

Weimar Republic and Nazi Takeover

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Info

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Study Part

Factual knowledge

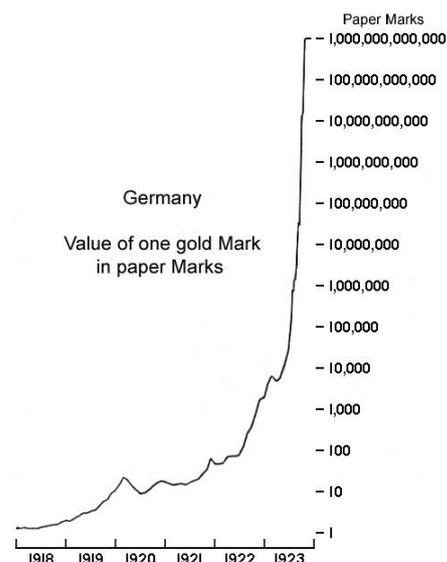
You know the content of the Weimar constitution

- The constitution gave the Reich president much power as he was allowed to dissolve the Reichstag and §48 basically allowed him to be a dictator (more on that later on). He was sort of a monarch, though elected by the people.
- Powers were separated, general suffrage (!), three chambers

You can describe the economic development in Germany between 1920 and 1930

There was a hyperinflation:

- Long-term reasons
 - Accumulated debts → banks, loans
 - › Money printing → devaluating own currency; to pay reparation payments, but these were defined in gold, not “money”
 - › Raised taxes → not possible for poor people
- Short-term reasons
 - › Invasion of the Ruhr valley
- Consequences
 - › New currency (the old became worthless)
 - › Dawes Plan
 - › Democracy lost many supporters (middle class)



The production rate and unemployment rate increased at the same time, which implies a change in production methods.

You know the Dawes¹ plan

The International Financial System Under the Dawes Plan and Young Plan 1924-30



¹ Won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1925
Version 1.0a from 1/13/2013

You know Germany's course in foreign policy in the 1920s

- Was admitted to the League of Nations
- Treaty of Versailles was diluted
- Ruhr evacuated
- Strengthened ties with France, GB, Soviet Union

You know the profiles of the major German parties of the 1920s

<p>Z (Centre Party)</p> <p>Formed in 1870 to protect Catholic interests. In favour of political reform and defended the Weimar Republic until 1930. Usually to the right of the DDP in its policies. Took part in Weimar governments up to 1932. Most support came from Catholic workers & middle class.</p>	<p>NSDAP (Nazis)</p> <p>Formed in 1919 as the German Workers' Party. An extremely nationalist and racist party which opposed the Weimar Republic. Initially pursued violent methods of winning power but later focused on winning elections. Appealed to all sectors of society after 1929.</p>
<p>DNVP (German National People's Party)</p> <p>A nationalist party formed in 1918 to protect the interests of the land-owning class. Rejected the Republic, the Treaty of Versailles and democracy. Most support came from Junkers (landed nobility) and some urban lower middle class.</p>	<p>DVP (German People's Party)</p> <p>Formed in 1918, this was a right-wing liberal party which opposed the Weimar Republic in principle but took part in governments. Most support came from the upper middle class and employers. Led by Gustav Stresemann who became Chancellor and Foreign Minister.</p>
<p>DDP (German Democratic Party)</p> <p>A left-wing liberal party formed in 1918. Supported the Weimar Constitution but lost electoral support after 1919. Most support came from liberal intellectuals and businessmen.</p>	<p>SPD (Social Democratic Party)</p> <p>Formed in 1875, this socialist party was the Weimar Republic's strongest supporter. Received more votes than any other party up to 1932. Most support came from workers and lower middle class. Radical members were thrown out in 1917 and formed the USPD.</p>
<p>KPD (Communist Party)</p> <p>Formed in 1918 by the Spartacus League. Joined Comintern (international communist organization led by Russia) in 1919. Opposed the Weimar Republic and wanted to establish a communist state in Germany. Became more popular after 1929.</p>	<p>BVP (Bavarian People's Party)</p> <p>A Catholic Party representing Bavaria. Effectively a branch of the Centre Party, but willing to work with anti-democratic politicians in Bavaria in order to exclude the SPD.</p>

You know the main steps of the fall of the Republic between 1929 and 1933

CHANCELLOR, YEAR(S)	EVENTS	CONSEQUENCES
Brüning, 20-32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reichstag rejects finance bill - Excluded SPD - Uses §48 often - "Hunger Chancellor" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finance bill: §48 used - Still has support - Reichstag dissolved, Nazis gained seats, but no majority → blocking minority - Dislikes
Papen, 32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hitler trying to become chancellor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nazis gain more seats
Schleicher, 32-33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tried to split Nazis - Papen seeks revenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Didn't work, Nazis event stronger - Hitler chancellor - Schleicher killed, - Papen vice-Chancellor

THE END OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

Understanding

You can explain the reasons of the inflation crisis in Germany and its effects on the further development of Germany

See "You can describe the economic development in Germany between 1920 and 1930" in the previous section.

