

BMS meeting Minutes 7.11.2019

1. Welcome to our guest speaker Mr Simon Peuple by President Roger Bragger.
2. Apologies received: S. Handford, P. Handford, P. McDermott, R. Painter and D. Rees.
3. Stats: Total - 23, Meal - 12, Drink – 5 and ONS – 1.
4. No new members.
5. Matters arising previous meeting, Library and Research Questions – None.
6. Functions: Stratford -upon-Avon Medal Fair – BMS were represented by D. Seeney, J. Scott M.Harrison and C.Davies. We thought we connected well with other attendees at the fair – we had D. Seeney’s set of fake/defective medals to attract the interest of passers-by. Approximately 50 flyers were given out but it remains to be seen if we have attracted new members.
7. Committee Point: Message received from S. Handford that, at the recent ‘Banbury weekend of Medals’ event, all the remaining ‘Waterloo’ books donated by P. McDermott have been sold – a additional sum of £75 has been raised to be split between a local hospice and BMS funds.
8. Tonight’s Talk is our annual Drummond Lecture - Speaker Mr S.Peuple was invited to give his talk.

Drummond Lecture:

‘One Hundred Years post the Versailles Treaty - Its settlements and its consequences’.

Simon started his topic with reference to the deteriorating conditions on the home front in the last two years of the War for Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

In Austria, in 1916, there were shortages of food supply resulting in a halving of bread rations. Even clothing was in short supply, however, somehow the authorities were able to double the wine allowance. The Emperor Charles I of Austro-Hungary would have liked to sue for peace but they were, of course, allied to Germany.

By September, 1918, the ‘Hindenberg’ line had been breached which indicated there was nothing militarily significant between the Allied Armies and the German border.

At the end of the war, Germany itself was under pressure not just from her enemies but on the home front with the ‘Kiel mutiny’. This occurred when the Imperial German Navy had planned an attack on the British Navy in October, 1918. The sailors in the German Navy were slightly older men, had anticipated what the stoking up of their vessels might mean, rejected the plans and refused to comply with the orders.

On 11th November, 1918 at 11.00hrs, the Armistice came into effect. Prior to this, the arrival of the United States in the Great War in 1917 had strengthened the Allies' position. By keeping the North Sea mined, fresh food availability remained limited - the Winter of 1918 became known as the 'Cabbage Winter'.

The Allied armed forces were very well fed in contrast to their German counterparts.

Earlier in the war, the price of bread had been fixed in Germany but there was no price cap for pork meat. Consequently, grain could be used to feed pigs. In 1915, one third of the pig breeding stock was slaughtered.

Immediately after the Armistice in Great Britain in December, 1918, the country was heading for a general election. The possibility of prosecuting Kaiser Wilhelm II [for his role starting the war] was an important issue in British politics at the time. Both the wartime prime ministers, Asquith and Lloyd-George went into the election in favour of the 'Hang the Kaiser!' campaign.

Kaiser Wilhelm II had abdicated on 9th November, 1918 and had ensured that he could not be succeeded because the monarchy had been abolished. He then fled to sanctuary in neutral Holland on 10th, November, 1918.

The Versaille's Treaty [VT]:

This is the document which decided the peace terms to be imposed on Germany as a result of the Great War. Many countries were represented at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 but the leading architects of the VT were the 'big four' leaders of the top four allied countries who were Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau of France, President Woodrow Wilson of the USA, Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando of Italy and Prime Minister David Lloyd-George of Great Britain.

Interestingly, Clemenceau survived an assassination attempt in February, 1919 and would never become President of France. It was President Wilson who had declared war on Germany in response to the escalation of the U-boat campaign in early 1917 which was aimed at sinking American ships supplying Great Britain. Wilson had produced independently his 'fourteen points' in January, 1918 which were a set of principles to be considered in peace negotiations to end the Great War. Prime Minister Orlando had wanted territorial compensation for Italy's involvement in the war a view which received no support from the other members of the 'big four'. Italy temporarily absented herself from the conference in response to this. The VT was signed on 28th June, 1919 five years to the day after the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in 1914.

