

# **HIST328 Europe in the Twentieth Century**

**Faculty of Arts and Sciences**

**School of Humanities**

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**Due Date: August 10 2012**

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**Assignment Question:**

- 4. Why did liberal democracy go into such (seemingly terminal) decline across Europe in the period 1919-1942?**

## Contents

1. Section One .....	3
2. Section Two.....	4
2.1 Introduction.....	4
2.2 Body.....	5
3. Section Three – Annotated Bibliography.....	8
3.1 Primary Sources.....	8
3.2 Secondary Sources.....	9

## 1. Section One

The end of the First World War saw a proliferation of liberal democracy across Europe, yet by the start of the Second World War liberal political institutions were in full retreat.

**Comment [R1]:** OK, a sound opening sentence. It doesn't do much to advance an answer, however, and will therefore need to be followed up with a clear engagement with the debated nature of the question, or a direct assertion. Also, your time-period does not end in 1939, but extends to 1942. Is this therefore problematic?

## 2. Section Two

### 2.1 Introduction

This assignment asserts six causes for the downfall of liberal democracy in interwar Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain. Political fragmentation and the inability of governments to deal with their respective crises; radicalism, strike action and military coups making violence a common and accepted political tool; nationalism, the struggles of ethnic minorities within newly formed nation states, and regional differences; the fear of the red menace; economic issues such as inflation and the Great Depression; new democratic liberties, advances in technology and fear of new lifestyles provided by modernity.

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**Comment [R2]:** OK, good.

### 2.2 Broader Scholarship

Payne explains that fascism dominated political societies which tended to polarise between right and left. These societies experienced the impact of modernisation and democratisation, and the expansion of radical nationalist groups under conditions of conflict.<sup>1</sup> One of the difficulties of interwar Europe was the integration of ethnic minorities previously under different legal and political structures.<sup>2</sup> Groth expands on this stating that political fragmentation was increased by ethnic minorities.<sup>3</sup> Hobsbawm mentions the threat of social revolution against bourgeois society and how fascism in particular took advantage of this threat to garner support, despite most on the left supporting individual freedom as much as the right.<sup>4</sup> Finally, Bessel explains that the cost of war and economic crises were not understood by impatient populations ready to vote for more strong leadership.<sup>5</sup>

**Comment [R3]:** OK, good, but 2.2 should be factored into the introduction (see the example in the Detailed Assessment Information).

**Comment [R4]:** Don't you mean emerged from? Or emerged to dominate? What you describe following on from this point seems to suggest this.

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**Comment [R5]:** OK, useful. One thing to consider though is whether the rise of fascism is the same thing as the decline of liberal democracy.

<sup>1</sup> Stanley G Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, Wisconsin, 1996, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> R J Crampton, 'Poland, 1918-39', in *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*. London, 1994, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> A J Groth, 'Polish Elections 1919-1928', *Slavic Review*, vol. 24, no. 4, December 1965, p. 655.

<sup>4</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, 'The Fall of Liberalism', in *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, London, 2002, pp.110.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Bessel, 'Germany from war to dictatorship.' in *Twentieth-Century Germany: Politics, Culture and Society 1918-1990*, ed. Mary Fulbrook, London, 2001, p. 32.

### 2.3 Body

Germany experienced a succession of uprisings, political upheaval, and financial disasters. The population voted against unpopular decisions, and political parties rarely worked together.<sup>6</sup> Civil disobedience showed political weakness as the government called on militants such as the Freikorps.<sup>7</sup> Inability to recover from the Great Depression encouraged Nazi popularity culminating in Hitler's use of article 48 of the constitution, suspending civil liberties.<sup>8</sup>

**Comment [R6]:** Did Hitler merely continue a policy which had been in place since 1930? German liberal democracy effectively ended in 1930, which illustrates the need to address how the fall of liberal democracy and the rise of fascism are actually not the same thing.

Poland's democracy struggled under financial difficulties, and government coalitions unwilling to compromise. Neither centre-right nor centre-left could find common grounds for coalition, and no coalitions could work effectively with ethnic minorities. After the new president was assassinated in 1922, financial difficulties brought the resignation of governments in 1923 and 1925.<sup>9</sup>

**Comment [R7]:** Why deal with Germany first, if Poland's shift away from liberal democracy occurred beforehand? Is there a rationale for placing Poland second in order?

