

The 1920 Reichstag of the Weimar Republic

Introduction

Before the start of the Great War in 1914, the German Empire was a major powerhouse in Europe. Having defeated France and annexed most of Alsace in 1871, Germany propelled itself to the front of the international stage as a military, economic, and colonial master. The nation had a booming industrialized economy, expansive railway systems and a standard of living that rivalled that of its neighbors. Politically, the Empire was ruled by *Kaiser*, or Emperor, but there was a parliament and a Chancellor. Yet, the Kaiser had the power to dissolve the parliament whenever he wanted. Across the country, duchies and nobility were the leaders of local communities, as the traditions of the centuries past still lingered in Europe.

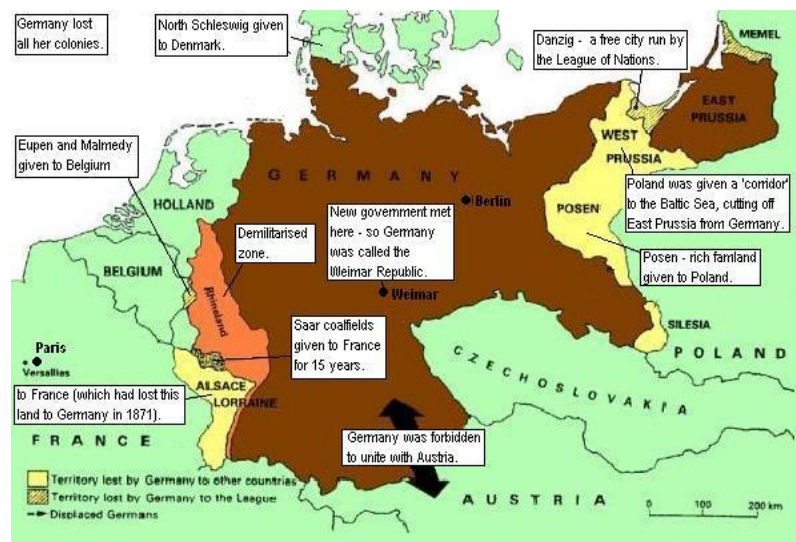
As for the military of the German Empire, it was one of the strongest in Europe at the time, with an expansive history of success. With its recent victories over its rival Austria, and the humiliation of France in the Franco-Prussian War, few nations dared challenge Germany. By all accounts, the German spirit, economy, and military prestige were strong motivators when the Great War broke out. However, after the initial momentum of Germany wore down and both sides engaged in trench warfare, things started to take a detrimental turn for Germany.

In the last days of the war, with the advanced weaponry and military tactics of the Allied Powers, rapidly decreasing morale of both the German army and the public, and a severe lack of resources and equipment, Germany's situation increasingly seemed unwinnable.

After a series of mutinies by German naval officers and soldiers, such as the Kiel mutiny on November 3, 1918, Kaiser Wilhelm the II lost the support of the people, and was forced to abdicate the throne of the German Empire on November 8, 1918. The next day, a provisional government was created, and two days later, on the 11th of November, 1918, an armistice was signed, putting an end to the Great War.

In December, the provisional government held elections to put together a National Assembly that would be tasked with creating a new parliamentary constitution for Germany, a radical shift from the years of feudal and imperial rule. In February the following year, this National Assembly formed the Weimar Coalition, named after the city in which it met, and formed the new government of Germany. Friedrich Ebert of the Social Democratic Party was named the President of the newly formed Weimar Republic.

Shortly after, the Versailles Treaty was signed June 2019. The treaty stipulated that Germany reduce the size of its military to only 100,000 men, get rid of its navy and air force, take full responsibility for the start of the war, give its colonial possessions as well as core cultural territories to the victors, and pay £6,600 million in installments to the allied powers. Additionally, Germany was not allowed to join the League of Nations, a precursor to the United Nations that was aimed to ensure peace



Representation of the territorial loss of the German Empire, as dictated by the Versailles Treaty, in addition to all German colonies.

and stability in the 20th century. This expulsion from the international community deteriorated the relations of Germany with the rest of the world, which further impacted trade.

Current Situation

These are trying times for the newborn republic and there are many issues on the horizon that the committee will have to deal with.

