

# PAPER 1: Knowledge Organiser: Germany, 1890-1945

## Part 1: The growth of democracy, 1890-1929

## Key words (underlined)

### Key Dates

<b>1871</b>	The German <u>Empire</u> was created. Before 1871, Germany was made up of lots of independent states– one of these was <u>Prussia</u> .
<b>1888</b>	Wilhelm II became <u>Kaiser</u> (Emperor). He was also King of Prussia.
<b>1898</b>	<u>Naval race</u> : Germany began to expand its navy to compete with Britain's navy.
<b>1914</b>	World War I started
<b>1918</b>	November- Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated. World War I ended. Germany became a <u>Republic</u> .
<b>1919</b>	January– <u>Spartacist Uprising</u> . June– <u>Treaty of Versailles</u> signed.
<b>1920</b>	February– Founding of Nazi Party. March– <u>Kapp Putsch</u> .
<b>1923</b>	January– French and Belgian troops invaded German industrial area of the <u>Ruhr</u> . <u>Hyperinflation</u> made money worthless. November– <u>Munich Putsch</u> .
<b>1924</b>	August– <u>Dawes Plan</u> : US loans money to Germany.
<b>1926</b>	January– Germany joined the <u>League of Nations</u> .
<b>1929</b>	February– <u>Young Plan</u> was proposed. October– <u>Wall Street Crash</u> , leading to the <u>Great Depression</u> .

### Government under Kaiser Wilhelm II

<b>Constitution</b>	Set of rules by which a country is governed. The German constitution made the Kaiser the most powerful figure in government.
<b>Kaiser</b>	Kaiser (Emperor) held ultimate power. He could dismiss the Chancellor and dissolve (close down) the Reichstag. The Kaiser was the supreme commander of the army. He made all decisions that related to the army, navy and foreign policy.
<b>Chancellor</b>	Chancellor (like a Prime Minister) ran the government and proposed new laws. He had more influence than the Reichstag. He did not need the support of the Reichstag to stay in power. He only needed the support of the Kaiser.
<b>Reichstag</b>	This was the German parliament. Its members were elected by all men over 25. Members of parliament passed or rejected laws. They could not put forward their own laws and had no say in who became Chancellor or other ministers of government.
<b>Prussian army</b>	Played an important role in Germany's unification (1871). Wilhelm was strongly influenced by army generals and officers. He adopted a system of <u>militarism</u> . This meant strengthening Germany's military (e.g. army and navy).

### Problems for Kaiser Wilhelm II and his government

<b>Industrialisation</b> (build up of industry)	German industry expanded massively between 1890-1914. Production of iron and coal doubled. By 1914 Germany produced two-thirds of Europe's steel. It was also successful in new industries (chemical and electrical). As a result of industrialisation, the population in Germany's cities grew. The working class expanded, which challenged the upper class.
<b>Working class</b>	Many workers in new factories were unhappy because wages were low, working conditions poor, and food was expensive.
<b>Trade unions</b>	More and more working class people joined trade unions and organised strikes in the hope this would force the Kaiser and his government to improve their conditions.
<b>Socialism</b>	Many ordinary workers voted for a new political party called the <u>Social Democratic Party</u> (SPD). They believed in socialism– the idea that power and wealth should be shared equally among the people. This challenged the influence of the upper class, including the Kaiser. One in three Germans voted for the SPD by 1912. The SPD hoped the Kaiser would share some of his power, and allow the Reichstag to introduce laws to improve workers' rights and conditions.
<b>Radical socialism</b>	There were some socialists who took a more extreme view. They wanted to rebel against the Kaiser's rule, start a <u>socialist revolution</u> , take over the country, and allow cities and towns to be governed by councils of workers.

### Wilhelm tried to divert attention away from Socialism:

- The Kaiser tried to reduce discontent among the working class. His government introduced some limited social reforms, e.g. in 1891 the Workers' Protection Act was introduced to improve safety in the workplace.
- In 1897, the Kaiser adopted a foreign policy called Weltpolitik (world policy). This focused on expanding German territory and the size of the navy.
- The Kaiser hoped this would distract attention from socialism and increase support for the monarchy and military.
- In 1898, the first Navy Law was passed. Its eventual aim was to build up Germany's navy to rival Great Britain's. It increased Germany's fleet to include 19 battleships.
- Despite the Kaiser's best efforts, by 1912 the SPD was the largest party in the Reichstag. The Kaiser had managed to keep his power, but the growth of the SPD showed an increasing desire for democracy.