The Paris Peace Conference worked on other treaties for each of the other defeated powers each named after a nearby Parisian district: Versailles Treaty for Germany, Saint-Germain-en-Laye Treaty for Austria, Trianon Treaty for Hungary, Neuilly-sur-Seine Treaty for Bulgaria and Sèvres Treaty for Turkey.

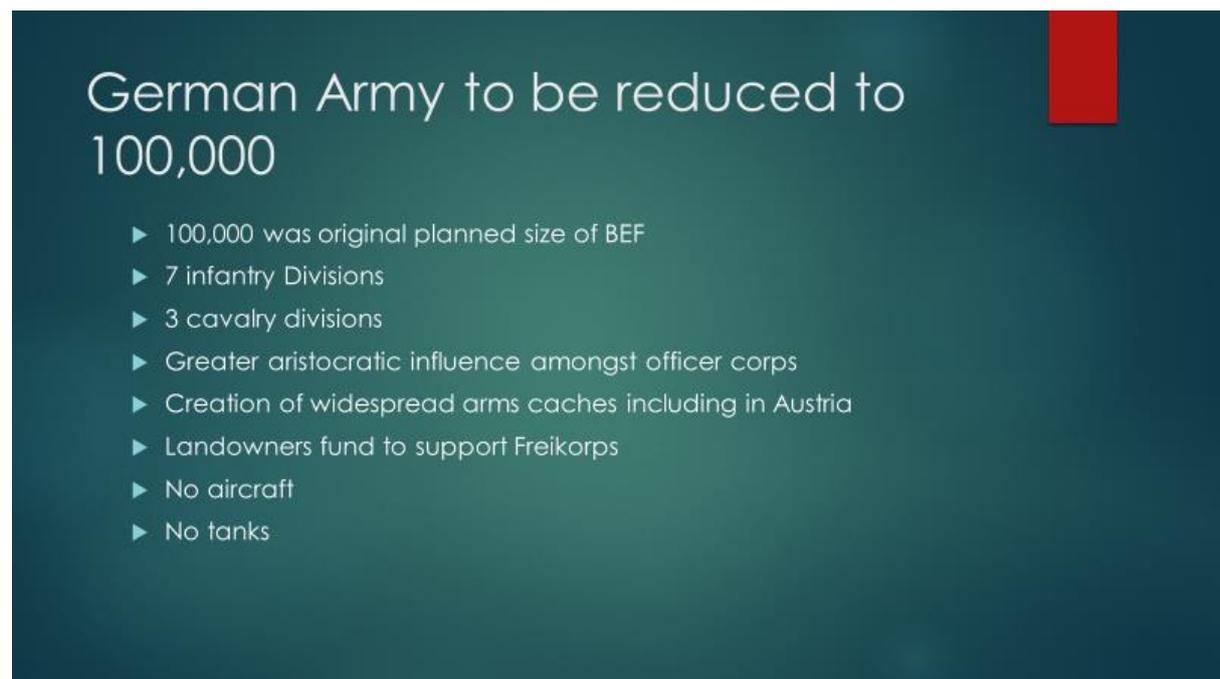
Troop numbers:

At the beginning of the Great War, Germany had two million soldiers but would be limited to 100,000 [100,000 was the original size of the British Expeditionary Force 'BEF'] as a maximum number after the VT. This was to be broken down into 7 infantry and 3 cavalry divisions with reduced size of the officer class. The German Officer class was a tightly woven grouping. A consequence of this restriction was a greater aristocratic influence in the Officer Corps. Also, sergeants in the army were given more authority but not promotion.

Arms caches were widespread in Germany and Austria.

