

CONSIDERATIONS ON THREE MAJOR
ASPECTS OF THE RISE OF THE
WEIMAR REPUBLIC

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty
of Saint Meinrad College
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

Michael Edward Schelling
May, 1970
Saint Meinrad College
St. Meinrad, Indiana



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	i
Chapter I: "The Need for a New Government in Germany: The Presence of Failure".	1
Chapter II: "The Political Parties and Elections for the Constituent National Assembly: The Peace Treaty".....	10
Chapter III: "The Constitution of the Weimar Republic".....	16
Conclusion.....	26
Footnotes.....	28
Bibliography.....	30
Appendices.....	32

INTRODUCTION

Anyone familiar with the scope of German history, especially that realm of history after 1900, will view the era of the Weimar Republic as, perhaps, the most significant. Although it was Germany's only "democratic experiment," the Republic was built on the framework of monarchical sentimentality and political failure which resulted in its final collapse.

Although the Republic existed from 1919 to 1933, the particular emphasis, which this paper stresses, is on "failure" and the problems of the Weimar Republic during its construction phase. The problems which besieged this particular government were of great importance because these very problems placed the Republic on a tottering framework. The political parties which existed in Germany during the Republic's short existence, were quite unstable and were certainly not unified on the matters of government. Thus, some measures which called for definite party unity in order to be legislated, fell apart. The Treaty of Versailles, which was a very precarious and weighty matter to the Germans, caused much furor and unrest among politicians and the masses alike. The Treaty placed Germany in a political bind. The Allied Powers demanded its acceptance, and the political groups and the citizens of Germany opposed the entire composition and terms of the Treaty. Historians have argued that the Treaty of Versailles became the actual stumbling block to the Weimar Republic's success as a democracy. It was,

indeed, the subject of much controversy and unrest in Germany during the post-war decade.

The Constitution of the Weimar Republic was considered a marvelous piece of democratic idealism. However, democracy takes more than printed words of idealism to become a workable reality. The people of Germany did not clearly understand the dynamics of effectively incorporating their Constitution into a living reality. The failure to understand the elements of a true, idealistic democracy led to the collapse of a government by and for the people of Germany.

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the most important aspects of the Republic during its formative year from 1918 to late 1919. Special emphasis is placed on the early provisional government of Prince Max von Baden in Chapter one and on the political parties and problems of peace in Chapter two. Chapter three deals specifically with the Constitution of the Weimar Republic, especially Article 48 of this document which brought about the advent of Adolf Hitler and the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany in 1933.

CHAPTER ONE

"The Need for a New Government in Germany: The Presence of Failure"

Perhaps the most unusual aspect about the Weimar Republic was its almost complete failure as a government. It has been called, by some, historians and critics alike, the "Democratic Experiment" in German political history. It is justly called an "experiment" because it was a futile attempt to establish a democratic form of government which, in all areas, failed miserably. It was an "experimental failure" in governmental politics. Three significant failures could be justifiably attributed to its final collapse. For the greater part, the Republic received unfavorable opinion from the mass population in Germany. This certainly seemed incredible since the people were to benefit greatly from the Weimar system and were in favor of its establishment.

Secondly, political opposition caused much unrest and chaos in the Republic. Political unity surely wasn't manifested during the rise of the government nor during its brief existence from 1919 to 1933. This political non-unity among the politicians certainly aided the collapse of the Republic some thirteen years later.

Finally, the unsettled conditions and chaotic aftermath of World War I caused a deluge of turmoil during the early

stages of the New Republic. These conditions lingered on until the final hour of the Weimar Republic's existence.

Some of these attributed failures are presented as major problems which must be considered when summarizing the total perspective of democracy in Germany during the post-war era.

Failure in implementing the democratic ideals so necessary in formulating a democracy is the foundation on which the Weimar Republic was established. The emphasis, however, is placed on the need for a new and effective form of government in Germany. This need was far too important to be underestimated. A new and effective government in Germany was the only hope of national unity and survival. This survival depended on an armistice with the Allied Powers to end the fighting and to negotiate a just and lasting peace.

Germany's defeat in World War I left a traumatic impact upon this nation. The defeat by the Allied Powers toppled the old political hierarchy and former institutions of government. On that fateful September 29, 1918, the once powerful and majestic Kaiser Wilhelm II was informed that the war was a lost cause for Germany and her allies, and that it was imperative that a new German government be quickly formed to negotiate an armistice.

