

The Weimar Constitution and political parties

Threats from the Left
Threats from the Right

Connector

Communist

Socialist

Conservative

Left

Right

Centre

Fascist

Outcomes

- All students to know the constitution of the Weimar Republic
- Most to know the threats of from the left and right
- Some to be able to see how this would affect Germany's political future

Elections

- Election for the new assembly were held January 1919
- Around 85% of the electorate participated
- 75% of people voted for the SPD, Centre Party or DDP
- The first Reich President was Friedrich Ebert the leader of the SPD

Situation

- Hugo Preuss was appointed Secretary of State in the Ministry of the Interior with the responsibility of drawing up a constitution
- They had problems
 - No Kaiser
 - Defeat of war
 - The revolution
 - There was no party with a majority

A constitution

- What was the role of the Reichstag to be?
- How much power should the President have?
- What was the relationship between the state and the government to be?
- What was the constitution going to involve?

Main Features

- The Reich was a federation of 18 states known as a LANDSER. Each Landser had its own parliament
- The *Executive* was very strong as the President had a 7 year tenure and had powers to counter balance the central parliament (Article 48)
- The Reich chancellor and cabinet needed a majority in the Reichstag
- There was an upper house known as the Reichrat (which could delay laws) The Reichsrat members were chosen by the Landser
- The Reichstag was elected every 4 years by proportional representation
- There was also a bill of rights guaranteeing freedom of speech, assembly and association

<p style="text-align: center;">Bill of Rights</p> <p>promises all Germans equality before the law and political and religious freedom.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Electors</p> <p>All men and women over the age of 20 can vote.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">safeguards <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="text-align: center;">elect <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Freidrich Ebert</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(elected president) He had special powers under Article 48 He is elected by the the electorate</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Reichstag (elected)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Law and making body elected every 4 years by proportional representaiion</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">controls <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="text-align: center;">from which is selected <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">The Army</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Government</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chancellor (presided over the government but had to resign if the Reichstag lost confidence in them) Ministers must have a majority in the Reichstag and must do as the Reichstag says.</p>

Good or bad

- You need to know the arguments for and against the Weimar Republic

Good	Bad
Democracy	Majority government is hard to achieve

Activity

- Fill in the grid comparing the Weimar system, the Second Reich and the UK

Threats from the Left

- The biggest threat came from the left-
think the Revolution in Russia
- This had already happened in Kiel and
Bavaria
- The KPD also had links with COMINTERN
but this alienated many working class
people

Examples of threats from the left

- The uprising of sailors at Kiel and Wilshaven naval bases. They formed workers councils and challenged the power of the Landser
- Ebert and General Groener made a secret deal that if the government guaranteed the authority of current officers the army would defend the new government

- A *zentralarbeitsgemeinschaft* was set up to negotiate between workers and owners (example an 8 hour day)
- Many workers unions in Germany then voted in favour of supporting Ebert and rejected a government based on councils
- Eberts moderate line angered the left wing and in January 1919 the mass uprising of the Spartakist League tried to take over and turn into a revolution like in Russia
- The SPD government led by Defence Minister Gaustav Noske ordered the army to surpress them
- They were supported by the Friekorp

Other threats from the left

- Ruhr 1920 Communist
- Central Germany March 1921 Communist
- Hamburg October 1923 Communist

Threats from the Right

- 1920 March-Right Wing Kapp Putsch
- 1923 November- Munich Putsch led by Hitler

Kapp Putsch

- Industrialists, landowners, military families, Freikorps, *Volkisch* groups
- In 1920 two Freikorps brigades were asked to disband (12 000 men) of which two leaders, General von Luttwitz and Wolfgang Kapp, leader of the Fatherland party refused
- On 12 March 12000 Freikorps marched to Berlin where the army refused to support the government, who then fled. Kapp proclaimed a new government but it failed to gain any support even from Conservatives
- The Left organised a strike and Berlin was paralysed and even the banks refused to recognise the government
- After 4 days they fled and Ebert returned to Berlin, whilst there were fights between workers and the army
- No action was taken against the army as Ebert recognised he may need them for the fight against the Communists.