Social Language of Politics in Germany: The Sociology of Political Discourse in the Weimar Republic." in *American Historical Review*. Vol. 95/2. 1990.
- Conway, Martin. "Democracy in Postwar Western Europe: The triumph of a political model." in *European History Quarterly*. Vol. 32/1. 2002.
- Daugherty III, Leo J. "The tip of the Spear: The formation and expansion of the Bundeswehr, 1949-1963." in *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*. Vol.24/1.2011
- Dewilde, Marc. "The state of emergency in the Weimar Republic legal disputes over article 48 of the Weimar Constitution." in *Legal History Review*. Vol.78/1. 2010.
- Dyer, Richard. "Less and more than women and men: Lesbian and gay cinema in Weimar Germany." in *New German Critique*. Vol. 51. 1990.
- Eley, Geoff. "Bismarckian Germany." in Gordon Martel (ed.). *Modern Germany Reconsidered 1870-1945*. New York:Routledge, 1992.
- Eley, Geoff. "Legacies of Antifascism: Constructing Democracy in Postwar Europe." in *New German Critique*. Issue 67.1996.
- Fischer, Conan. "Continuity and Change in the Post-Wilhelmine Germany from the 1918 Revolution to the Ruhr Crisis.", in Geoff Eley (ed.). *Wilhelminism and Its Legacies: German Modernities, Imperialism and the Meanings of Reform, 1890-1930*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2003.
- Herwig, Holger H. "Industry, Empire and The First World War." in Gordon Martel (ed.). *Modern Germany Reconsidered 1870-1945*. New York:Routledge, 1992.
- Hill, Lewis E., Butler, Charles E. and Lorenzen, Stephen E. "Inflation and the destruction of democracy: the case of Weimar Republic." in *Journal of Economic Issues*. Vol. 11/2. 1977.
- Joffe, Josef. "The Continuities From Frederick the Great to the Federal Republic." in Robert A Pastor (ed.). *A Century's Journey: How the Great Power Shaped the World*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.

- Jones, Larry Eugene. "Culture and Politics in the Weimar Republic" in Gordon Martel (ed.). *Modern Germany Reconsidered 1870-1945*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Jones, Larry Eugene. "Franz von Papen, the German Center Party and the Failure of Catholic Conservatism in the Weimar Republic." in the *Central European History*. Vol.38/2. 2005.
- Lamb, Stephen and Phelan, Anthony. "Weimar Culture: The Birth of Modernism", in Rob Burns (ed.). *German Cultural Studies: An introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Lamberti, Marjorie. "German school teachers, National Socialism and the politics of culture at the end of Weimar Republic." in *Central European History*. Vol. 34/1. 2001.
- Langewiesche, Dieter. "Nature of German Liberalism." in Gordon Martel (ed.). *Modern Germany Reconsidered 1870-1945*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Lehmann, Sibylle. "Chaotic shop talk or efficient parliament? The Reichstag, the parties and the problem of governmental instability in the Weimar Republic." in *Public Choice*. Vol. 144/1. 2010.
- Lenman, Robin and Osborne, John and Sagarra, Eda. "Imperial Germany Towards the Commercialization of Culture." in Rob Burns (ed.). *German Cultural Studies: An introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Lidtke, Vernon L. "Abstract Art and Left Wing Politics in the Weimar Republic." in *Central European History*. Vol. 43/4. 2010.
- Marks, Sally. "The Myths of Reparations." in *Central European History*. Vol. 11/3. 1978.
- McElligott, Anthony. "The collapse of Weimar." in *History Today*. Vol.43/5. 1993.
- Mommsen, Hans. "The Origins of Chancellor Democracy and the Transformation of the German Democratic Paradigm." in *German Politics and Society*, Vol.25/2. 2007.
- Moravcsik, Andrew. "The origins of human rights regimes: democratic delegation in postwar Europe." in *International Organizations*. Vol.54/2. 2000.
- Putnam, Robert D. "The political attitudes of Senior Civil Servants in Western Europe: A Preliminary Report." in *British Journal of Political Science*. Vol 3/3. 1973.
- Rafter, Nicole. "Criminology's Darkest Hour: Bio-criminology in Nazi Germany." in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*. Vol. 41/2. 2008.
- Retallack, James. "Wilhelmine Germany." in Gordon Martel (ed.). *Modern Germany Reconsidered 1870-1945*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Rippey, Theodore F. "Rationalisation, Race and the Weimar Response to Jazz." in

German Life and Letters. Vol. 60/1. 2007.

Roberts, David. "Nationalism, Neutralism and the Peace Movement in West Germany." in *Social Alternatives*. Vol. 3/2. 1983.

Rohl, J.C.G. "Higher Civil Servants in Germany, 1890-1900." in *Journal of Contemporary History*. Vol.2/3. 1967.

Roseman, Mark. "Division and Stability: The Federal Republic of Germany." in Mary Fulbrook (ed.). *20th Century Germany, politics, culture and society 1918-1990*. UK: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Shen, Yu-chung. "The anomaly of the Weimar Republic's Semi Presidential Constitution." in *Journal of Politics and Law*. Vol. 2/3. 2009.

Steinweis, Alan E. "Weimar Culture and the Rise of National Socialism: The Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur." in *Central European History*. Vol.24/4. 1991.

Stephenson, Jill. "The rise of the Nazis: Sonderweg or spanner in the works?" in Mary Fulbrook (ed.). *20th century Germany, politics, culture and society 1918-1990*. UK: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Stern, Frank. "Antisemitic and Philosemitic discourse in Postwar Germany." in *Folia Linguistica*. Vol.27/3.1993.

Telzrow, Michael E. "Lessons of the Weimar Republic." in *New American*. Vol. 25/10. 2009.

Wheeler-Bennett, John. "The end of Weimar Republic." in *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 50/2. 1972.