

WORLD WAR II- SKEWED AT VERSAILLES TO NUREMBERG TRAIL: AN ASSESSMENT THROUGH CARICATURES

PRESENTED BY

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ABSTRACT

*Bertrand Russell once observed that war does not determine who is right, but who is left. WORLD WAR II may be that creepy event in human history, even in our craziest dreams, we never want to remember it. What happened in the six years from 1939 to 1945 made all mankind feel ashamed on their humanity and the extent that people to win a unnecessary war. Human rationality was questioned for the first time because they had just ended the First World War in 1918. There are many factors responsible for this catastrophic apocalypse, that many innocent militants and civilians were pushed to. It all started with the **BLAME** game in the Treaty of Versailles, and then the Germans and Italians began to seek **REVENGE** for the wrong done to them in WWI to the **JUSTICE** sought to those countless Jews, Gypsies and Asians, massacred in the name of purity of Race. The present paper traces the journey in WWII from the Injustices at Treaty of Versailles to the Nuremberg Trail. As, we move further, we will unveil the triad- **BLAME, REVENGE & JUSTICE**.*

Key words: *Blame, Revenge, Justice, World War II, Treaties, Betrayal, Genocide, Ultra-nationalism, Arms Race, Trial, Apocalypse, War, Humanity, Disgrace, Peace and Diplomatic Groupism, Caricature, Jews.*

PAPER:

Nothing has influenced the history of mankind as much as WARS have. Probably, it is said that there were ten years of war for every one-year peace in world history. War always appeared from the shadows through different faces. Sometimes it was waged for expansions of Kingdoms or over issues of successions, for raids, for a political or religious cause, revolutions or civil disputes or uncertainties. It has created different nations or wiped out certain nations from the face of the earth by changing the boundaries on the maps of the world. Emperors rose to prominence or faded in the annals of history textbooks. Whatever may be the causes of its rise, it has always left the trial of death, destructions and untold sufferings and humiliation. These sufferings and humiliation when bottled up in a tight airtight container always grappled to escape in the form of Revenge. It finally vents out like a terrific magma let loose from the tunnels of mountainous chambers to destroy the whole set of so-called civilized societies of the modern world. The European history of the 20th century had a far-reaching impact not only on the future of the small European nations but also the larger landmass of the continents of Asia, Africa and America too. The war had its seeds sown in the rubbles of WWI and the infamous Treaty of Versailles signed on May 7, 1919, exactly 102 years ago from this date. The Treaty of Versailles forced Germany to concede vast European territories and overseas colonies. Perhaps the most humiliating portion of the treaty for defeated Germany was Article 231,

commonly known as the "War Guilt Clause," which forced the German nation to accept complete responsibility for initiating World War I. Germany was required to make enormous reparation payments. In addition, the German military was to be severely limited in size and armaments.

The peace treaty did not ultimately help to settle the international disputes which had initiated World War I. The dreadful sacrifices of war and tremendous loss of life suffered on all sides weighed heavily. Revision of the Versailles Treaty represented one of the platforms that gave radical right-wing parties in Germany, including Hitler's Nazi Party, such appeal to mainstream voters in the 1920s and early 1930s. Promises to rearm, to reclaim German territory, particularly in the East, and to regain prominence again among European and world powers after a humiliating defeat stoked ultranationalist sentiment and helped average Germans to overlook the more radical tenets of Nazi ideology. When we look back to the rise of Adolf Hitler, one thing that hurts us is the fact that Germany's first attempt towards Democracy was cut short by the humiliating treaty signed by the political party in power THE WEIMER REPUBLIC which exist for a short span of 14 years. Though for a very less time period but it had already seen the ups and downs of the German nation after WWI. Some called it a "makeshift Democracy". The fact being that the Germans were still fullydrenched in the water of Monarchical and Authoritarian regimes. The new Republic can be considered as the emergency solution to mitigate, as far as possible, the effects on the Germans defeat of WWI. By mid-September of 1918, one by one the Central powers-Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey had started surrendering and at this position the Germans found themselves without an ally. So, the German Military Commander, Ludendorff recognised that Germany had lost the war and that only an immediate armistice could prevent a Military disaster. Even the majority in the Reichstag (Socialists, the Centre Party and the Progressives) had intensified their efforts to extend the parliamentary government and so to strengthen the democratic element in the Constitution. This transition from a Constitutional to Parliamentary monarchy was deliberately engineered by powerful political forces within Germany. Even though Hitler used the failures of the Weimer Republic to scale the ladder of ultimate Dictatorship but the fact remains that it was not the Versailles treaty that sealed the fate of this Republic but the after-effects of a war that Germany had lost.