Germany was not to be allowed to manufacture military aircraft or tanks. It was not allowed submarines. The Germans were to circumvent the restriction on development of tank and U-boat technology and personnel with the Soviets in 1922.

The Navy was allowed six 'pre-Dreadnought' battleships and some smaller vessels.



German Army to be reduced to 100,000

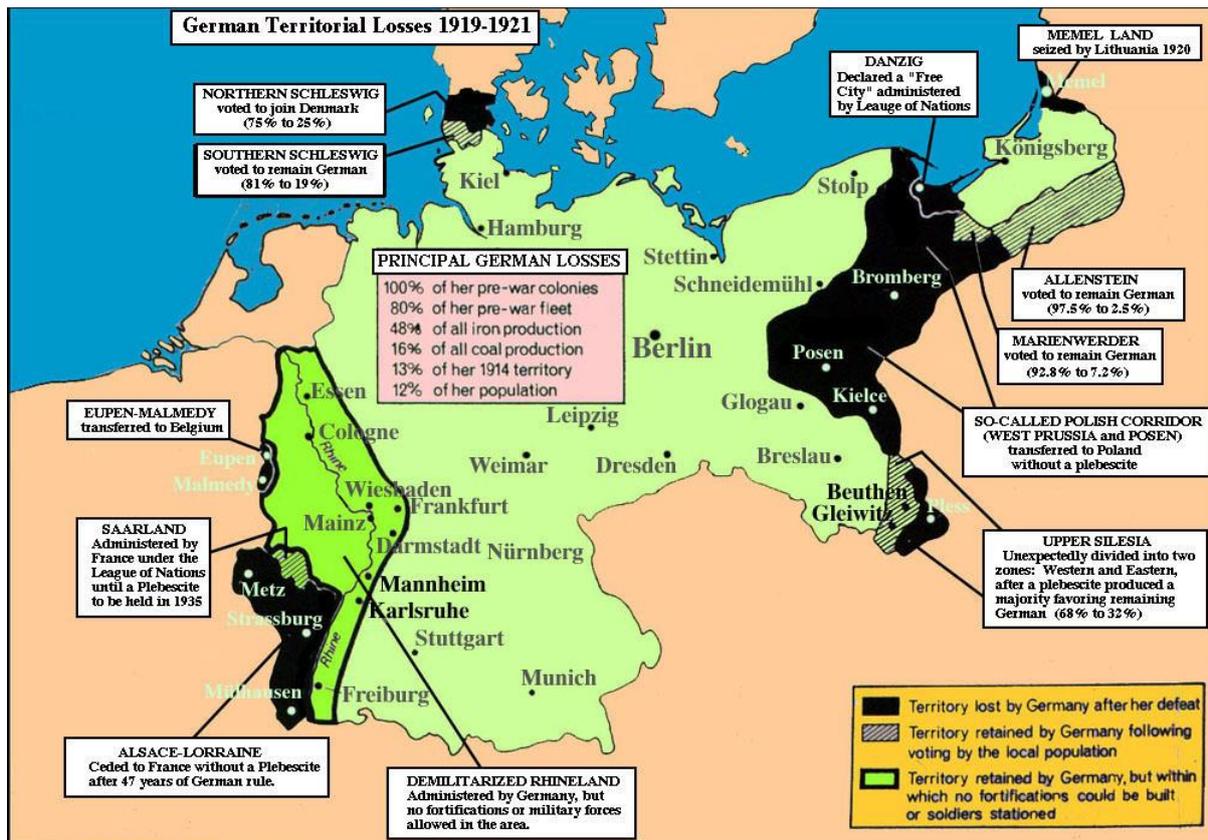
- ▶ 100,000 was original planned size of BEF
- ▶ 7 infantry Divisions
- ▶ 3 cavalry divisions
- ▶ Greater aristocratic influence amongst officer corps
- ▶ Creation of widespread arms caches including in Austria
- ▶ Landowners fund to support Freikorps
- ▶ No aircraft
- ▶ No tanks

Above: Slide summarising the implications of the VT for the German Army.

