

Weimar Republic – Democracy in Germany

Background

Germany had no real tradition of democracy. The country waged the First World War under the leadership of Kaiser Wilhelm II and the General Staff.

Democracy was only adopted following the armistice. The German leadership thought it might bring softer peace terms from the Americans.

The opening act of the new democratic leadership was signing the hugely unpopular Treaty of Versailles.

At first they refused to sign. Only after the Allies threatened the full invasion of Germany, did Secretary of State Erzberger sign the Treaty of Versailles.

The Treaty of Versailles was a permanent stain on democracy in Germany!

The Weimar Republic was in a struggle for survival. This was a period of informal power and violence

Attacks came from the left wing, and then they came from the right wing.

Right wing veterans from the First World War organized into the *Freikorps*, and violently crushed the left wing Spartacists Revolt.

Month later the *Freikorps* assassinated Erzberger, and then murdered the Foreign Minister, Walter Rathenau.

Rathenau was a Jew.

Not surprisingly, the *Freikorps* membership later became the heart and soul of Hitler's SA.

Some historians claim that these facts doomed the Weimar Republic.

There is definitely some truth to these claims, but we should not forget about the rising optimism under the leadership of Gustav Stresemann.

When the economy was booming in the 1920s, things looked good for democracy in Germany.

Then the New York Stock Market crashed in 1929!

The Germany economy tanked, and the German people turned to leaders offering radical solutions.

The man of the hour was Adolf Hitler!

The Bloodless Revolution

1) Why was it called the "Bloodless Revolution" of 1918?

2) Which group immediately threaten the survival of democracy in Germany?

3) Why was dependence on the army a problem?

4) What was the outcome of the Bloodless Revolution?

The Weimar Constitution

5) Complete the following chart.

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Notes</i>

Right Wing Attacks on the Weimar Republic

6) Complete the following chart.

<i>Revolt</i>	<i>Key Players</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Outcome / Significance</i>

7) "Putsch" - _____

8) The Weimar Republic was an attempt at democracy in Germany.

It failed due to the problems on the following chart. Explain why these problems were a threat to the survival of the Weimar Republic.

<i>Problem</i>	<i>Explanation of Threat</i>
Communism	
Treaty of Versailles	
Economic Situation	
Proportional Representation	