First of all, the hyperinflation of the Weimar Republic, coupled with the war reparations imposed by the Versailles Treaty, is a wide-reaching economic problem that the committee must make an effort to solve as fast as possible. Since the beginning of the war, the pre-existing economic woes of the empire have only multiplied due to the poor choices of the previous German Empire government. While those on the other side of the war, namely France, funded the war by imposing income taxes, Kaiser Wilhelm II and his advisors decided to fund the war entirely by borrowing money. It was believed

that once the war was won, Germany would be able to pay off the debt by annexing resource-rich industrial territory from its enemies. The Kaiser also believed that he would be able to impose massive reparation costs on the defeated nations. This strategy, however, failed when Germany lost the war. Immediately, the new Weimar Republic was left with a broken economy, a discouraged society, and a monumental amount of national debt, and due to the Treaty of Versailles, further reparations to pay to the victors of the war. As of now in 1920, around 50 German Mark is equal to one United States dollar, and this exchange rate is projected to worsen in the near future. The committee must come up with actionable policies to combat the inflation and to repay the debt and reparations in some manner.



A wounded German veteran asking for money on the street in 1919. Many veterans came back to destroyed homes and were thus rendered homeless.

Furthermore, such economic issues have given rise to an increase in unrest among the populace of the nation. With businesses, shopkeepers and artisans worried about the future success of the industry, many bright and talented individuals of Germany seek to leave for more prosperous lands, particularly the United States. Among those who cannot afford to leave, extreme poverty and hunger is on the rise, creating further socio-economic issues for the nation. Additionally, the resulting increase in homelessness and poverty, coupled with the many veterans and nationalists that want revenge for the humiliation of the German Empire by the Treaty of Versailles, many in Germany are beginning to strike and protest.



Piles of German Mark awaiting distribution at the Central Bank in Berlin during the hyperinflation.

Demonstrations, and cries for more effective government reform echo on the streets of every city in Germany, where the protesters find themselves more and more aligned with strong radical political parties like the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP) and the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (KPD). On one side, veterans and ultra-nationalists rally with the NSDAP on the common feelings of hatred and the desire for revenge against the traitorous government and the Versailles Treaty. These groups lack central organization as of now, but this may change if their issues are not addressed. On the other side of the political compass, socialists and anarcho-liberals continue to protest and strike against the government, much like they have done before and during the war. Their grievances lie with the ruling class' abuse of the working class, working conditions, high rent and a myriad of other issues.

So far, there have been multiple clashes, some violent, between leftist protesters and the police in cities like Berlin. While the KPD and other leftist organizations are claiming that the government and the police are using excessive, disproportional violence against leftist protesters, these accusations have been dismissed. Meanwhile, there have not yet been any police intervention against right wing protests, a fact which the KPD has claimed shows the favoritism of the government against the right.

So far, both the NSDAP and the KPD parties have not expressed direct support for the protesters, but are certainly benefitting from these public displays of support for their parties' ideals. They expect that with such civil disobedience, the government will more support their proposals. It is also worth noting that, currently, neither party has a formalized paramilitary group.

Lastly, international relations, trade, and the war reparations that must be paid are subsidiary issues that the committee should aim to resolve. Ever since the war and the loss of substantial territory, both colonial and European, Germany's relations with the international community is at an all-time low. The exclusion from the League of Nations only compounds this issue. Many in Germany believe that the nation was treated too harshly in the peace deal of the war and that foreigners exploited the people of Germany. This is likely to have an effect on the public opinion on policies involving other nations and could further the agenda of certain political parties in the government.

In concert with this spike in hostilities, trade is suffering which only serves to further the economic problems of the republic. With the expulsion from the League of Nations, and inflamed tensions between Germany and the rest of the international community, Germany had few trade partners to whom to sell its coal and machinery. It should be the aim of the parties supporting the democratic institution to remedy the situation, while it should be the general aim of the committee to alleviate the damages of these circumstances.



The Weimar Reichstag in session in 1920. With the members sitting in a semicircle arrangement in front of the Chancellor.

As for the payment of the war reparations, the committee can call upon a variety of solutions, with the most straightforward of which being strict adherence to the reparations. The most radical direction the committee could take Germany, is to oppose the war reparations all together, which would naturally have consequences in of its own. There is no certainty what direction would be most beneficial to the people of Germany at this time, but some parties are likely to benefit from different directions the committee may go down.