Freikorps:

This was an organisation of ex-military volunteers funded by landowners to oppose left wing groupings in Germany. In 1917, the Germans had sent Lenin to Russia to inspire revolution [effectively to stop the Russians fighting in the war] and now feared this consequence themselves.

Territorial losses: These were many and a brief summary follows



Above: Map of European German territorial losses 1919-21.

Germany lost all of her pre-WWI colonies worldwide to the benefit of assorted Allies.

Alsace-Lorraine: Poincaré the French President was from Lorraine. This area which had been lost to Germany as a result of the Franco-Prussian war was regained by France.

Malmedy: This area ceded to Belgium.

As French mining activities had been severely damaged in the war, the pecuniary benefits of Saarland coal mining were ceded to France for 15 years. A plebiscite would then decide its outcome.

The 'Rhineland' was to be demilitarised, occupied and bridges over the Rhine were to be held by British and French forces for a period of up to fifteen years. There was a provision for staged withdrawal provided Germany maintained a non-aggressive stance. The occupation, in fact, only happened till 1930 as the cost became unaffordable.

Schleswig-Holstein was to be decided by plebiscite – The results were clear in that 'Danish' and 'German' parts voted to stay with their respective mother countries.

Upper Silesia was partitioned – A metal producing area which had had major German investment with German owners but Polish workers was partitioned off causing anger to the Germans. A Polish 'corridor' was created but this didn't represent the nationalities of those living in the territory concerned.

Czechoslovakia was to be recognised as an independent nation state but different cultures were represented in the Czech and Slovak parts.

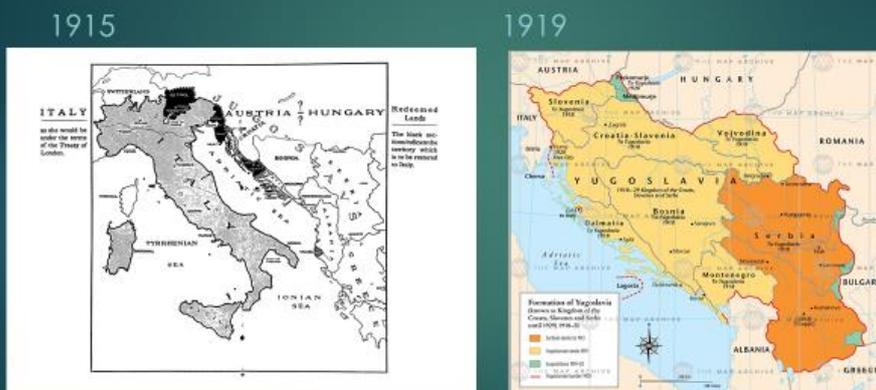
Re-creation of Poland



Above: Poland recreated after the VT at the end of WWI.

Italy made small gains in territory and the new Yugoslavia is shown [\[see map below\]](#).

Italy – why did we fight?



Austria was much smaller country and was prevented from merging with Germany without the permission of the League of Nations.

Yugoslavia was a group of peoples created out of different cultures some of whom disliked each other.

Romania gained Transylvania. Hungary and Bulgaria both lost territories.

Also, the territory of Memel was ceded in 1923 to Lithuania.

Did the VT lead to the Second World War [WWII]?



Above: Cartoon from the Daily Herald 17.5.1919 - 'Peace and Future Cannon Fodder' – The child marked 'Class of 1940' is sobbing – there is a copy of the peace treaty nearby- Clemenceau dubbed 'The Tiger' ['Le Tigre' in French] turns to the sound saying 'Curious, I seem to hear a child weeping' while Wilson, Orlando and Lloyd-George look on.