Interwar Italy was characterised by strike action, coups and political violence paving the way for Mussolini's dictatorship. 1919ism was fuelled by the sense of betrayal at the lack of post war gains for Italy.<sup>10</sup> Strikes and land seizures were met by government sponsored Arditi.<sup>11</sup>

**Comment [R8]:** Again, given Italy's shift away from liberal democracy commenced well before Germany's, why deal with Italy third?

The non-violent March on Rome ended in Mussolini's becoming Prime Minister. In 1925 Mussolini dissolved parliament.<sup>12</sup>

**Comment [R9]:** Take care here – Mussolini was invited to take power as per the usual liberal democratic methods.

Spanish democracy was undermined by anti-clerical and political violence, and strikes. Reform led to anti-clerical violence and worker strikes, forcing the government to employ aggressive suppression of unrest.<sup>13</sup> After the brutality of Asturias in 1934, violence escalated to a point in 1936 culminating in the political assassination of Calvo Sotelo.<sup>14</sup>

**Comment [R10]:** Surely violence reached its peak in the Civil War, not in a single instance of political assassination?

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20. Do not begin a new page of references with *Ibid* – use the surname, short title, page(s) form.

<sup>7</sup> Laurence Rees (dir.), *The Nazis – A Warning from History*, BBC, 1997, at <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/the-nazis-a-warning-from-history/>, accessed 27th February 2012, Episode One.

<sup>8</sup> Laurence Rees (dir.), *The Nazis – A Warning from History*, Episode One.

<sup>9</sup> Crampton, 'Poland, 1918-39', pp. 43-44.

<sup>10</sup> Payne, *History of Fascism*, p. 87.

<sup>11</sup> Philip Morgan, 'The Postwar Crisis and the Rise of Fascism, 1919-1922,' in *Italian Fascism 1919-1945*, New York, 1995, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> Payne, *History of Fascism*, p. 114.

<sup>13</sup> David Garrioch, 'The Historical Background', in *The Spanish Civil War: a cultural and historical reader*, ed. Alun Kenwood, Providence, 1993, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> John Blake and David Hart (dirs), *The Spanish Civil War*, Granada Television [UK], 1983, at <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/spanish-civil-war/>, accessed 24 May 2012, Episode One.

Newly re-formed Poland contained multiple ethnic minorities leading to disunity of the people and politics.<sup>15</sup> Despite a plebiscite in Upper Silesia voting for Germany, Poland's new borders remained. Governments attempted to encourage 'Polish' culture on the people in order to create nationalistic feeling.<sup>16</sup> Polish politicians refused to work with minorities.<sup>17</sup>

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**Comment [R11]:** Take care here – it was not a foregone conclusion that this would occur, rather it was the way the new Polish state handled this situation that determined ethnic disintegration, rather than integration.

Spain was divided by regional differences characterised by economy, class and politics. The agrarian economy saw a wealthy landowner class in control of poor peasant population.<sup>18</sup> Basque and Catalan industrial economies boomed, however their desired autonomy threatened Spanish economy and unity.<sup>19</sup> Allegiances ranged from Monarchist and Socialist, to Fascist and Anarchist ensuring social and political polarisation.

**Comment [R12]:** The ordering of your national case-studies has altered here. Why is this the case? Try to establish a clear rationale for the structuring of the essay.

The fear of communist revolution drove Italy into the arms of the fascists. Italy appeared in open revolt during the 1920s and threatened a re-awakening of revolution in 1922.<sup>20</sup> Political elites believed they could control the fascists, the only movement capable of suppressing Bolshevism.<sup>21</sup>

**Comment [R13]:** The only movement *believed* to be capable of suppressing Bolshevism. Take care you don't buy into the fascist myth.

Germany's feeling of betrayal at the hands of communism was encouraged by the Nazis' open hatred of communism. Fear of communism was bolstered by revolutions such as the 1919 Räterepublik and socialist industrial uprisings.<sup>22</sup> After the Great Depression communist support grew raising the alarm of business and politicians.<sup>23</sup>

**Comment [R14]:** ? In what way?

**Comment [R15]:** Indeed.

The Weimar Republic was unable to effectively deal with economic difficulties. Costly reparations led to the inflation crisis of the early 1920s.<sup>24</sup> Foreign loan agreements encouraged a 'Golden Age' which proved false with the onset of the Great Depression. In

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<sup>15</sup> Groth, 'Polish Elections', p. 655.

