

Why did the Spartacist Uprising happen?

- Far-left wing revolutionaries wanted to unite the people behind the workers. After Nov 10th 1918 the SDP were in charge, but Germany was extremely unstable with armed demobilized soldiers joining in the demonstrations and violence on the streets. This increased after the Armistice. Also, many people in Germany were still starving thanks to the British Naval Blockade which killed 400,000.
- There was also a movement to rally the left-wing together. The Spartacus League, lead by 'Red' Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht formed the German Communist Party or KPD in December 1918.
- They decided in January 1919 that they would lead a revolution in tumultuous Berlin, to overthrow the SDP and form a new govt. to look after the people and ensure no return of the Kaiser.

Why was the Treaty of Versailles so unpopular in Germany?

- They were very disappointed by the terms. Before the talks the conditions put on Germany were met – they had a democratic govt. by Jan 1919 and the Kaiser had gone. They expected support in establishing their country and thought they would be seen as allies against the Communists.. Germany knew they weren't guilty but were punished severely. In Germany the T of V came to be called 'the shameful diktat of Versailles.' Ebert called it gewaltfrieden (enforced Peace) and Scheidemann quit rather than sign it. The right-wing blamed the Weimar Republic and the Jews, calling them the 'November criminals'. The main issue was Article 231, the Guilt Clause.
- They lost 13% of its land, all of its colonies, 6 million of its citizens from North Schleswig, Eupen and Malmedy, Memel, Alsace Lorraine, the Sudetenland, Posen, Upper Silesia and West Prussia; Danzig, and the Saarland was internationalised and the Rhineland demilitarized.
- It lost 48% of its iron production, much of its farmland. They had to give Cattle and sheep to Belgium and France, build merchant ships for the US and British and pay £6.6bn in reparations.
- They had to disband the Freikorps, reduce the Army to 100,000, the Navy to 6 battleships and nothing over 1,600 tonnes, No submarines, aircraft, tanks, armoured vehicles or heavy artillery.

Problems of the Republic 1919 - 1923

Why did the Spartacist Revolution fail?

- The SDP and many left wingers didn't support the revolution. Ebert and Gustav Noske sympathised with the left wing but they certainly didn't want revolution.
- Many in the left wing did not join the revolution in Jan. and those that did were ill-prepared.
- The Spartacists were outfought. The SDP enlisted the help of the right-wing, anti-Semitic Berlin Freikorps and General Groener and the Reichswehr. They were crushed by 15th Jan. 100 Spartacists died as opposed to 13 Freikorps.

Invasion of the Ruhr and Hyperinflation

- In January 1923, the French and Belgians invaded the Ruhr region of Germany because in 1922 the Germans had failed to pay them the money they owed them in reparations.
- This was economic disaster as the Ruhr produced 80% of Germany's iron and coal and contained many factories that produced a wide range of goods. So they tried Passive Resistance. They went on strike and refused to work for the invading army. Some even tried more direct action such as setting factories on fire. Initially it united the German people behind the Weimar Republic as it backed the strikers and paid their wages. The Germans had to print more money to pay the workers. At the same time less goods were being produced in the Ruhr. This led to price rises at the same time as the German mark lost its value, this meant hyperinflation – particularly by Nov. 1923. In 1922 bread was 163 DM, by Nov 1923 it was 428bn German Marks. In 1922, £1 = 764 DM, by Nov 1923 it was £1 = 1,680,000 bn DM. Potato sellers were using baskets for tills, people were using wheel barrows, suitcases for wallets and money for wall paper and kids were using money for toys like blocks or kites.
- Pensioners, average workers or savers with lots of money in the bank suffered as they were on fixed incomes, the poor, land owners and those with flexible incomes were fairly shielded and farmers, domestic and international businessmen and those in debt benefitted from high prices the good exchange rates, and wiping out of debts.

Why did the Kapp Putsch happen?

- The power of the Freikorps grew with SDP support. Further uprisings in March 1919 (Berlin) and April (Munich) were crushed with even greater ferocity by the Freikorps with SDP support - 1000 Spartacists were killed.
- They rallied behind Dr Wolfgang Kapp, head of right-wing think tank, National Union, and National People's Party, supported by Erhart, leader of the Berlin Freikorps, and General Luttwitz, leader of the Berlin Reichswehr.
- The T of V called for the reduction of the Army to 100,000 and disbanding of the Freikorps. On March 13th 1920, stressing the Communist threat, the Freikorps and the Reichswehr of Berlin took control of Berlin and most of the Army refused to move against Kapp and his 5,000 followers.

The failure of the Kapp Putsch and Rise of the right-wing

- But Trade Unionists supported Ebert and went on General Strike, cutting off electricity, gas, food and coal supplies and brought the city to a halt.
- Kapp fled the country to Sweden. The 400 Reichswehr officers were not prosecuted as they were needed to fight the Communists. Out of 376 murders in 1920, 354 were done by the right-wing. However, no right-wingers were executed as opposed to 10 Communists who were.
- Support for the right-wing grew, especially among the Army. In 1920 Hitler created the NSDAP (Nazi Party) out of the DAP or Nazi Party with the 25 Point Programme. By 1921 Hitler had taken control of the Party from Drexler having honed his skills as the leader of Propaganda and publishing the Observer newspaper. By the end of 1923 there was the Munich Putsch.