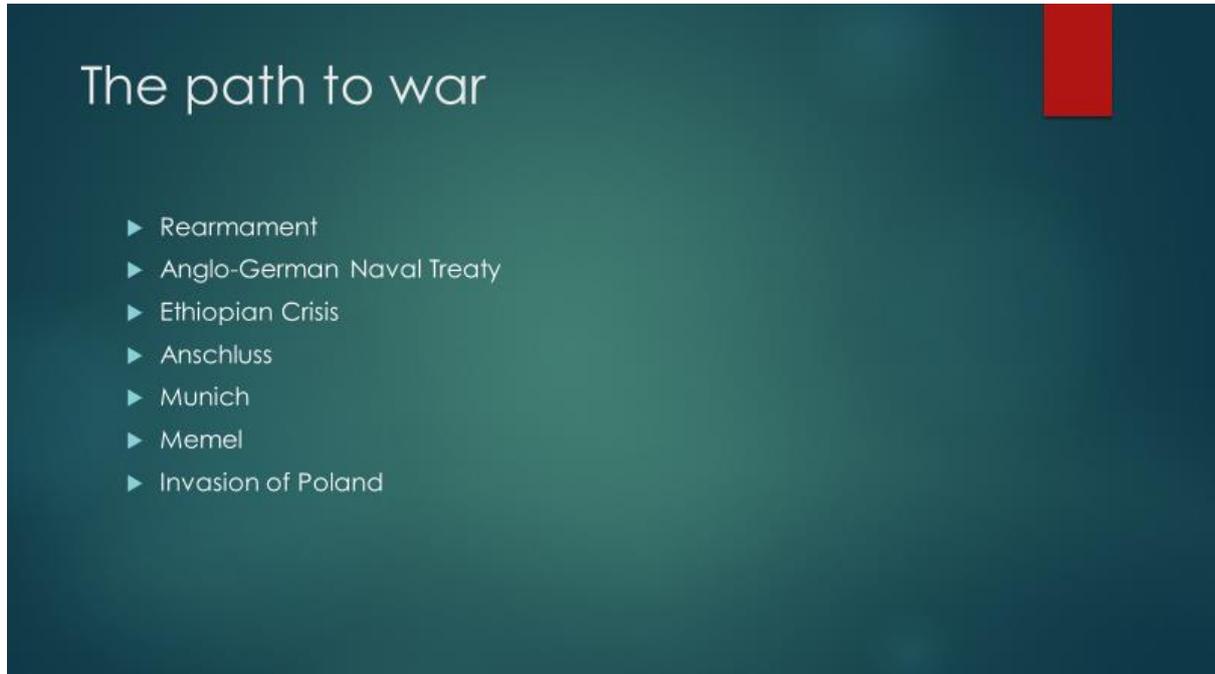
In territorial terms, the loss of Alsace-Lorraine and effects on the Rhineland were significant contributory factors.

In monetary terms, there was the colossal reparations bill – this was the sum that Germany was to be 'invoiced' for the costs of the war – at the time of the signature of the VT, the precise cost was unknown.

It should be noted that after the French defeat by the Prussians in the Franco-Prussian war 1870-71, a sum of five billion marks was paid by France as reparations for this war and, interestingly, many German cities have parks which were funded by these reparation monies.

In the early 1920's, Germany defaulted on its reparation payments triggering the occupation of the Ruhr industrial heartlands by France and Belgium. This worsened the German [Hyperinflation] economic crisis between 1923-25.

The path to WWII involved many contributory factors: [see slide below]



A complex list and timeline of interacting factors can be seen to be important that lead to the WWII. Through the interwar years, these include rearmament, the Anglo-German Naval Agreement [drawn up to prevent arms race with the British Navy], the Ethiopian crisis, the Munich Agreement, Anschluss, the territory of Memel in Lithuania leading up to and including the invasion of Poland.