President Woodrow Wilson of the United States had informed the almost defeated Germans that he would never accept an arm-

istice or negotiate for peace unless a new government was established in Germany. He simply refused to deal with the crumbling government-empire of Kaiser Wilhelm, who was the principal cause and aggressor of the devastating conflagration known as World War I. This new government, which was established by the Germans, was to be a provisional-type structure--a predecessor of the ill-fated Weimar Republic. Prince Max von Baden, of royal lineage, was appointed chancellor on a temporary basis of this provisional government with the approval of the Reichstag. This Reichstag was a completely different legislative body than the one formulated under the Weimar Republic Constitution. It was von Baden who skillfully set about to negotiate the armistice with the Allies. Before his retirement from the political scene as chancellor of the provisional government, von Baden persuaded Friedrich Ebert, the future President of the Weimar Republic, to accept the office of Chancellor, thus placing the affairs of government in his hands.

It appeared to the German nation that the provisional government would be able to negotiate a just peace. To their utter disappointment, the Germans would later discover that peace would be outrageous in terms of war reparations and foreign occupation of German lands. But before that final settlement of peace at Versailles, the rise and establishment of the Weimar Republic would be well on its way to doom and final collapse.

Almost two months after the Kaiser was informed about the approaching end and defeat of his once powerful army and nation, he retired to Holland and remained there in permanent exile. Thus the ancient monarchical empire of the Hohenzollerns collapsed after five magnificent centuries of rule. Some twenty-two German and other monarchies, along with the Kaiser's empire, also collapsed, including Emperor Charles who abdicated on November 4, 1918. Thus the dual-monarchy was also left to the annals of history.

On November 11, 1918, the once proud and great German Power accepted the Allied surrender terms. Europe and Germany, especially, would never be the same again as a result of this acceptance.

The war was, indeed, devastating for Germany. Approximately one-and-a-half-million men died--not to mention the two-hundred thousand men who were missing in action, and the thousands wounded in battle. Germany had lost a greater portion of her male inhabitants in war. The war had virtually sapped the strength and the will not only of the soldiers, but also of the people. These poor, unfortunate Germans took consolation in the hope of a new democracy filled with all the social and international justice it implied.

Again, they were sadly mistaken; for a new democracy would end up in total failure; and international and social justice

would be, under the guise of huge war reparations, imposed by the Allies under the terms established at Versailles.

The establishing of a new government was quite necessary for the purpose of negotiating peace and securing an armistice. There are many other reasons for a new government in Germany which are, perhaps, less significant than those previously mentioned. However, they do constitute an important phase in the establishing of the Weimar Republic.

Internal troubles began to develop in November of 1918-- the interim period between the end of the war and the meeting of the National Assembly in January, 1919. On November 3, in the coastal port of Kiel, a mutiny broke out among a squadron of sailors, stationed in that port. Soon afterwards, the sailors were joined by workers and soldiers who were returning home from the battlefield. These uprisings soon spread to other coastal cities and eventually to the larger cities of northern and central Germany. The collapse of the German military system and discipline provided some reasoning for these uprisings. Another reason behind these sudden outbursts seemed to hinge on the question of whether the "new" Germany was to be governed by an elected National Assembly or by a system based on the Marxist proletarian class dictatorship.

In Berlin, riots had been initiated by a group popularly known as the Spartacists. This group was composed of radical

socialists who tried to set up a socialist system of government in Germany. They opposed the provisional government under Chancellor Ebert and overthrew the remnants of political authority, but the Spartacist movement with all its militant and sporadic uprisings soon passed.

In the newly formed Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, meeting in Berlin on November 10, 1918, the Social Democrats received equal representation on a joint committee of the two socialist groups (Socialist Democrats and Independent Socialists of the extreme Left). It was due to the influence of the Social Democrats that the Proclamation of the Council of Volksbeauftragte (People's Commissars) of November 12 contained the provision that all future elections, including the one for a Constituent National Assembly, should be based on the universal suffrage of German men and women. Thus the democratic ideal of equal popular representation had achieved its first and decisive triumph over those forces which advocated tyrannical class rule.¹

The Republic had won a major victory over those who believed in a system of government based on the Russian example.

Besides the internal strife which rocked the provisional government in 1918, the military posed a threat to the Republic's stability. It was necessary to gather the support of the military for the sake of the government's efforts at peace and for the security of the homeland. This security was the control of the leftist groups which were causing much agitation, especially in Berlin, and other large cities in Germany.

