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MAD 2020

History

Day - 21

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Question:

Discuss how the Treaty of Versailles lay the groundwork for World War II

Answer.

Signed exactly five years after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the Treaty of Versailles, Treaty of Versailles, signed in Paris on June 28, 1919, formally ended World War I – but at the same time laid the foundation for the Second World War, for the following reasons

1. German war guilt:
 - Article 231 of the treaty placed all blame for inciting the war squarely on Germany
 - It stripped Germany of 13 percent of its territory and one tenth of its population.
 - The Rhineland was occupied, and demilitarized, and German colonies were taken over by the new League of Nations.
 - The German army was diminished to 100,000 men and the country was forbidden to draft soldiers.
 - Its weapons were largely confiscated, and its navy stripped of large vessels.
 - It also required Germany to pay 269 billion gold marks – the equivalent of \$37 billion.
2. The Versailles Treaty had also included a covenant for the League of Nations, the international organization envisioned to preserve peace among the nations of Europe and the world. But the U.S. Senate ultimately refused to ratify the Versailles Treaty due to its opposition to the League, which left the organization seriously weakened.
3. In the Middle East, Britain and France divided the region into many smaller mandates under the control of either of the two, to be given independence later at a time when the new countries would be ready, fulfilling their colonial ambitions in the garb of these mandates.

The treaty was a slap in the face to Germany, whose residents saw the famous “war guilt” clause as a humiliation.

Right-wing German politicians used the treaty as a nationalist rallying point. The staggering reparations payments reduced the country’s industrial output, and thrust Germany into hyperinflation in the 1920s, leading to the rise of Hitler who rallied people around him promising to restore lost German glory.