### Impact of World War I on the German people.

**Soldiers:** Men between 17 and 60 years conscripted. Soldiers worn down by terrible conditions in the trenches, bombs, poisonous gas and machine gun fire. War dead totalled 1.8 million. Millions more suffered permanent disabilities, both physical and mental.

**Home Front:** Very cold winter of 1916-17 led to terrible shortages of food and fuel. It was nicknamed the 'turnip winter'. Number of civilian deaths from starvation and hypothermia increased from 120,000 in 1916 to 290,000 in 1918. In 1918 Europe was hit by the 'Spanish flu', which caused over a million deaths in Germany.

**Women:** Women worked in factories, replacing men who had joined armed forces. The chance for better pay in armament factories. By October 1918 over a third of the total workforce was female. Women became more political, for example joining the SPD and trade unions. In 1915, 500 women gathered in front of the Reichstag and protested for the war to end.

**Economy:** German economy was ruined by the war. Factories had been producing guns, bullets and shells, not goods to sell abroad and making money. Germany had borrowed money from abroad (for example the USA) to pay for the war. This would need paying back. In 1916 10,000 workers assembled in Berlin and demanded an end to the war.

**Rebellion:** From October 1918 sailors in the German navy refused to follow orders because they no longer wanted to fight. Workers in the towns supported them and took part in huge strikes. In just six days, workers' and soldiers' councils were set up and governed towns and cities all over Germany, such as Munich. In November 1918 a huge protest was held in Berlin. Members of the SPD called for the Kaiser's resignation and a democracy. The country was in chaos and there was little the Kaiser could do.

# KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER: Germany. Part 1: The growth of democracy, 1890-1929

## Key words (underlined)

Timeline: The establishment of the Weimar Republic	
<b>October 1918</b>	German Generals told politicians they could never win the war.
<b>9 November</b>	<u>Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated</u> and left Germany, never to return. Germany became a Republic. Friedrich <u>Ebert</u> , the leader of Germany's largest political party (the <u>SPD</u> ), was put in charge of a temporary government. One of the first actions he took was to sign an armistice to end the war. Ebert promised to hold <u>democratic elections</u> .
<b>11 November</b>	Germany surrendered. The First World War ended.
<b>19 January 1919</b>	Ebert held the democratic elections he had promised. His own party, the left-wing SPD, won the most votes and Ebert became the new German President.
<b>11 February</b>	In the small German town of <u>Weimar</u> , Ebert and other newly elected politicians met to create a new <u>constitution</u> for Germany. This was the start of the <u>Weimar Republic</u> .

## Government of the Weimar Republic

<b><u>Democracy</u></b>	A system of running a country in which all adults have the right to vote for the government they want
<b><u>Republic</u></b>	A country run by a parliament with no monarch
<b><u>Constitution</u></b>	The rules by which a country is governed.
<b><u>President</u></b>	<u>Head of State</u> . Elected every seven years. Chose the Chancellor. Controlled army, navy and air force. Could dissolve the Reichstag and call new elections. Article 48 gave him emergency powers to suspend the constitution and pass laws without the Reichstag.
<b><u>Chancellor</u></b>	Like the <u>Prime Minister</u> . Chosen by President (usually from the political party with the most votes in an election). Must have the support of at least half the politicians in the Reichstag to introduce new laws. Responsible for day-to-day running of government.
<b><u>Reichstag</u></b>	<u>Parliament</u> . Discussed and introduced laws. Members of the Reichstag elected every four years by men and women aged 20. Voting system used was called <u>Proportional Representation (PR)</u> = parties got the same proportion of seats as their proportion of votes. E.g. if a party won 10% of the votes, it was given 10% of seats in parliament
<b><u>Weaknesses</u></b>	<u>PR</u> meant even parties with a very small number of votes got into the Reichstag. This meant it was difficult to make decisions because there were so many parties, and they all had different points of view. <u>Article 48</u> meant the President had too much power. This power was only supposed to be used in an emergency, but became a useful way of getting around disagreements in the Reichstag. This undermined democracy.

