

Early Challenges to the Weimar Republic

Aim: To understand the political spectrum (Left & Right)



Democracy Vs. Dictatorship



Political definitions:



Democracy:

A 'democracy' is a type of political system that is ran by it's citizens or elected representatives. In a democratic society, all it's citizens are equal and free.

Dictatorship:

Citizens of a dictatorship do not have the right to nominate their leader.

A dictator is someone who is in charge and not restricted by any constitution, laws or opposition.

Communism:

Communists believe that the working classes (called the **proletariat**), should destroy the power of the rich people who owned land and factories (the **capitalists** or ruling class). Communists believe that everyone should have an equal share of power and wealth.

Usually only one political party is in power.	Laws are made by the courts and elected politicians.
Secret police frighten, intimidate and imprison people who are against the government.	The leader is made out to be a hero.
There are regular elections in which the voters can choose between different parties.	All clubs and trade unions are under the control of the government.
People are not punished for speaking out against the government.	The government controls the press, radio, TV and films.
People can largely read and see what they like.	Voting in elections is not secret.
The government does not control clubs and trade unions.	Laws can be changed when the leader decides.
The police and armed services protect the people.	The government uses spies or informers to keep a close check on people.

Democracy		Dictatorship	
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The political spectrum

Extremist



Extremist

KPD: Communist Party
Extreme left
Opposed Weimar Republic
Supported by workers and some middle classes
Extremist Party

SPD: Social Democrats	DDP: Democrats	ZP: Centre Party	DVP: People's Party
Moderate left	Moderate left	Moderate	Moderate right
Support Weimar Republic	Support Weimar Republic	Support Weimar Republic	Sometimes Support Weimar Republic
Supported by workers and middle classes	Backed by intellectual middle classes	Conservatives, originally part of the Catholic Church	Supported by upper middle classes
Moderate Parties			

DNVP: National Party	NSDAP: Nazi Party
Right wing	Extreme Right wing
Grudgingly accepted Republic	Opposed Weimar Republic
Landowners, wealthy & big business	Founded in 1920
Extremist Parties	



Extreme Left wanted:

- Control by the people
- An end to capitalism
- An end to private ownership of land and business, instead owned by the workers
- Cooperation with foreign nations

Main left wing party in 1919: KPD



Extreme Right wanted:

- A return to a strong government
- A strong army
- A powerful leader (Monarch)
- Capitalism (private ownership of land and business)
- Traditional family values
- Law and order

Main right wing party in 1919: DNVP

Thinking about Proportional Representation, if the moderate centre parties had 45% of the votes, the extreme L&R parties had 20%, the rest split with smaller parties, what problems would this cause for Ebert trying to run the country?

Interpretation 1

From *The Coming of the Third Reich* by Richard J. Evans, published in 2004.

No one was prepared for the peace terms... All of this was greeted with incredulous horror by the majority of Germans. The sense of outrage and disbelief... was almost universal. Germany's international strength and prestige had been on an upward course since unification in 1871... now, suddenly, Germany had been brutally expelled from the ranks of the Great Powers and covered in what they considered to be undeserved shame. Versailles was condemned as a dictated peace, unilaterally imposed without the possibility of negotiation.

Interpretation 2

From *Nazism and War* by Richard Bessel, published in 2004

The Social Democratic politicians, into whose lap the German government fell in 1918, didn't have widespread support. Instead, they faced a bitter, suffering population, filled with unrealistic ideas about what peace could bring and divided about the road ahead.

Study interpretations 1 and 2, which both describe the political situation around 1920. What do they agree on, and what information is found in only one of the extracts?

Homework: Don't lose these homework sheets, they will all come together at the end!