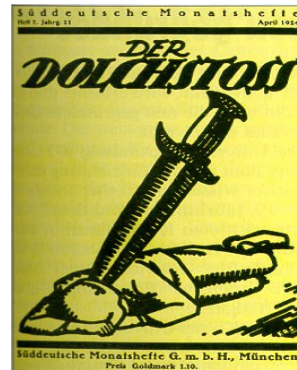


The Rise of Fascism

What problems faced
the Weimar
Government of
Germany 1919–1923?



A. Background

- ▣ Difficult start- 1918 - 1923
 - President Wilson would not deal with the Kaiser
 - Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicates and civilian government set up
 - It is hated by nationalists who loved the Kaiser and Imperial Germany
 - Nov. 1918 - new government blamed for armistice, rumor spreads, army had been "stabbed in the back" by govt.

B. Ineffective Constitution and Government Authority

- The Weimar Constitution did not create a strong democratic government:
 - **Article 48** of the constitution gave the President sole power in 'times of emergency' – something he took often.
- The system of **proportional voting** led to 28 parties. This made it virtually impossible to establish a majority in the Reichstag, and led to frequent changes in the government.
 - During 1919-33, there were twenty separate coalition governments and the longest government lasted only two years. This political chaos caused many to lose faith in the new democratic system.

-
- The **Army**, was not fully under the government's control.
 - It failed to support government during the Kapp Putsch or the crisis of 1923.
 - Many government officials – especially **judges** – were right-wing and wanted to destroy the government.
 - After the Kapp Putsch, 700 rebels were tried for treason; only 1 went to prison. After the Munich Putsch, Hitler went to prison for only 9 months

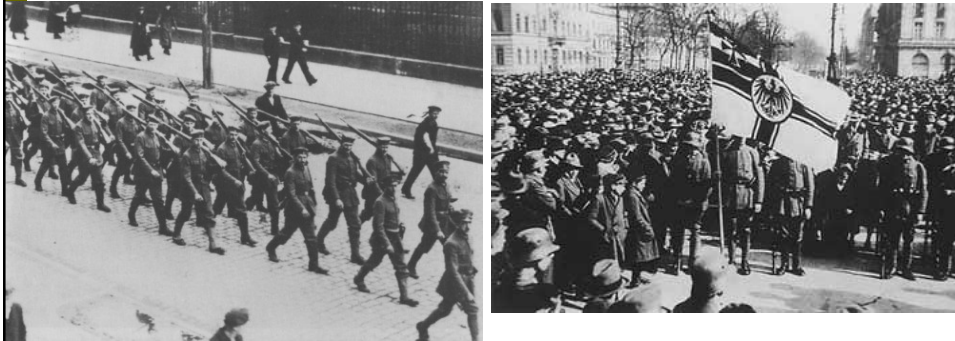
C. Left-wing Rebellions

- The Communist **KPD** hated the new government:
 - In Jan 1919, 50,000 **Spartacists** rebelled in Berlin, led by **Rosa Luxemburg** and **Karl Leibknecht**.
 - They were only defeated by ex-soldier "Freikorps" and the army – the government was seen as ineffective
 - In 1919, Communist **Workers' Councils** seized power all over Germany, and a Communist 'People's Government' took power in **Bavaria**.
 - A communist paramilitary organization also rebelled in the Ruhr

D. Right-wing Terrorism

- Many right-wing groups hated the Weimar government for signing the **Versailles Treaty**
- The **Kapp Putsch**: in March 1920, a **Freikorps** brigade rebelled against the Treaty, led by Dr Wolfgang Kapp.
 - It took over Berlin and tried to bring back the Kaiser.
 - It was defeated by communist and worker groups
- Nationalist terrorist groups murdered 356 politicians.
 - In August 1921 Matthias **Erzberger**, the man who signed the armistice (and therefore a 'November criminal'), was shot.
 - In Berlin on 1 October 1923, soldiers calling themselves **Black Reichswehr** rebelled, led by Bruno Buchrucker.
 - The **Rhineland** declared independence (21–22 October)

Images of the Kapp Putsch



E. Invasion-Inflation: the crisis of 1923

- The cause of the inflation was **Reparations**
 - the government paid them by printing more money, causing inflation. In January 1923, Germany failed to make a payment, and France invaded the **Ruhr**.
 - This humiliated the government, which ordered a general strike, and paid the strikers by printing more money, causing hyperinflation:

- ▣ Dec. 1922 7000 marks = \$1US
- ▣ July 1923 160,000 marks = \$1
- ▣ Nov. 1923 4,200,000,000,000 marks = \$1

- ▣ Middle class devastated
- ▣ Rich get richer - their wealth in land and industry

Germany, 1923



F. Munich Putsch

- On 8–9 November 1923, Hitler's Nazi Brownshirts tried to take control of Bavaria (the **Munich Putsch** or **Beer Hall Putsch**).



Hitler's failure taught him to come to power by legal means!



The arrival in Munich of troops supporting Hitler.

Recovery and Prosperity - 1924 - 1929

THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC UNDER
GUSTAV STRESEMAN



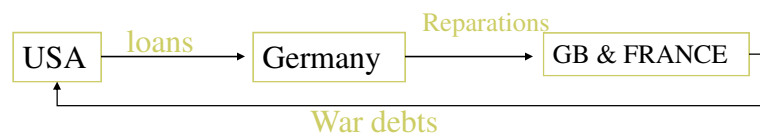
Gustav Stresemann 1878-1929

G. THE FACTS

- ✚ Stresemann was Chancellor in 1923 only.
- ✚ His main role was as Foreign Minister from 1924
- ✚ He was a right-winger and more capable than Ebert
- ✚ He built up Germany's prosperity again although all of Europe was recovering at this time as well

THE DAWES PLAN - 1924

- Germany's reparations rescheduled over a longer period
- America lent money to German industry and also to the Government to pay reparations
- German currency reorganised



H. Foreign Policy

Stresemann showed real skill in foreign policy

1. Locarno Treaties – 1925 (guaranteed Versailles Treaty Borders)
2. 1926 – Germany joined the League of Nations
3. Young plan – 1929 – more loans from the US

After a number of years in the wilderness Germany was accepted back into the international community

Locarno Treaties

Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Poland met at Locarno in Switzerland.

Signed a number of treaties to settle disputes between themselves

1. France, Belgium and Germany agreed to accept borders as drawn up by Treaty of Versailles
 2. Rhineland stayed demilitarised
 3. France would protect Poland and Czechoslovakia if attacked by Germany
 4. Germany would not use force to settle disputes with neighbours
- (Note Hitler nullified this treaty when he sent his armies into the Rhineland in 1936)

I. Other features of the Stresemann Years

- Golden age of German cinema
 - Night life, cabaret
 - Removal of censorship
 - Unemployment and poverty still high
 - Growing prosperity based on USA loans –
what would happen if USA wanted the money back ?
- POSITIVES
- NEGATIVES

Both the Nazis and the Communists made little progress in these years because people were much better off and their EXTREME ideas did not appeal to people

Sources:

By Mr. Crowe

www.SchoolHistory.co.uk