

Germany 1890-1945



Recap

Germany under the Kaiser

A: Introduction

1888-1918 Germany was a monarchy under the rule of Kaiser Wilhelm II. The term 'Kaiser' came from Caesar meaning Emperor with absolute power. The Kaiser was an absolute monarch and retained power until death. He had the ability to choose the Chancellor (Prime Minister). He also had power over Foreign Policy and influence on Domestic Policy.

B: The Context - Unification of Germany

Prior to 1871 Germany was a group of 25 separate German-speaking states and city-states between France, Russia and the North Sea coast. Each state had its own traditions, culture and in some cases language. In 1871 these states were unified to form Germany and this was fueled by a rise in German nationalism pushed on by Prussia, the leading state before unification. Leading Germany to its success would be its army and navy which it needed to compete with other nations such as Britain, America, France and Russia.

C: Powers of the Kaiser:

The new German constitution (system of running a country) was a mix of strong monarchical power and individual rights. The emperor retained absolute power over ministers and government decisions: he could hire and fire the chancellor (prime minister), determine foreign policy and was commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He also had some influence over domestic policy but this was mainly the Chancellor's area of power.

D: Foreign Policy

Germany's foreign policy approach during this period was called *Weltpolitik*; it was more confident, assertive, some might say aggressive; with the aim of strengthening Germany. *Weltpolitik* began to generate tensions and fears of a European conflict. The Kaiser allowed its 1887 treaty with Russia to expire, and its aggressive diplomacy pushed the Russians into an alliance with France, losing them an ally. Germany also began to expand her army and navy and used this to gain new colonies or possessions in Africa, East Asia and the Pacific.

E: Domestic Policy

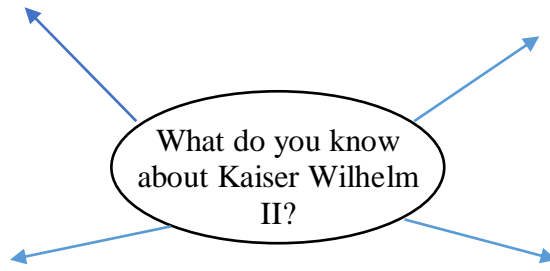
The government adopted policies to encourage industrial growth and Germany experienced an economic and technological boom for most of the late 1800s. The unification of Germany boosted industrial growth, railway construction, coal production, iron ore mining and foreign investment. German banks formed and grew quickly, providing credit and investment for new ventures. With its large and rapidly growing population (40 million in 1880, 58.5 million by 1910) Germany had a workforce large enough to meet the needs of industrialisation. By 1900 Germany had overtaken Britain economically, and was second only to the United States.

F: Challenges to his reign

During his reign the Kaiser faced challenges due to the complexity of ruling a newly united Germany. Some extremist groups viewed him as too authoritarian or 'power-hungry' in comparison to the previous Kaiser and sought to challenge him. Extremist groups such as Anarchists grew in popularity in this period. Anarchists believed that the government limited people's freedom and without laws and coercion (violence) from the government, people would live freely with no need for a government. A handful of bombings around Europe caused great concern for many people. Any people involved in extremist activities were closely monitored and arrested if necessary.

G: Trade Unions

In 1900 the membership of the socialist trade unions was 680,000. Trade unions were groups who protected workers' rights and could go on strike (refuse to work) to try and force this. They were generally socialist (believed in fairness and equality), which many of the ruling classes (business owners) didn't like. By 1913 membership had risen to 2,575,000. They had influence over the Social Democratic Party (SPD) who won 35% of the vote in the 1912 election.



Challenges: Add some more information about what these challenges were.	Why was this a problem for Kaiser Wilhelm II?
Rapid industrialisation -	
The growth of socialism -	

Exam Question : Describe two problems faced by the Kaiser in ruling Germany between 1871-1914.

Weimar Germany

A: Why did the rule of the Kaiser come to an end?