## Post-war economic problems

<b><u>Reparations</u></b>	In accepting blame for starting the war in the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was expected to pay for all the damage caused by it. Germany was forced to pay £6.6 billion in reparations. The Germany economy was already in tatters.
<b><u>Occupation of the Ruhr</u></b>	By 1923, Germany could no longer meet the reparation payments. France and Belgium decided to take resources instead, so occupied the Ruhr– the richest industrial part of Germany. This gave them access to Germany's iron and coal reserves. German government ordered workers in the Ruhr not to fight, but strike and not help the soldiers (passive resistance). French and Belgian soldiers killed 100 workers and 150,000 were thrown out of their homes.
<b><u>Hyperinflation</u></b>	German economy was devastated again. German government tried to solve debt problem by printing more money, but this plunged the economy into hyperinflation (prices spiralled out of control as money lost its value). In December 1921, a loaf of bread cost four marks. By November 1923, it cost 201 billion marks!

## Political opposition to the Weimar Republic, 1919-23

**January 1919:** Group of communists (left-wing) called the Spartacus League tried to take over Berlin, Germany's capital. Thousands took to the streets, firing guns and trying to take over important buildings. This became known as the Spartacist Uprising.

Ebert sent 2000 ex-soldiers, known as the Free Corps, to attack the Spartacists. After three days of brutal street fighting, the Free Corps recaptured buildings. A hundred Spartacists were killed. Luxemburg and Liebknecht, the Spartacist leaders, were arrested and brutally murdered by the Free Corps. The Spartacist Uprising was over.

**March 1920:** Some of the Free Corps took part in the Kapp Putsch ('Putsch' means rebellion)- led by Wolfgang Kapp. They took over Berlin. Kapp wanted to create a new right-wing government. He aimed to take over the whole country, make the army strong again, and then recover the lands Germany had lost in the Treaty of Versailles.

Ebert and the rest of the government fled from Berlin. However, Kapp did not have the support of the workers and they went on strike, resulting in no gas, water, electricity, or trains. Kapp was forced to give up and fled abroad. Ebert and his government returned to Berlin.

**November 1923:** Hyperinflation was at its peak and there were food riots. Germans were angry at French and Belgian invasion of the Ruhr. When the government stopped resisting by ending the strike in 1923 discontent increased.

The right-wing Nazis took over a beer hall in the Bavarian city of Munich where local government leaders were meeting. This was known as the Munich Putsch. Hitler announced he was taking over Bavaria, and then he would march to the German capital of Berlin and take over the whole country.

The next day Hitler marched into Munich supported by his private army, the Stormtroopers (SA). But news of the revolt had been leaked to the police, who were waiting for Hitler. The police fired on the rebels and the revolt collapsed. Hitler was sent to prison for just five years (he could have been executed for such a serious crime). Other Nazis got away with equally light sentences.

## Recovery? (1924-29)

**Stresemann:** Chancellor between August and November 1923. He made important changes to help Germany to recover from its economic crisis. E.g. He ended the strike in the Ruhr. But some of his decisions made him very unpopular and so he was only Chancellor for 102 days! He is best known for his work as Foreign Minister from 1924-29.

**Rentemmark:** In 1924, Stresemann replaced the worthless German Mark with the Rentenmark to stabilise Germany's currency. Hyperinflation ended.

**Dawes Plan (1924):** Stresemann secured France and Belgium's withdrawal from the Ruhr and agreed more realistic payment dates for reparations. The USA lent Germany £40 million. This helped to pay reparations and build new factories, houses, schools and roads in Germany. But the loans made the German economy dependent on US loans.

**Young Plan (1929):** The Allies agreed to reduce the reparations to a quarter of the original amount, and Germany was given longer to pay them.

**Locarno Pact (1925):** Germany, France and Belgium agreed to respect their joint borders – even those created as a result of the Treaty of Versailles.

**League of Nations:** Germany was allowed to join in 1926. Germany was re-established as an international (world) power.

**Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928):** Germany signed this agreement along with 65 other countries. They promised not to go to war, unless to defend themselves if attacked.

**Wall Street Crash (1929):** There was a massive stock market crash in America which started a global economic depression. This is known as the Great Depression. The German economy suffered even more as America demanded back all the money it had lent Germany since 1924 (Dawes Plan).