You can explain the content and idea of Article 48 of the Weimar constitution

Together with §25, §48 was a backdoor & loophole which could be misused easily; §48 allowed the president the rule alone, without the Reichstag, which he could dissolve at any time (§25). Its original purpose was to allow the president to react swiftly if need be.

You can explain advantages and disadvantages of the Dawes plan

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| - Germany depended on foreign economies | + Currency stabilization |
| - Germany suffered from the Great Depression | + More foreign investments |

You can explain opposition against the Republic

The democracy was attacked from various sides

- Monarchy
- Left and right wing extremists' attacks
- Inflation crisis
 - › Suffered: middle class (who saved money in banks)
 - › Didn't suffer: real-estate & land owners, workers (you can't lose anything when you ain't got anything...)

You can explain why the stock market boomed in the 1920s & you can explain the reasons of the stock market crash in 1929

Short-term

- Panic reaction → pulling money out of stock exchange
 - › Demand declines → price declines

Long-term

- Borrowed money invested in stock market
- Stock market went up, while “real” revenue went down → satirized market & over-production (which was realized in 1928)
- Newly invented methods
 - › Deferred payment
 - › Loans
- Speculative bubble of the stock market
 - › Affordable for everyone → earn extra money without working
 - › Buy shares with credits → aggravation

You can explain why the stock market crash turned into a national and international depression & you can explain the effects of the depression on the politics in Germany

National

- Unemployment rate ~25%
 - › No social welfare
 - › Figure only includes people who *became* unemployed
 - › One unemployed affected many about 7 people (large families)
- 5,000 banks failed, 32,000 businesses failed
- GDP declined 30% within 4 years; money supply at the same rate
- Savings were lost → personal bankrupts
- Vicious circle, deflation: demand decreases → industrial crisis → increasing unemployment
- Whole US economy affect after few weeks, didn't recover until 1939/WWII
- Hawley-Smoot Tariff Act
 - › Legalized in 1930
 - › Massive protective tariffs (up to 49%)
 - › Against advice of 1k+ economists
 - › Risk of international trade breakdown
- “New Deal”
 - › Employment projects, e.g. Hoover Dam

International

- Dawes Plan
 - › Withdrawal of loans to Germany
 - › Blessing in 1924, curse in 1929
- Worldwide trade network / one single economic space (no isolation anymore)
 - › Biggest member tumbles
 - › Crisis
- Tariffs increased → protectionism

You can explain how various problems mutually aggravated each other in Germany after 1929

Content may follow

Interpretation

You can assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Weimar Republic²

- “Unfinished Revolution”
- §48 (and §25)
- Assassination of political opponents
- Inflation
- Social uprisings
- Strikes
- French invasion of the Ruhr
- + General suffrage
- + Tried to be democracy
- + freedom of speech and religion, and equality under the law
- + elected president and elected Reichstag

You can assess the political views in Germany about the government’s foreign policy

Content may follow

You can evaluate how appropriate the term “Golden Twenties”/“Roaring Twenties” is

- industrialization
- line production
- rationalization
- coal industry booming
- electrification
- inventions
 - › telephone, radio, cars, ...
- stock market
- new role of the women, huge “small” steps
- party, relief after war
- ➔ much change in very little time, uncertainty what was to come next

You can assess interpretations about the reasons of the fall of the Weimar Republic³

DATE	REASONS
1919-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic constraints (domestic → reparation payments / debts & international → stock market crash) - Depressed people, unhappy with the situation - Various leaders tried to “use” these people for their own ideas → Nazi movements - Doors were opened for Hitler - “national humiliation” by the Versailles Treaty - “Sabotaged coalition government”
1929-33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No parliamentary decision p Hitler - Mistaken policies of Brüning - Misguided men - Crisis caused not only by economy, but also by critics & enemies (Schleicher , Papen, Hindenburg) - Economic crisis - Unfunded unemployment benefits - Inevitable end, outcome open (there would have been a choice)⁴

² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/history/mwh/germany/weimarstrengthweakrev1.shtml>

³ Compiled sources from various historians

⁴ This is highly debated

“Linus’ Section”

Keywords, which I think are important to keep in mind

- Unfinished Revolution
 - › E.g. teachers, judges learned their stuff in the monarchy
 - › No time to develop a democracy
- Blocking minority
 - › Although neither the communists nor the Nazis had a majority in the Reichstag themselves, they could block every vote from 1932 on