The German military had always been loyal to the monarchy,

immersing itself in the very ideals of monarchism. When the emperor retired and the monarchy collapsed, the military still remained loyal to the monarchy and longed for its restoration in Germany. Monarchical loyalty had its roots in the German military.

The important thing, however, was that Generals Hindenburg and Gröner, who commanded the unreserved loyalty of the returning troops, placed themselves unequivocally at the disposal of the Republic, notwithstanding their sentimental attachment to the monarchical traditions of Germany. By putting the well-being of the nation above all personal considerations they set a noteworthy example and made possible a relative stabilization of the republican form of government.²

To briefly summarize, the need for a new government in Germany was quite evident because of three important reasons. First, the inevitable collapse of the monarchy left Germany without a true source of government--except for the provisional government which would remain only on a temporary basis. Secondly, the armistice and peace negotiations relied heavily on this new government. Finally, it appeared that if the internal difficulties, caused by revolutionary uprisings, were to be handled effectively and the popular support of the military was to be secured, then a government that was acceptable and had the tactical expertise to legislate, had to be established.

It seems that the urgency and the immediate need for a new government caused a hasty and somewhat disorganized formulation of such a government under Prince Max von Baden. This hastiness and disorganization was also carried over into the rise of

on authority to maintain order, on the Obrigkeit."5

There was a definite need for a new government and that need was ultimately fulfilled by the establishing of the Weimar Republic. It was unfortunate that this particular fulfillment was cursed with failure and ultimate collapse.

the Weimar Republic in 1919.

The people of Germany were not satisfied nor did they accept their new government. They were accustomed to five centuries of monarchial rule and were not educated in the idealism of democracy nor prepared to handle it.

Germany was desperate for peace so that the nation could re-build what had been shattered by war. Thus, Weimar, being somewhat of a refinement of Baden's provisional government, proved to be a failure. The Treaty of Versailles and many other factors burned like acid in the hearts of the people.

From the very beginning democracy in the Weimar Republic laboured under an enormous handicap: it had been introduced in the hour of defeat, not by the will of the German people, but in order to fill the vacuum left by the collapse of the Kaiser's government with an arrangement acceptable to the victorious Allies.³

In consideration of the internal strife in Germany during the interim period, Hans Kohn in his MIND OF GERMANY refers to the Weimar Republic as the "Weimar Illusion."

Practically all the new movements and trends were radical, whether to the left or the right. They despised and rejected the middle road, reasonableness, and common sense, the live and let live, the practical art of politics, the foundation of democracy.⁴

The heart of the failure of Germany's "democratic experiment" was the nation's love for the monarchy: "They had relied

CHAPTER TWO

"Political Parties and Elections for the Constituent National Assembly: The Peace Treaty"

In the Germany of 1919, there existed several major political parties which played key roles in the formation of the Weimar Republic. The first of these parties was the Nationalist Party which was formerly known as the Conservative Party. The Nationalist Party was composed of the Conservatives--who preferred the elements of monarchical rule. The composition of this particular Party also included the Pan Germans, militarists, and the majority of the Junker class. The majority of members in the Nationalist Party were saturated with monarchical sentimentality and mourned the loss of the Hohenzollern Empire when Kaiser Wilhelm retired to Holland.

The People's Party, formerly known as the Right Wing of the Old National Liberal Party, was composed of the big businessmen and the large industrialists. The members of this Party preferred a monarchical form of government but were ~~will-~~ willing to accept the elements of a future democracy. Gustav Stresemann was the leader of this Party.

The Center Party supported a democracy and was violently opposed to a socialistic regime. Matthias Erzberger, a Catholic, led the Party until 1921 when he was assassinated by fanatical Nationalists.

The Democrats, or Progressive Party, joined the Left Wing of the Old National Liberals. This political group gave full support to the ideals of a Republic and they denounced any form of military bureaucracy.

The most influential and largest group, the Majority Socialists (Social Democrats), was the impetus and motivating force in German politics. This Party was led by Friedrich Ebert, the first President of the Weimar Republic and the Chancellor of the Provisional post-war government. Philipp Schei Scheidemann was also a leader in this particular group. The Majority Socialists favored a gradual process of socialization based on a scientific method to be accomplished through natural means of parliamentary government.