This is what Hitler addressed to the German nation about the disgrace brought to them by the Weimer Republic, definitely a ploy by him to gain mass support and backing

"With the armistice begins the humiliation of Germany. If the Republic on the day of its foundation had appealed to the country: Germans, stand together! Up and resist the foe! The Fatherland, the Republic expects of you that you fight to your last breath, then millions who are now enemies of the Republic would be fanatical Republicans. Today they are the foes of the Republic not because it is a Republic but because this Republic was founded at the moment when Germany was humiliated, because it so discredited the new flag that men's eyes must turn regretfully toward the old flag"

No doubt the terms of the treaty were very harsh and hurt the pride of once mighty German Empire but Weimer government was forced to digest the humiliating pills (Fig. 1), thus, starting the BLAME game by Adolf Hitler. He openly opposed the clauses of the treaty calling it a mere scrap of paper and did everything against the words scripted as directions for the Germans to do.

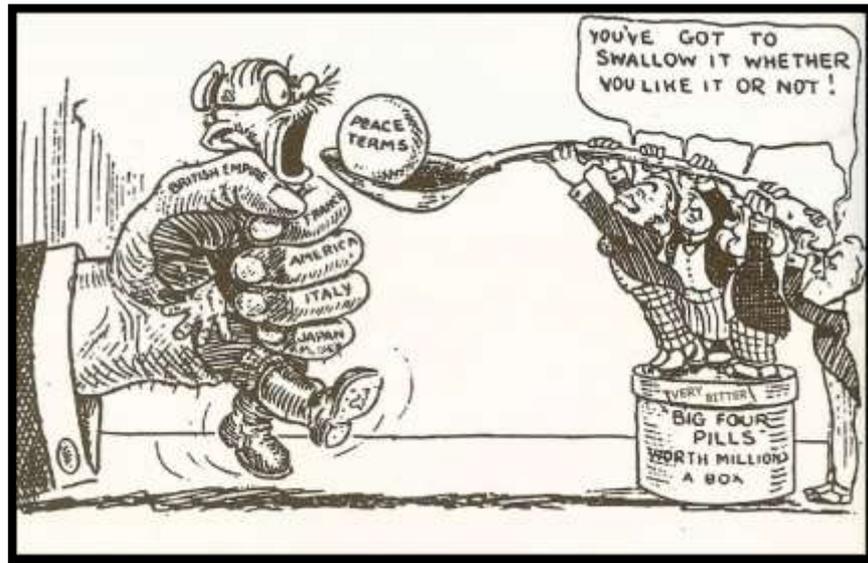


Figure 1. Cartoon that appeared in a British newspaper in 1919. It depicts German Kaiser Wilhelm, representing Germany being forced to accept the peace terms given by the super powers

Germans once again started on the quest of being a superpower. Under the Nazis, they did everything to rejuvenate themselves under the leadership of their Fuhrer, who claims: *The German people are not warlike nation. It is a soldierly one, which means it does not want a war, but does not fear it too. It loves peace but also loves its honour and freedom.* Heading along with it was another nation, who was once an allied party and instrumental in the defeat of Austrian Empire, it was the nation of Italian speaking people- Italy. A lot of drastic change was seen and felt within the boundaries of Italy. The Italian Statesman and Prime Minister, Vittorio Emanuele Orlando represented his nation as one of the Big Four at Paris Peace Conference. His attempts to gain the Port of Fuime met with no success. Finally, Orlando himself recalled proudly: "When ... I knew they would not give us what we were entitled to ... I writhed on the floor. I knocked my head against the wall. I cried. I wanted to die." Although Italy did receive control of most of the European requests, they failed to gain their colonial ambitions and felt they did not get what they had been promised. This engendered resentment towards the Allied countries, especially as Italians felt they had paid a high price, in terms of men and money, fighting for the Allies. These resentments helped drive the success of Benito Mussolini and his fascist movement - four years after the war, Mussolini and his black -shirts gained power.