Directive

While there is no singular clear goal that the committee is trying to reach, the delegates must work together to solve the various current issues in the Weimar Republic. Managing foreign relations and trade, curbing the violent protests of the people, and making sure that Germany is stable are among the objectives of the government. However, individual political parties and politicians may strive for different things and it is important to keep an eye on your colleagues. As more issues present themselves in the nation, the committee will need to be adaptable as well as resolute in coming up with quick solutions to address the demands of the people of Germany. For example, there are rumors among military observers of a possible interposition by France due to the slow repayment of the reparations.

The Reichstag Composition

At the start date of the committee in 1920, there are several powerful political parties that have been chosen to be represented in the committee. The committee, a smaller representation of the German Parliament, is the legislative body of the Weimar Republic and, aside from the President, hold the most power in the government.

***“Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands”* or The Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD)**

The first party of significance in the new republic is the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). The SPD, born from an increasing desire for individualistic political and social freedom in Germany like in the western powers, is currently the most powerful political force in the Weimar Republic. It not only provided the first President of the Republic, Friedrich Ebert, but was one of the leading parties to write the constitution as well. It could be said that this party is synonymous with

democracy, and is thus the backbone of the democratic movement in Germany. Such accomplishments have secured the future of the party and have placed it in a good position from which to propose and enact policies that the party favors.

The strength of the SPD comes from its initial momentum in the political sphere of Germany. With the current president, Friedrich Ebert, being an SPD candidate and with various SPD members occupying key roles in government and in the police force of Germany, the party is very numerous in size and well connected. It is unlikely at this time that the SPD will be dethroned from the positions it holds around institutions, but the future of the republic may change.

While the majority of the population views the SPD favorably, this sentiment is subject to change if the SPD government is ineffective in enacting positive social and economic reforms in the new republic. Any changes in sentiment against the democracy in Germany will directly impact the support for the SPD as well, and vice versa.

“Zentrum” or The “Center” Party of Germany (Zentrum)

The prominent centrist party in Germany is Zentrum, which strongly represents the views of the Catholic population in Germany, which constitutes the vast majority of South Germans. With views and policies that often serve as a middle ground between the radical wing parties in parliament, Zentrum ideology is adaptable to the concerns and ideas of both the German people as well as their colleagues in the parliament. Such a position is sure to allow Zentrum members to take the best of both worlds in parliament to promote their own reputation and standing in the political spheres, and Zentrum is thus more likely to be in political coalitions than any other party. Their standing in this middle ground position will likely persist as the times go on, and the party may therefore enjoy stable ground from which to act.

Zentrum draws the vast majority of its membership from the Christian southern Germany, an unignorable population in German politics. This also means, however, that Zentrum is susceptible to potential changes in desires of the Christian Germans that constitute its membership. With key members of the clergy and the potential backing of those that follow them, Zentrum may use their influence among religious circles to influence the people of Germany.

Zentrum, like the SPD, is fully pro-democracy. Collaboration between Zentrum and the SPD is likely to yield beneficial results for the democratic institution in Germany.

“Deutschnationale Volkspartei” or The German National People’s Party (DNVP)

One of the fiercest opponents of the Weimar Republic was the German National People’s Party (DNVP). As a party representing the monarchist view many Germans at the time still shared and championing the return of the Kaiser and the reformation of a new German Empire, this political party resisted the democratic system from its earliest moments. The overarching goal of this political party is to delegitimize the democratic institution as much as possible at every opportunity and prepare the political sphere for the return of the Kaiser Wilhelm II from exile in the Netherlands. While an optimistic goal, it is certainly possible and is something that other political parties fear, especially with the lingering loyalties to the Kaiser in both the government and the armed forces of Germany.

The composition of the supporters, both direct and indirect, of the DNVP are arguably the most well-known and powerful among the other parties. First, there are is the “old guard” of the imperial army. Having been decorated and rewarded during the wars past, the old guard are mostly still loyal to the Kaiser whose decisions allowed them to accumulate their renown and positions. Like them, the members of the nobility, though not as powerful in the 20th century, would benefit greatly to a return to

the imperial system, as they would likely see their vast riches and political power returned to them by the Kaiser.

Furthermore, it is likely that the DNVP are in touch with other loyalists both within and without the government of the Weimar Republic. Relying on the riches and former prestige of their members, the DNVP is a well-funded and well established party in Germany, and will likely benefit from publicized failures of the democratic institution.

“Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands” or The Communist Party of Germany (KPD)

The Communist Party of Germany (KPD), is another party that opposed the democratic institution. Having started immediately after the end of the war, the founding members of the party were figures that had already actively protested against the limited liberties in pre-1918 Germany. Now out of the war and with the new democracy, the party is just as critical of the new government. Denouncing it as being exploitative of the working class and simply a guise for the rich and powerful to control the country, the KPD’s ultimate goal would be the formation of a socialist regime, similar to the one in the Soviet Union.

The party is almost completely made up of labor workers, university students and farmers, who demand reform to reduce the power held by the rich and powerful of Germany. While this group may not be regarded as having great political power or resources available, the party as well as its supporters demonstrate high levels of organization and communication. Additionally, the supporters of the KPD and the ideals of communism are resolute in their quest to make both Germany and the world at large better for the people.

Communicating often with other communist movements in Europe, especially in France, the UK, Italy and the Soviet Union, the KPD and the people that support it exhibit a great level of class consciousness and solidarity. Any international action that targets workers or is related to international communist parties will likely increase the popularity and aggressiveness of the KPD. The KPD receives indirect aid and help from the Soviet Embassy in Berlin, though the Soviet Union has yet to officially announce their support of the KPD and their actions.

Though ideologically against the concept of a representative democracy, the KPD is more likely to support government reform and policy adoption through legal channels if it means opposing the agenda of right-wing parties.

“Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei” or The National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP)

Lastly, the nationalist, hard right-wing National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP) is a relatively new political party and as of now the smallest of the other four. Yet, since the end of the war, the party has been gaining steady support from broad sections of the population. Playing on the insecurities and fear of the population, following the defeat in the war, the party’s policies and plans involve the expulsion of foreign influence in German political spheres, nationalization of key industries and to “regain the honor” of the German people. The party has also taken a hard stance in racial and ethnic matters in Germany; something the intellectuals and elites in the new republic are concerned about. With rampant anti-Semitism in the ranks of the party leadership, it is unclear what the future holds for the public popularity and political power of the party.

Though still in its infancy, the NSDAP’s membership increasing more rapidly than any other party. With many low-ranking veterans of the war in the party, the NSDAP seems to garner the support of people that are upset with the embarrassment that the nation suffered after the war, and look for someone to blame. As people with such sentiments are scattered around the nation and the party was created very recently, the party and its supporters lack organization and communication with fellow

supporters at this time. Yet, like the KPD, the members of this party are resolute in their goals to return Germany and its people to the forefront of global politics.

Members of the *Reichstag*

Members of the “*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*” (KPD)

Friedrich “Fritz” Baumann

Born in 1899, Fritz worked in his father’s bakery all his life in Hamburg until the war. When the war started, both his father and brother were drafted to fight on the eastern front. After hearing the news of their loss in 1915, Fritz started to become disillusioned with the government and started reading communist theory. He later joined the KPD in 1919. Regarded as very radical and aggressive among his peers, Fritz has formed good relations with people that often take part in protests and riots.

Helmut Schröder

Helmut studied international law and economics in Moscow State University until a year before the start of the war. He has a great investment with the recent revolution in Russia, having lost university friends in the bloody aftermath of the revolution. He was interrogated and placed under house arrest upon the start of the war, as he was suspected of having been converted to spy on behalf of Russia. Helmut has intimate knowledge of the ideals of the communist revolution and has an increasingly negative perception of the German government. He does have a few friends in the Soviet embassy in Berlin.

Johannes Elm

Johannes Elm is a staunch pacifist and is totally committed to the utopian ideals of a stressless communist utopia. Though he did not attend any formal education institution, he travelled around western Europe from 1905 to 1910 and stayed at friends’ homes and hostels. Having spent a considerable amount of time among like-minded working class friends in France, Italy, Spain, and even great Britain, Johannes has many leftist associates with whom he is still in contact.

Members of the “*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*” (SPD)

Joseph Benda

Joseph Benda is the former president of the Berlin police force, and thus commands great respect and authority among democratic institutions in Berlin. He retired when he grew worried of the future of German democracy, and decided to run for a parliamentary seat. Despite his record, he has been the center of controversy during the war when his police department used excessive force against revolutionary protesters in Berlin. The increasing dislike of him may be attributed to the fact that his mother was Jewish.