As the war went on, conditions in Germany worsened and people began to call for the war to end. On the 10th November 1918 the **Kaiser** ran off to Holland. The very first thing the new government was to surrender. The war was over. The leaders who signed the armistice were given the nickname 'November Criminals' by those who opposed the Treaty of Versailles.

B: The New Constitution

Under the Kaiser Germany had been almost completely under his control. It was a **Monarchy**. He made the laws and chose the **Chancellor**, etc. Under the New Constitution: Germany was now a **democracy** with elections and freedom for ordinary people. The Monarchy was brought to an end and Germany became a **Republic**. The capital was moved to **Weimar**.

C: The Treaty of Versailles

The Treaty of Versailles was signed in 1919 by the leaders of the Weimar Republic. It severely restricted Germany **militarily** (only allowed any army of 100,000, and prevented Germany from controlling certain **German speaking areas** (Saarland, Sudetenland) and pay **reparations** (compensation) money to the allied countries.

D: What problems did the Weimar Republic face from 1919 to 1922?

Many Germans were unhappy with the new constitution and the new government.

Communists attempted to overthrow the govt three times: with the **Spartakist** revolt (1919); **Bavaria declared independence** (1919); and the **Red Rising in the Ruhr** (1920). All three attempts were defeated when the govt 'unleashed' the **Freikorps**.

Nationalists caused problems for the govt: when the **Treaty of Versailles announced** in May 1919 the people called govt ministers who signed the treaty "**November criminals**,"; **Kapp Putsch** (1920)- which was defeated by a strike and the **murder of Walter Rathenau** (1922)

D: The Year of crisis 1923.

The invasion of the Ruhr: Germany because they had not been paying their reparations so the French invaded. The Germans that worked in the factories were told to follow a policy of "**passive resistance**." The French reacted with violence and forced evictions.

Hyperinflation: the government then started to print off money to pay the French. This caused the money to become hyperinflated making it worthless.

The Munich/Beer Hall Putsch: in November Hitler tried to take over. Hitler was arrested and charged with treason. He was given 5 years in prison but was released after 9 months.

E: Stresemann years 1924- 1929

Stresemann led Germany to recovery during this period:

- He burned the old money that was hyperinflated and replaced it with the **Rentenmark**.
- In 1924 he makes the **Dawes Plan** with the U.S.A. The U.S.A agreed to lend Germany money.
- In 1925 he made the **Locarno Treaty** - Germany would not try to take back land that France and Belgium got from the treaty of Versailles. Germany was allowed to join the **League of Nations**.
- He also signed the **Young Plan** that reduced the reparations that Germany had to pay.

By 1929 Germany was well on the way to recovery.

F: Depression hits Germany, 1929-32.

After the Wall Street Crash, American money dried up. Unemployment rose from 600,000 in 1929 to 6,000,000 by 1932. Germans were jobless, homeless and hopeless.

Actions- what happened? How did the government react?	Does this show the government acted successfully? Explain why/why not
<p>The Spartakist Revolt, Berlin 1919. The Spartakists were a group of Communists. They attempted to take over Berlin by force. The government used the Freikorps (a group of ex-soldiers that refused to stand down) to fight and defeat the Spartakists. One of the leaders (Rosa Luxemburg) was killed and her body dumped in a canal.</p>	
<p>Bavaria breaks away, Spring 1919. The government of Bavaria (a huge chunk of Southern Germany) decided to split away from Germany, become independent and run Bavaria on Communist-lines. The Weimar government, fearing a break-up of the whole country, sent in troops and Freikorps, defeated the Bavarian separatists and Bavaria was reunited with the rest of Germany.</p>	
<p>The Treaty of Versailles, May 1919. After the discussions of the 'Big Three' the terms of the Treaty were announced. Throughout Germany, there were huge demonstrations against the terms. The government ministers who signed the Treaty were denounced as traitors and were nicknamed 'November Criminals' for having signed the armistice the previous November.</p>	
<p>The Kapp Putsch, March 1920. Wolfgang Kapp, a nationalist who had the support of the Freikorps, took control of Berlin. He attempted to run the city but the Trade Unions opposed him and organised a workers' strike which brought the city to a stand-still. After 100 hours 'rule', Kapp was forced to flee.</p>	
<p>The 'Red Rising in the Ruhr', March 1920. Striking workers in the Ruhr were given weapons by Communists- they intended to take over the country. The government sent in troops and the Freikorps (who hated Communism) and after a series of battles the Red Rising was defeated.</p>	
<p>The murder of Walther Rathenau, June 1922. Walther Rathenau was one of the ministers that had signed the Treaty of Versailles. He was targeted by a nationalist group (called the Organisation Consul) for his 'treachery' in weakening Germany. He was shot dead. His funeral was attended by 1 million Germans who wanted to show their support for the government and their opposition to terrorism.</p>	