The stage was now set for REVENGE and Europe was going to witness the naked dance of death but there was an attempt to chequer peace against the rising might of the Fascist powers (Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy). These powers believed that the axis of the world would revolve around Rome and Berlin (Fig.2). From this onwards, the alliance which gave rise to the term "the Axis powers" started to take shape in October 1936 when Germany and Italy signed a friendship treaty that formed the Rome-German Axis. The fate of Czechoslovakia was sealed when the Sudetenland province of this nation was ceded to the Germans to buy peace from England and France. This was a grave mistake since it gave wings to Hitler's undeterred ambition.



Figure 2. Nazi Germany (Hitler) and Fascist Italy (Mussolini) represent the axis to depict that they now want the world to revolve under their political parameters.

Hitler observed that: *I sought to have seized the initiative in 1938 instead of allowing myself to be forced into war in 1939, for war was, in any case unavoidable. However, you can hardly blame me if the British and the French accepted at Munich every demand I made to them.*

First Austria, then Czechoslovakia and later Poland became the scapegoat of Hitler's dream of Lebensraum (greater living space for the Aryan Race). It was only then that the Brits and French men arouse from their reverie. By the time the Battle horn was blown the Axis powers had a strong coalition of BERLIN-ROME-TOKYO AXIS (with Japan too joining Italy and Germany) (Fig 3). By 1940, as the revenge seemed to be going on to achieve its prime motto then suddenly it was halted by the Russians in Europe and Brits and Frenchmen in Africa. The tide began to turn and by 1942, the Russians, Americans (after Pearl Harbour shock) and Brits had been smashing the Axis everywhere. The Frenchmen lost to the Germans and was completely occupied but they still fought alongside the Allies to liberate their land. The turning points were three battles: the Battle of Stalingrad (Europe), the Battle of El Alamein (Africa) and the Battle of Midway (Pacific Ocean). The war ended on 2nd September 1945, exactly after 6 years and 1 day with the final surrender of Japan (shocked by the atomic explosion in the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by America). The threatening and shocking end led to serious peace decisions (Fig 4). politicians realised that the bomb would change international politics and would lead to another 'hot war' that would kill all humankind and this time War would be MAD (mutually assured destruction). However, it did not end just here, it leads to another generation towards a 'COLD WAR'

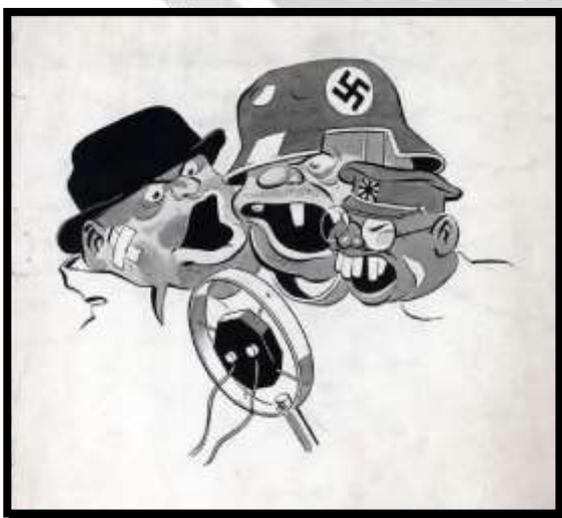


Figure 3. Grotesque Italian, German and Japanese characters, shouting into a microphone. Mussolini definitely represents the Italians, for the Nazis – possibly Goering, and for the Japanese, possibly Yosuke Matsuoka, who signed the Tripartite Pact which established the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis on September 26 1940.



Figure 4. cartoon of 11 August 1945. It depicts the Atomic Bomb looming threateningly over the peace makers.

