

Germany in Transition, 1919-39

The Impact of the First World War

The Weimar Constitution

Key terms

Constitution- the basic laws of a nation/state e.g. how it is governed.

Proportional Representation- a way of counting votes where 60,000 votes equals one seat in the Reichstag

Task: Match the following elements of the Weimar Constitution to the correct description.

Article 48	Governing body that was elected every four years. They could make laws and control taxation.
Chancellor	Elected every seven years. Was Supreme Commander of the army, could dismiss the Reichstag and call new elections.
Reichstag	President could suspend the Constitution in an emergency. He could make laws without the use of the Reichstag.
President	Men and women over the age of 20 years.
Electorate (voters)	Chosen by the President. Had to have support of a majority of the Reichstag.

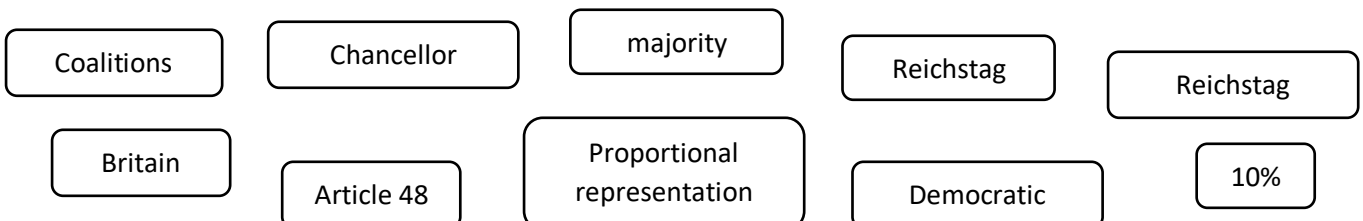
Task: Complete the gap fill below to identify the key elements of the Weimar Constitution.

STRENGTHS of the Weimar Constitution:

- It was very _____. Men and women had the vote at the age of 20 years, which was even more democratic than _____ where the age for men was 21 years and for women, 30 years.
- The _____ had to have the support of most of the politicians in the _____.
- Voting by _____ meant that the number of seats each party had in the Reichstag was based on the number of votes they got. For example, if a party won 10% of the votes they would win _____ of the seats in the Reichstag.

WEAKNESSES of the Weimar Constitution:

- _____ was not very democratic because it allowed the President to abandon the constitution and overrule the _____.
- Proportional representation meant that lots of smaller parties gained seats in the Reichstag making it very difficult to get a _____. As a result, parties had to form _____ and these often failed because of various disagreements.



The Treaty of Versailles

Key terms

Reparations- war damages to be paid by Germany

Diktat- dictated peace i.e. the Treaty of Versailles was forced on Germany because they were not allowed in the negotiations.

For most Germans, the Treaty of Versailles was a dictated peace- *diktat*. The Weimar government was blamed for this even though the initially rejected the treaty. Many people believed that the German army had not been defeated by the Allies, but forced to surrender by the new government. The army had been 'stabbed in the back' by the politicians who signed the armistice- these politicians became known as 'November criminals'.

Task: Use three colours to categorise the following terms of the Treaty of Versailles.

KEY

Territorial terms

Military terms

Financial terms

- The army could not exceed 100,000 soldiers
- Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France
- Reparations were fixed at £6.6 billion
- Rhineland was demilitarised
- No union with Austria (Aschluss)
- No submarines
- All colonies to be given to the Allied Powers
- West Prussia given to Poland
- Coal to be mined in the Saar by France
- No tanks, armoured cars or heavy military permitted