<sup>16</sup> Stefan Norblin, Poster: Upper Silesia, 1925, in *Documents-Inter-war Europe 1918-1930s*, HIST328 Trimester 2, Armidale, 2012, p.2.

<sup>17</sup> Jeffrey S Kopstein and J Wittenberg, 'Beyond Dictatorship and Democracy: Rethinking National Minority Inclusion and Regime Type in Interwar Eastern Europe.', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 43, no. 8/9, 2010, p. 1100.

<sup>18</sup> Blake and Hart (dirs), *The Spanish Civil War*, Episode One.

<sup>19</sup> Garrioch, 'The Historical Background', p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> Payne, *History of Fascism*, p. 93.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>22</sup> Rees, *The Nazis*, Episode One.

<sup>23</sup> Excerpts from interview with Johannes Zahn in Rees, *The Nazis*, Episode One.

<sup>24</sup> Bessel, 'Germany from war to dictatorship', p. 14.

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dealing with the crisis, the government inadvertently removed obstacles for Hitler's future rise to power.<sup>25</sup>

**Comment [R16]:** See above, re. the actual ending of democracy in Germany.

Poland experienced constant financial crises, weakening confidence in democracy. Poland's economy was boosted by the inclusion of industrial Upper Silesia from Germany.<sup>26</sup> The economy was threatened by ethnic minority tensions and the inflation crisis of 1923.<sup>27</sup> Though currency reform in 1924 eased the situation, the cessation of coal exports to Germany in 1925 ushered in a new crisis.<sup>28</sup>

**Comment [R17]:** Useful.

German and Italian fascists utilised new technology and embraced traditional values and ancient symbols to create unity. New technologies such as radio, photography, movies and air travel allowed Hitler and Mussolini to push their propaganda to the masses.<sup>29</sup> They also rejected the new modern lifestyle, advocating traditional family values and utilising Roman symbolism, creating an aura of strength.<sup>30</sup>

**Comment [R18]:** OK, but this doesn't really answer the question as such. If you want to argue that their example encouraged others, and led to support for the ending of democracy, then that would be a good way of arguing the point.

The onset of democracy brought secularisation, democratic freedom and economic shifts in Spain. Anti-clerical constitutions and policies brought about turmoil.<sup>31</sup> The shift towards industry and urbanisation impacted the predominantly agrarian society. Democracy brought a voice to the people who, excited by promised new liberties, then grew impatient at the slow pace of reform.<sup>32</sup>

**Comment [R19]:** You mean the republic?

A conclusion will also be required.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 25-32.

<sup>26</sup> Crampton, 'Poland, 1918-39', p. 41.

<sup>27</sup> Kopstein and Wittenberg, 'Beyond Dictatorship and Democracy', pp. 1100-1101.

<sup>28</sup> Crampton, 'Poland, 1918-39', p. 44.

<sup>29</sup> Rees, *The Nazis*, Episode One.

<sup>30</sup> Payne, *History of Fascism*, p. 92.

<sup>31</sup> Garrioch, 'The Historical Background', p. 11.

<sup>32</sup> Blake and Hart (dirs), *The Spanish Civil War*, Episode One.

### 3. Section Three – Annotated Bibliography

#### 3.1 Primary Sources

Brigham Young University. *The Treaty of Versailles. Articles 231-247 and Annexes: Reparations*, 2001, <http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/versa/versa7.html>, accessed August 8 2012.

**Comment [R20]:** Spelling. Proof-read your work closely prior to submission to avoid such errors coming to the eye of your examiner.

This source contains articles 231 to 247 of the Treaty of Versailles pertaining to reparations. Of particular use are articles 231 officially admitting Germany's guilt for the war as well as 235 outlining reparations. These will be cited as the origin of the German people's feeling of humiliation from the First World War, as well as impacting on the Weimar Republic's economy.

**Comment [R21]:** OK, useful.

Highest-denomination banknotes of the German Reichsbank, 1922-1923, in *Documents-Inter-war Europe 1918-1930s*, HIST328 Trimester 2, Armidale, 2012, p. 6.