Though the war halted and brought huge destructions in terms of life and property but what remained was the act of JUSTICE to those people who were tormented physically, mentally and morally. The Nazis hated the JEWS as they believed that the Jews were responsible for the defeat of the Germans in WWI. Even though the ethnic Germans suffered the aftermath of WWI, the Jewish business thrived hence this became the reason for the Jews being hated everywhere in Germany during the Nazi regime. The Jews were segregated and despatched to the Nazi Concentration Camps. The Camp system was extensive. It included concentration camps, labour camps, prisoner of war camps, transit camps and killing centres. These camps had occupants like Jews, Social Democrats, Communists, Liberals, Freemasons, Jehovah's Witness, Clergies who opposed Nazis, Members of Opposition Party, Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), repeat criminal offenders, homosexuals, security suspects and non-Germans who does not fit in Hitler's Lebensraum programme. Such camps were established at Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald, Flossenburg, Mauthausen, Ravensbruck, Auschwitz and Natzweiler. As the Third Reich began to collapse, thousands of prisoners in Germanoccupied territories were sent on forced marches to the German interior to prevent the mass capture of prisoners by allied forces. This was nothing less than the brutal ordeals or "DEATH MARCHES". Most of them perished due to ill health or dehydration while others were shot to death. Many of those who were freed from the camps by the American Soldiers died even after the liberations as they were so ill from how they'd been treated. Sadly, there are no records of those fallen in those marches. Around 1.65 million people were registered prisoners in the camps, out of whom around 1 million died during imprisonment. The women prisoners were sent to Ravensbruck Concentration camp. It harboured around 132000 prisoners according to the Camp memorial. The medical experiments were conducted on them. It involved deliberate cutting into and infecting leg bones and muscles with virulent bacteria, cutting nerves, introducing substances like pieces of wood or glass into the tissues and fracturing bones. There was a second set of experiments conducted on these women like studying bone, muscle, nerves regeneration and the possibility of transplanting bone from one person to another. Not many survived such experiments, while those with unhealed wounds were executed. Later during the Nuremberg Trial 23 of those Doctors was either given death sentences or long term imprisonment while some were acquitted too. Their names were Hermann Becker-Freyseng, Wilhelm Beiglböck, Kurt Blome, Viktor Brack, Karl Brandt, Rudolf Brandt, Fritz Fischer, Karl Gebhardt, Karl Genzken, Siegfried Handloser, Waldemar Hoven, Joachim Mrugowsky, Herta Oberheuser, Adolf Pokorny, Helmut Poppendick, Hans Wolfgang Romberg, Gerhard Rose, Paul Rostock, Siegfried Ruff, Konrad Schäfer, Oskar Schröder, Wolfram Sievers, Georg August Weltz. The worst part of the story is that even small innocent children became part of their bloody experiments.



Figure 5. David Low, I've Settled the Fate of Jews - and of Germans (14th December, 1942). It depicts the Jews going to the slaughter house where Nazi methods of mass extermination takes place by shooting, poison gas and electrocution revealed appalling depths of cold brutality. They have been loaded in the train container by Hitler.

FIGURE	SOURCE
FIGURE 1.	Kinsey, Denis. Remix of "Treaty of Versailles, Bitter Pill cartoon". Thinklink. Retrieved. https://www.thinglink.com/scene/601059285933228032
FIGURE 2.	Mammoth Memory. AXIS POWERS – THE AXIS POWERS MAINLY INVOLVED GERMANY, ITALY AND JAPAN. Retrieved. https://mammothmemory.net/history/world-war-ii/importantfacts-of-world-war-ii/axis-powers.html
FIGURE 3.	The National Archives. The Art of War. Catalogue ref: INF 3/1322
FIGURE 4.	Priscilla, Atomic Bomb. Thinklink. Retrieved. https://www.thinglink.com/scene/461776536773591042
FIGURE 5.	Low, David. (1986). Years of Wrath : A Cartoon History, 1932-45. Gollancz. Reprint edition. P. 226.

CONCLUSION

Thus, with the lapse of time these incidences too are lost somewhere in the hustles of tough and never ending spree of life but what we must remember is the fact that there is nothing called as civilized or barbaric people. It does not take much time for a civilized person to turn into a beast as happened 75 years ago.

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