The territory of Ethiopia [Abyssinia] was desired by Italy – The British and French Foreign Ministers [Hoare and Laval] had negotiated a proposal try to end the second Abyssinian war. This became known as the 'Hoare-Laval' pact. When the details were leaked to the press in late 1935, the pact was strongly rejected in both Britain and France and abandoned. This facilitated Italy's drift towards Nazi Germany. The war in Abyssinia continued into 1936.

Anschluss: Moderate Austrian Germans would have liked to merge with Germany ['Anchluss'] but this is barred by the VT. A plebiscite in Austria is planned to determine the answer to this question but Hitler, unopposed, moves militarily into Austria before any vote.

The Munich agreement: This agreement of 1938 was concluded between France, Italy, Germany and Great Britain [it didn't involve the USSR]. It effectively allowed the territory of Sudetenland [largely three million German speakers and part of Czechoslovakia] to be annexed by Germany.

Werner Von Blomberg was Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces in 1936 [the head of the Wehrmacht]. In 1938, he was perceived to have put himself in an unfortunate position that could damage the Wehrmacht's reputation as he, a widower since 1932, had married his much younger secretary. Unfortunately for Blomberg, his new wife and mother-in-law had records at the Berlin Police department... This caused uproar which his enemies were able to exploit - Blomberg was forced to resign.

Other contributory parts:

The Great Depression of 1929 was a severe worldwide financial disaster. It had started in the USA with the Wall Street Crash in September, 1929 leading to the failure of many US banks. Although its effects were global, its impacts were especially felt in Germany with rising unemployment, financial hardship and increasing difficulty with reparation payments as the supply of US dollars which was underpinning the economy dried up in the early 30's.

Picture below: The 'Jarrow Crusade' protesters of 1936 protesting about poverty and unemployment on Tyneside.

1929

▶ The Great Depression



There is no monocausal explanation of how the Nazis came to power but in reality, it was mainly a combination of consequences of two major factors - the VT along with the Great Depression.

Monocausal explanations rarely work

- ▶ Hindenburg
- ▶ 1929 – July 1932; rise from obscurity to largest party
- ▶ Nazi popularity stalls in November 1932
- ▶ General Schleicher
- ▶ 6 million unemployed and about 8 million in reality
- ▶ Berlin remains Socialist
- ▶ Rhineland remains core of Centre Party strength



Above: Political developments in the late Weimar era.

Development of extremism: Nazi Party Voting stats – 1928 – 1.5% of vote [just before the time of the great depression], 1933 – the Nazis were the largest party. By 1933, unemployment in Germany was 6 million persons - nearer to 8 million actually]. The Nazi vote develops in rural areas in the first instance. Berlin remains a socialist area and the Catholic Rhineland an area with centrist voting intentions. The 'Elite' do a deal with Von Papen and Hindenburg. In the Lippe Detmold elections, the Nazi party wins 9 seats out of twenty-one in January, 1933 having won none in the previous election there.

Elite do a deal with Nazis

- ▶ Von Papen
- ▶ Hindenburg's finances
- ▶ Lippe Elections
- ▶ Appointment of Hitler as Chancellor heading coalition
- ▶ 2nd February 1933 – promises army they will rearm
- ▶ Day of National Awakening
- ▶ Reichstag Fire / Emergency Decrees / Enabling Bill
- ▶ April 1934 – "Deutschland Pact"
- ▶ Rohm Purge / Death of Hindenburg / Fuhrer

Above: Factors in 1933-34 leading to Adolf Hitler becoming 'Führer'.

