

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

Bill of Rights promises all Germans equality before the law and political and religious freedom.	Electors All men and women over the age of 20 can vote.
safeguards <input type="checkbox"/>	elect <input type="checkbox"/>
Freidrich Ebert (elected president) He had special powers under Article 48 He is elected by the the electorate	Reichstag (elected) Law and making body elected every 4 years by proportional representaion
controls <input type="checkbox"/>	from which is selected <input type="checkbox"/>
The Army	Government 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.

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, Freikorp, *Volkisch* groups
- In 1920 two Freikorp 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 Freikorp 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.