Hitler's Rise

A: What were the Nazis' ideas?

The word Nazi is a shortened version of National Socialist. The Nazi took ideas from Nationalists and Socialists so that they could win over votes from both sides.

- **Socialist ideas:** profit sharing in industry; a generous pension for old age; the abolition of incomes not earned by work
- **Nationalist ideas:** Land for the benefit of those of German blood. Only they may be members of the German nation. No Jewish person can be part of the German nation. All German speakers in one country; the abolition of the Treaty of Versailles.

B: The growth in Nazi support.

From 1929, Nazi support grew so by 1933 they were the biggest party. Why support the Nazis?

Depression: the Nazis offered 'work and bread'.

Nazi militarism: The Nazis wore uniforms and had parades; this got support from ex-soldiers.

Fear of communism: Some people were terrified that communists would take over.

Lack of respect: People felt German society was breaking up because a lack of respect.

Racists: Some held racist views against Jews and hated homosexuals.

Nationalist and Socialists: see above

C: How did Hitler become Chancellor?

By 1932 the Reichstag was in chaos, three different Chancellors were appointed – Brüning, Von Papen, Schleicher – with each only lasting a few months. Hindenburg wanted to prevent Hitler from becoming Chancellor, but eventually had to appoint Hitler Chancellor in January 1933, following the Nazis' success in the November 1932 election.

D: From Chancellor to Dictator (1933-1934).

Hitler was appointed Chancellor in Jan 1933. Hitler used this position to give himself more and more power. Within 18 months Hitler made himself as Dictator.

- As soon as he became Chancellor Hitler called new elections to win even more votes
- Reichstag Fire: Parliament building was burnt down, a Communist called Van Der Lubbe was found guilty
- Hitler convinced President Hindenburg to issue The Law for Protection of People and State. This allowed the Nazis to start to round up Communists.
- After the election the new parliament voted to hand over law-making power to Hitler (The Enabling Law).
- Hitler used this new power to: close down Trade Unions, ban other political parties and place Nazis in charge of Germany's regions (Gauleiters and Blockleiters).
- Hitler then sorted out his enemies within the Nazi Party: he launched the Night of the Long Knives (Ernst Rohm and the SA were rounded up and shot).
- Hindenburg died (in August 1934). Hitler took on the title 'Führer' and the army now swore an oath of loyalty to him.

Life in Nazi Germany

A: The police state

In Nazi Germany the Gestapo spied on the general population. They targeted people who were known as **enemies of the state**. They were forced to sign a **D-11 form** to say they agreed to go into **protective custody** and then were taken to **concentration camps** without a trial.

B: Women in Nazi Germany.

In Nazi Germany women were expected to follow the **KKK: Kinde, Kuche, Kirke** (children, cooking, and church). **The Motherhood Cross** was awarded to women who had the most children. **The Law for the Encouragement of Marriage** encouraged them to have at least four children.

C: Leisure time.

Hitler and the Nazis set out to control leisure time in Germany. A large organisation was set up called **Strength through Joy** (in German: **KDF**), it organised holidays and trips to the theatre and sporting activities.