These banknotes are examples of German currency during the early 1920s inflation crisis. The banknotes are of high denominations such as one billion Marks. They will be used as examples of how inflation in Germany's economy spiralled out of control, and how paper money was worth so little that images that typified German currency in the past and future, were noticeably absent.

**Comment [R22]:** OK, useful. Consider doing some background research on how the German government may actually have caused this hyperinflation deliberately.

Norblin, Stefan. Poster: Upper Silesia, 1925, in *Documents-Inter-war Europe 1918-1930s*, HIST328 Trimester 2, Armidale, 2012, p.2.

This source is an example of pro-Polish nationalistic propaganda aimed at ethnic minorities. Noteworthy is the worker in front of a factory and the translation into four different languages. This poster will be used to demonstrate how the Polish government attempted to stir up nationalistic feeling in an ethnic minority region.

**Comment [R23]:** This is not actually what the poster is trying to do. It is a multi-ethnic vision of Poland, designed to encourage a sense of national belonging among peoples of varying ethnicities and cultures. This is not an aggressive, exclusionary form of nationalistic, as you seem to assert here. Take care that your prose exposition of source material accurately conveys meaning.



### 3.2 Secondary Sources

Bessel, Richard. 'Germany from war to dictatorship.' in *Twentieth-Century Germany: Politics, Culture and Society 1918-1990*, edited by Mary Fulbrook, London, Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd, 2001, pp. 11-33.

This source discusses the interwar period in Germany. Beginning with the Weimar Republic's inauguration, it discusses the events leading up to subsequent Nazi takeover. This source will be used to detail political fragmentation and weakness in the face of violence and radicalism, and economic issues.

**Comment [R24]:** Again, take care – the rise of fascism/Nazism is not the same thing as the decline of liberal democracy, rather it is a factor in accounting for the latter.

Blake, John, and David Hart, (dirs). *The Spanish Civil War*, Grenada Television [UK], 1983 [6 Parts], at <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/spanish-civil-war/>, accessed 24 May 2012.

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This six part documentary discusses the Spanish Civil War, from the forming of the Second Republic through to its outcomes and legacy. It also covers foreign involvement, such as German and Italian support of the Nationalists and Soviet support of the Republicans. Episodes one and two of the documentary, in particular interviews, will be used for the Spanish context of political fragmentation, civil disobedience and political violence and modernity.

**Comment [R25]:** OK. Don't forget the basic fact that liberal democracy lost the war.

Cattaruzza, Marina. "Last stop expulsion" – The minority question and forced migration in East-Central Europe: 1918-49', *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2010, pp. 108-126.

This article examines problems faced by ethnic minorities in Central-Eastern Europe. It explains that ethnic minorities had already undergone forced nationalism under the Hapsburgs. When the same happened again under Poland, Czechoslovakia and Rumania, minorities resisted or emigrated. The article also discusses how Hitler utilised the issue to press his claims in Europe. This article will be utilised within the context of nationalism and ethnic minorities in Poland.

**Comment [R26]:** See my comment above re. the poster – the poster is not really an example of this aggressive form, but rather is an example of a more inclusive form.

Crampton, R J. *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*. London, Routledge, 1994, pp. 39-56.

This source details Eastern European history in the twentieth century. Particularly relevant is the section on interwar Poland ranging from Paderewski's 1919 government through to Germany's invasion in 1939. It discusses the plight of ethnic minorities and details economic difficulties and political polarisation that led to Józef Piłsudski's coup in 1926. This assignment will use the Chapter three – Poland to explain the issues of Polish ethnic minorities and economy.

Comment [R27]: Useful.

Garrioch, David. 'The Historical Background', in *The Spanish Civil War : a cultural and historical reader*, ed. Alun Kenwood, Providence, Berg, 1993, pp. 3-17.

This source describes the background of the Spanish Civil War. It covers the historical significance of the nineteenth century including the power of the army and church. It details events leading up to the 1936 coup including the class, regional, political struggle, and radical violence which permeated Spanish society. This assignment will use this document as a guide to political fragmentation, political violence and regionalism.

Comment [R28]: Useful.

Groth, A J. 'Polish Elections 1919-1928', *Slavic Review*, vol. 24, no. 4, December 1965, pp. 653-665.

This article details the Polish elections of 1919, 1922 and 1928. By examining voter numbers it shows how gaining a majority in the Sejm became increasingly difficult. This article will be used in both political fragmentation and ethnic minority issues of the assignment.