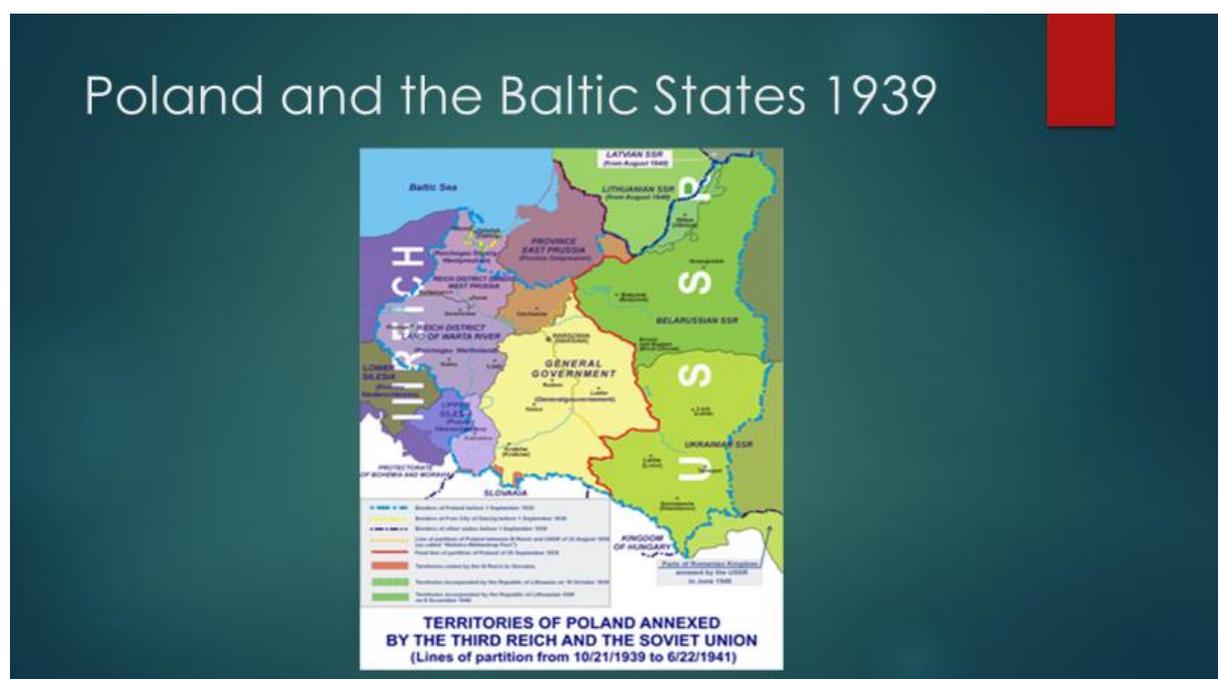
There was much manoeuvring between the Governments of General von Schleicher and von Papen between 1932-33.

The 'Enabling Act' of 1933 was passed which allowed Hitler as Chancellor to pass legislation for a four year period which couldn't be voted down by the Reichstag but could be blocked by the President [as long as the President remained alive].

In 1934 the 'Deutschland Pact' occurs following a meeting on the said ship between the Army Generals and Adolf Hitler- One of the older Nazis Ernst Rohm remains the leader of the 'SA' [the Sturmabteilung] the original 'brownshirt' right wing paramilitaries of whom there are still 2 million members. The Generals decide to offer Hitler the headship if he eliminates Rohm. Returning to the Munich putsch of 1923, it was Rohm who'd taken the 'top job' in the SA and for this reason, he was disliked by Goering and Himmler [in time, they were to become Luftwaffe and SS [the Schutzstaffel] chiefs respectively]. The precise number of killings is not known but included General Von Schleicher. The day of extrajudicial killings in 1934 has become known as the 'Night of the Long Knives'. On that day, Von Papen who was the Vice Chancellor stayed with Hindenberg and Goebbels, who was also disliked by Goering and Himmler, stayed with Adolf Hitler...

After the death of Hindenberg in 1934, Adolf Hitler becomes 'Führer' and Chancellor by merging the roles of President and Chancellor. He is then the supreme leader..