D: Workers in Nazi Germany.

In some ways workers benefitted from Nazi rule: the Nazis were able to reduce unemployment: through **rearmament**, **conscription**, Jews and women were not counted as unemployed, the **National Labour Service** (in German – **RAD**) was set up; Hitler tried to get Germany to be self-sufficient (**Autarky**). The **German Labour Front** was set up to replace the Trade Unions but it failed to stand up for workers' rights.

E: Propaganda and censorship

Dr Joseph Goebbels was in charge of **propaganda**. He wrote speeches for himself and for Hitler. He ran propaganda campaigns in the form of **Mass rallies** and made effective use of the Nazi control over radio, newsreels and newspapers. The Nazis also used **censorship** in several ways: they banned opposition leaders (like the Communists); all newspapers had to print pro-Nazi stories; anti-Nazi books were burnt; Jazz music and Tarzan films were banned

F: Children in Nazi Germany

Students were **indoctrinated** at school: teachers had to put across Nazi ideas in lessons and **The Hitler Youth** was set up. Boys were trained with military skills. Girls were taught how to look after the home. Both boys and girls were taught Nazi ideas and were encouraged to inform their parents.

Life in Nazi Germany

G: Nazi persecution of Jewish Germans.

Nazis blamed Jewish people for all that was wrong in the world. In 1933 they **boycotted Jewish shops**; in 1935 they brought in the **Nuremberg Laws**. In 1938 **the Night of the Broken Glass** (or **Krystallnacht**) saw Jewish owned business, home and Synagogues smashed. From 1941 onwards the Nazis perpetrated mass-murder in the form of the **Holocaust**.

H: The church under Nazi rule

Hitler was initially cautious in his dealings with the Church in Germany – 40 million Germans were Protestant and 20 million Catholic. The **German Christians** associated themselves with the Nazis under their leader **Ludwig Muller**. However, as Hitler's dictatorship strengthened he began to dismantle the power of the Church. He did this by rounding up members of the **Confessional Church** (led by **Martin Niemoller**) that openly criticised the Nazis.

I: Opposition

Most Germans accepted or supported Nazi rule. Even in 1944 when it became clear that the Nazis would lose World War Two, very little opposition occurred. The opposition was small and feeble. In 1936 the Gestapo reported that there were probably only 1,000 anti-Nazi groups in Germany; churning out about 1,500,000 leaflets. There were small acts of defiance: people refusing to use the greeting, 'Heil Hitler'; flyposters; writing anti-Nazi graffiti on walls. Anti-Nazi jokes did spread throughout the country. **Martin Niemoller**, a protestant vicar, ended up in prison for his opposition. **The White Rose Organisation** was led by two students at a university in Munich. They were brother and sister- their names were **Hans and Sophie Scholl**. They distributed anti-Nazi leaflets and demanded freedom to think as they chose. They were caught and executed. **The Edelweiss Pirates** were a group of rebellious youths who refused to toe the line. They beat up members of the Hitler Youth.

J: Who benefitted from Nazi rule?

Some Germans did benefit: the unemployed got jobs; leisure activities organised; young people in Hitler Youth; family-life encouraged.
Other Germans did not benefit: Jewish Germans, less freedom for women; less freedom of speech and thought; less freedom for workers; bad time for opponents and 'enemies of the state.

K: Germany during the war, 1939-45

Germany experience during the Second World War can be summed up to two sections:

1. For the first three years Germans did well because Germany was winning the war (victory in battle, Germany was strong again, Germans in work in munitions factories, workers brought into Germany from captured areas; very little affect on lives of Germans as fighting took place in other countries).
2. For the last three years life for ordinary Germans was much harder because Germany was losing the war (10 million Germans died, from 1943 onwards there are massive air-raids on German cities. Many of these cities were reduced to rubble, shortages of fuel and of food in the last year of the war, millions of German refugees in the East of Germany trying to get away from the invading Russian army).