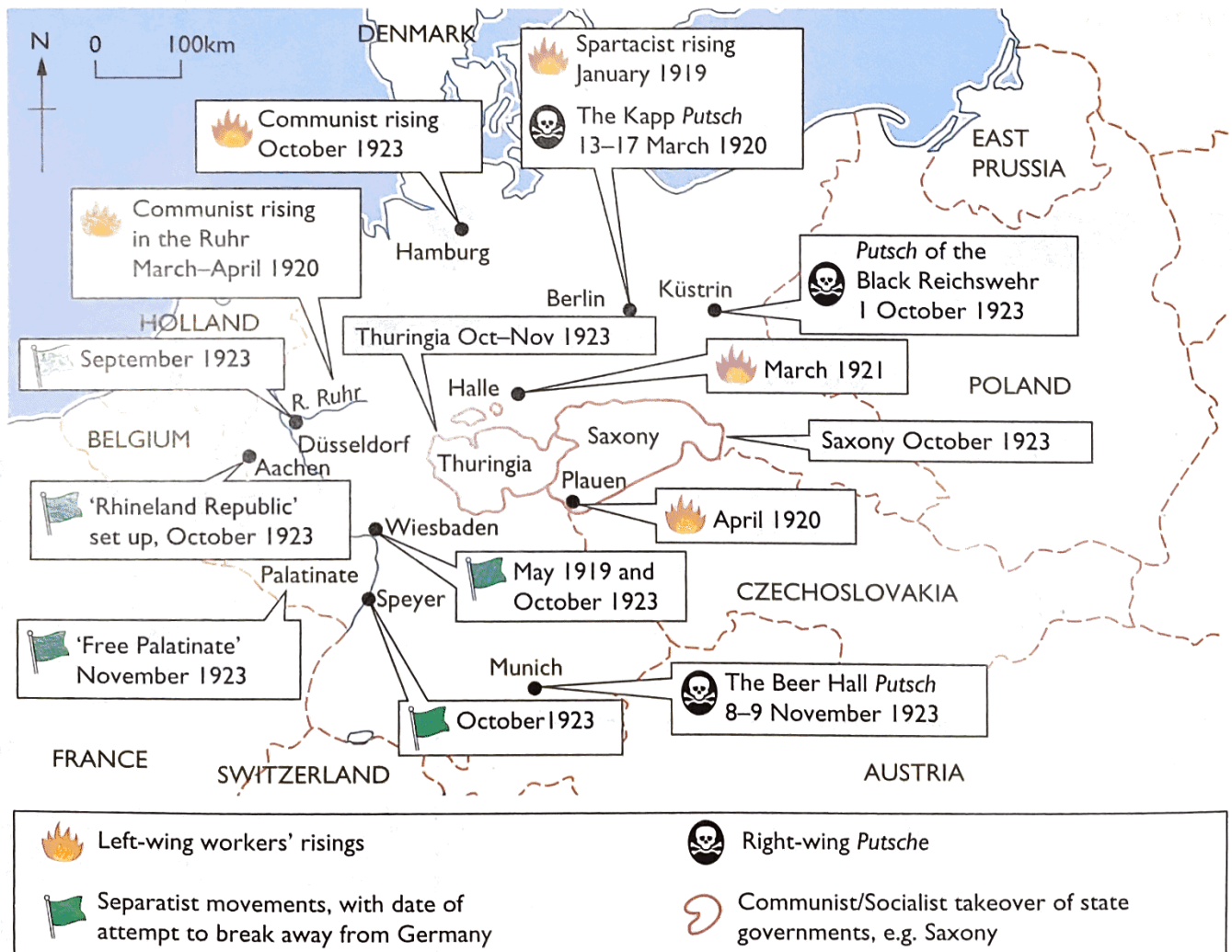
Picture 1. The territory lost by Germany as part of the Treaty of Versailles.

Political instability

The Weimar government was unpopular among many Germans, especially communists, socialists, nationalists, army leaders and those who helped govern Germany before. The Weimar Republic faced many threats from the left and the right, including several uprisings that threatened the government's existence.

Some Germans were hopeful that there would be a Communist revolution in Germany, just like in Russia. Soldiers, sailors and workers set up councils in October and November 1918.

This fear encouraged the German government to make a deal with the new army leader, General Groener. They agreed that the army would support the new government against revolution and the government would help support the supply of the army. Some Germans thought that the Weimar's dependency on the army made them weak.



SPARTACIST UPRISING

Who? Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, the Spartacist League (communists)

Where? Berlin, Germany

When? 6th January 1919

Why? Wanted to overthrow the Weimar government and start a Communist revolution

Events- after some protests, the Spartacists declared a general strike on 6th January, over 100,000 workers were involved in the action and rebellion. During this strike, the Spartacists seized key government buildings and telegraph offices.

End- the Weimar government found the revolt difficult to handle and asked the Freikorps (ex-soldiers) to put down the rebellion. They managed to do this by 13th January. Luxemburg and Liebknecht were arrested and killed.

KAPP PUTSCH

Who? Freikorps and Wolfgang Kapp

Where? Berlin, Germany

When? March 1920

Why? The Freikorps (ex-soldiers) were angry because of the restrictions the Weimar government had placed on them as part of the Treaty of Versailles

Events- Kapp successfully seized Berlin on 13th March, the Weimar government moved to Dresden and then Stuttgart. The Weimar government had asked the army to help stop the rebellion, but they refused to fire on fellow soldiers.

End- President Ebert called on the people of Berlin not to support the Kapp Putsch and asked them to go on strike. This meant that the rebellion had little support and it collapsed.

Task: Which do you think was a bigger threat to the Weimar government, the Spartacist Uprising or the Kapp Putsch? Explain your answer

Events in the Ruhr and hyperinflation

Key terms

Hyperinflation- extremely high inflation, where the value of money plummets and becomes worthless

Passive resistance- opposition to a government without using violence

During the First World War, Germany had borrowed lots of money. This meant that when the reparations were announced at £6.6 billion, the Weimar government claimed they could not afford it. They had also lost a lot of industrial land as part of the Treaty of Versailles, this made the problem much worse. To solve the problem, the Weimar government started to print more money so that they could pay France. The value of Germany currency started to fall rapidly and when Germany defaulted on one of their payments, the French occupied the Ruhr. The Ruhr was part of the Rhineland, which was an area where the German army were not allowed to go, this meant the Germans could not stop France from occupying it.

Task: Complete the gap fill below to find out about French occupation of the Ruhr.

French occupation was met with _____. This was when the German workers went on strike as a protest against the invasion. A number of these strikers were shot by French troops. The invasion united people in their _____ of French and Belgian troops. The strikers became heroes as they were standing up to the humiliating terms of the _____. The German backed the

workers by printing more _____ to pay their wages. With people not working, Germany was producing even less _____, which meant even less money. The extra strike money plus the collapse in production turned inflation into _____.

money

goods

Treaty of Versailles

hatred

hyperinflation

Exam Style Question



Source A: Hitler and his fellow Nazis marching through Munich in 1923

Use source A and your own knowledge to describe the events of the Munich Putsch (5 marks)

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