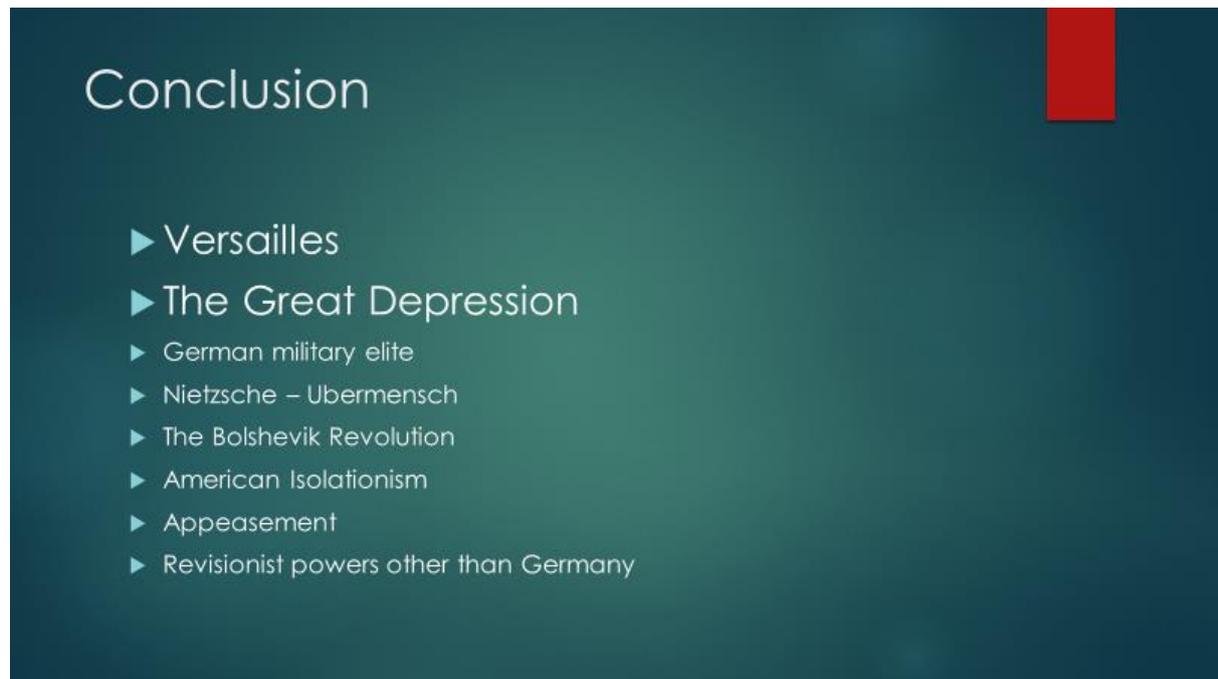
Policy of appeasement: Possibly as a result of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, the fact remains that the Germans never built an aircraft carrier in the Third Reich.



Above: Map showing territories annexed by Third Reich and USSR in September 1939.

September, 1939, Hitler invades Poland [so do the Soviets] Nazi-Soviet pact had been signed in August, 1939.

Chamberlain and British rearmament : At the time of the Great Depression, the USA was funding a lot of British war debt charging an interest rate of 6%. It was Chamberlain who was instrumental in reducing this debt burden by negotiating a reduction in the debt interest rate to 2%. The resultant savings paid for the rearming programme of Great Britain.



Above: the two main contributory and other factors leading to WWII.

In conclusion, the imposition of the Versaille's Treaty on the defeated Germany in 1919, had many consequences some of which had been predicted but it is when seen in conjunction with the financial disaster of the Great Depression of 1929 that events start to crystallise that lead to the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party being in full control of Germany in the form of the Third Reich.

President Roger Bragger thanked our speaker for an enlightening and thoroughly absorbing talk and there followed a long post talk Q and A session which was much appreciated by the members.

I attach my usual apologies for any errors or omissions in this short summary and thank Mr Simon People for the permission to use and reproduce slides from his powerpoint presentation.

Dr C M Davies.

BMS Secretary.

Typed 30.11.19-2.12.19