Dominic Kuhn

Dominic Kuhn, a Berlin based businessman, owns a few factories around the country, and deals mostly with raw mineral refinement. Kuhn ran for government out of fear that radical movements in the government would interfere with his various manufacturing businesses. Having dealt a decent amount with other traders around Europe and even in the United States before the war, Kuhn is likely to possess connections in business circles, both within and without Germany.

Charlotte “Lotte” Ritter

Charlotte grew up in a very poor household in Berlin with five siblings. Her parents were bedridden most of her childhood, so she had to step up care for her sisters and brothers. Headstrong, brave and resolute in her goals, she worked her way through the government ranks in 1919, and later decided to run for Parliament. She is the youngest member of the Reichstag, and with her young age of only 25, she will likely resonate with women around the nation, and use her platform to further the rights of women.

Members of “Zentrum”**Alexander Schmitt**

“Be true only to yourself and God,” is the motto Alexander Schmitt lives by, ever since his late father told him those words when he was a child. When his father died of old age before the war, Alex became the priest in his town outside of Munich. He later ran for parliament when he was encouraged to do so by his church patrons. A well respected man of the clergy in his community, Alexander Schmitt is likely to gain national favor among the religious population in Germany.

German Fritz

Inserted into Frankfurt at the end of the war by a special branch of the British Intelligence Services, German Fritz is a double agent that had been converted to the Allies’ side when he was captured during the final years of the war. Often referred to in communications with London as “Lone Bear,” he has been tasked with the preservation of a weak German state, and with that goal in mind, German joined the centrist party. German has foreign espionage contacts which will likely come in handy.

Albert von Holstein

While von Holstein was an official in the previous German Empire government, he advocated against the war with France from the beginning. He later sat in on the constitution committee in 1918 and has thus experience within his party and a decent reputation among French and British diplomats. Viewed as a traitor by some, even in his own party, Albert is still a respected voice among international circles.

Members of the “*Deutschnationale Volkspartei*” (DNVP)**Wolfgang von Strauss**

As a decorated and well respected military general, von Strauss earned his reputation through his countless successful offensives on the eastern front during the war. Though he may be the oldest member of the Reichstag, at an age of 82, he is viewed in Germany as a national hero and is likely to have his views respected by the public. He is still in touch with his military colleagues and has contacts with a variety of different servicemen in the different branches of the army.

Elise Baumfeld

Born to Jewish parents, Elise was raised to work at the bank in Berlin at which her father was a respected manager. After the outbreak of the war, with the increase in anti-Semitism and anger in the public caused her father to step down from his position and move to the countryside, much to the

displeasure of Elise. She felt wronged by those who had now come into power and blamed them for the misfortune that fell upon her family. Elise soon returned to Berlin to pursue a career in politics to restore the political order in which her father had grown up.

Simon Müller

An advisor to the last Kaiser, Simon is member of an ongoing conspiracy in government circles that aims to stage a coup and make way for the return of the Kaiser from the Netherlands. With orders directly from the Kaiser's staff in exile, Simon is well funded and has direct contact with monarchist supporters in Germany.

Members of the “*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*” (NSDAP)

Otto Alpers

Raised in a household that thoroughly believed in the war and Germany's righteous role in it, Otto enlisted to fight in 1917. Ironically, the same week he was sent to the front, he was wounded, and sent to a hospital to recover. He did not leave the hospital until 1919. Soon after, he found out of Germany's loss in the war as well of the death of his father. His mother blamed the loss of the war and the condition of Otto on his father's heart attack. Otto joined the NSDAP out of hatred for the allied powers. This passion has earned him many like-minded friends who regularly attend protests.

Paul Reichert

While initially an apolitical fellow who just felt as though his beloved nation was being disgraced by the victors of the war to an unfair degree, Paul soon came across NSDAP flyers preaching the sort of things he already thought were true. He thus joined the local branch of the party and soon was encouraged to run for the Reichstag, based on his soft-spoken and charismatic nature. This trait allowed him to get elected, and at the same time, allows him to appeal to those members of society that are still on the fence about joining the NSDAP. He was featured on a political poster a few months ago.

Dieter Krupp

A general from the western front who was denied commendation by his Jewish superiors, Dieter has held a grudge against the government and the elite of Germany since the end of the war. A deeply suspicious man, before leaving the army at the end of the war, a few friends and him stole a warehouse worth of weaponry which he now stashes in his forest lodge near Frankfurt.