Hobsbawm, Eric. 'The Fall of Liberalism', in *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, London, Abacus, 2002, pp.109-129. Details?

Kolb, Eberhard. 'The Years of Crisis, 1919-1923.', in *The Weimar Republic*, trans. P S Falla, London, Unwin Hyman, 1988, pp. 34-50. Details?

Kopstein, Jeffrey S, and J. Wittenberg, 'Beyond Dictatorship and Democracy: Rethinking National Minority Inclusion and Regime Type in Interwar Eastern Europe.' *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 43, no. 8/9, 2010, pp. 1089-1118.

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This article discusses how nationalism was the dominant force in politics in interwar Czechoslovakia and Poland, and how ethnic minorities played a role in political authority. These countries struggled to include minorities in mass politics while limiting their influence. This article will be used to demonstrate that native Poles attempted to control rather than work with ethnic minorities.

**Comment [R29]:** Useful.

Morgan, Philip. 'The Postwar Crisis and the Rise of Fascism, 1919-1922.' in *Italian Fascism 1919-1945*, New York, St Martin's Press, 1995, pp. 3-52.

This source details fascism's rise in Italy up to Mussolini's March on Rome. As well as the events that occurred, it details Italian 'trasformismo' and details of the makeup of the Partito Nazionale Fascista (PNF). This source will be used with regards to the socialist crisis of 1920 and paramilitary organisations.

**Comment [R30]:** Good source.

Payne, Stanley G. *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 1996.

This book discusses the historical rise of fascism and compares four different forms; Austrian and German Nazism, and Italian and Spanish fascism. It details failed fascists in Europe as well as comparing fascism to Social democracy, and describing different non-fascist authoritarian movements in Bulgaria and Romania. The assignment will use this source for the Italian and Spanish violence and radicalism, communist threat, and modernity.

**Comment [R31]:** Worth examining in the sense that fascism was not the only choice.

Rees, Laurence (dir.), *The Nazis – A Warning from History*, BBC, 1997 [6 Parts], at <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/the-nazis-a-warning-from-history/>, accessed 27<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

This six-part documentary covers the downfall of the Weimar Republic through to the Soviet advance into Berlin. Of particular use are the interviews with former Nazi party members, militia, and other Germans who display the passion for, and against Hitler and his regime. The demise of the Weimar Republic and Hitler's consolidation of power will be the focus along with examples of the Nazi Party's use of modernity in building support.

#### 4. Appendix I – Extension Approval Email(s)

Details noted.

	N	P	C	D	HD
All sections completed (sufficient content).					<u>X</u>
Appropriate and sufficient primary ( <b>at least 3</b> ) and secondary sources ( <b>10</b> ) located.					<u>X</u>
Clarity of the argument (including the first sentence of the essay) relative to the question.				<u>X</u>	
Clarity of the essay outline (paragraph structure).			<u>X</u>		
Expression (grammar, syntax, spelling).				<u>X</u>	
Appropriate referencing.					<u>X</u>

This was a strong response to the set task, Christiaan, which indicates a good level of research already undertaken, and an appropriate degree of planning undertaken with the larger Research Essay in mind.

The essay plan as constructed does advance a good set of responses to the set task, but the choice to leave-off your discussion in 1939, instead of continuing –as the question demands – to address the period up to 1942, leaves your argument in a weak position. The chief reason for the effective ‘death’ of liberal democracy in Europe by 1942 was the military success of the Axis. Those regimes effectively destroyed flourishing liberal democracies in Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, and France (as well as having effectively done so in Czechoslovakia in 1938-9). Some sense of this will be required in the essay, and the notion of military activity as a form of political violence will assist you in integrating this into the essay as it stands (consider also the Nationalist victory in the Spanish Civil War as a factor here, although the drift of the Popular Front towards radical left-wing policy was also important in this regard).

It is also worth considering the argument of much of the scholarship related to the pre-existence of liberal democratic traditions, and whether the absence of these made it less likely that the ideology would flourish post-1919. The relative incompleteness of the liberal democratic revolutions (such as in Germany, where the old elites possessed considerable power, or managed to claw back some of that power, e.g. via the presidency of Hindenburg) is also worth considering.

Aside from these issues, and the structural changes suggested above, this bodes well for a strong Research Essay.

81% Distinction