...the Majority Socialists, led by men like Ebert and Scheidemann--were revisionists, who had long since given up any belief in the necessity of violent revolution and, now that power seemed within their grasp, wished to proceed by orderly methods towards the consolidation of democracy and the inauguration of a program of social development.⁶

The Independent Socialists were interested in the establishment of socialism in Germany before the general elections were held. The Independent Socialists were bitter rivals of the Majority Socialists, and the former accused the latter of treacherous acts against the mandates of socialism. The Independent Socialists gave full support to the Spartacists and their uprisings. After January, 1919, the League (Spartacist)

became known as the German Communist Party led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, the son of the founder of the Social Democrats. The Party desired the establishment of a government similar to that which existed in Russia after the 1917 Revolution. However, in the preceding chapter, it was mentioned that the attempt of the Spartacists was thwarted due to the November 1918 Proclamation of the Council of Volksbeauftragte.

The rivalry and contention that existed between Ebert's Party and the Independent Socialists, led by Hugo Hasse, had eventually subsided. The threat of an overthrow of authority in Berlin by the Communists had been removed and Friedrich Ebert could proceed with his plan for a National Assembly.

On January 19, 1919, the deputies gathered in the city of Weimar, long noted for its historic relationship with the great Goethe and the traditions of humanism. The city of Berlin was still the scene of unrest and turmoil, so the delegates decided to choose Weimar, in order to escape any possible interruption of their meeting. The delegates, gathered at Weimar, were there on a very important and purposive mission--to establish a permanent government--a democracy for the German people.

On February 6, 1919, the 423 deputies elected the following members to the National Assembly:

Social Democrats (Majority Socialists).....	163 seats
Independent Socialists.....	22 seats
Center.....	89 seats

Democrats (formerly Progressives).....	74 seats
People's Party (formerly National Liberals) ..	22 seats
Nationalists (Conservatives).....	42 seats?

The Majority Socialists held the largest number of seats in the Assembly and, in order to have a majority hold, the Center and the Democratic Parties joined the Majority Socialists in forming the Weimar Coalition. Out of the 423 elected members, 333 supported a republican and democratic form of government.

The National Assembly had three tasks to perform. It had to establish a legal government, to conclude peace with the Allies, and to write a constitution for the new republic. It completed the first of these with dispatch. When Friedrich Ebert surrendered the powers of government to the Assembly, it elected him to the post of Reich President (Reichspräsident) and authorized his party to set about forming a new cabinet, which in view of the election returns, would necessarily be a coalition cabinet if it were to expect majority support... Philipp Scheidemann (Reichskanzler) formed a coalition cabinet in which half were drawn from the Center and Democratic Parties. This was the original Weimar Coalition, and its members were to prove to be the most loyal supporters of the Republic throughout its career.⁸

The stable and permanent form of government had been established; thus the provisional governing power had been abolished. However, before the actual drafting of the Constitution, it appeared necessary that peace should be concluded.

The task of concluding peace was more difficult, and, indeed, subjected the new governmental machinery to an almost intolerable strain. The first reaction to the peace terms that were forwarded to Berlin in mid-May was one of incredulity, and this was succeeded by

an indignation shared by all parties. 'What hand would not wither that would sign such a treaty!' cried Scheidemann passionately. It was nevertheless soon apparent that blind rage would serve no useful purpose. The Allies made it clear that they would renew hostilities if the terms were not accepted; and no responsible German could permit that to happen.⁹

The Treaty of Versailles, based on Wilson's Fourteen Points, was finally signed and ratified on June 28, 1919. However, the signing of such a document caused quite an uproar in Germany among politicians and the people alike. Prior to the conclusion of the Treaty, Philipp Scheidemann had resigned as Chancellor of the Republic and Gustav Bauer, a noted Socialist, was chosen to replace him in this particular cabinet position. Bauer, in the name of the Weimar Republic and on behalf of the people of Germany, signed the Treaty that brought about the ominous burden of war reparations and loss upon the German nation. The Weimar Republic, did, indeed, lose much prestige because of the signing of such a document. However, in such a predicament, what could the new Republic do? The Allies demanded the acceptance of all the terms of the Treaty, and Germany was compelled to accept the document as it was drawn up by the Allied Powers. The nation was certainly not equipped, nor prepared, to continue the war effort.

The crisis over the peace terms had ominous results. The memories of the extreme conservatives and the superpatriots were notoriously short. They had already forgotten how decisively Germany had lost the war; and it was in these very months that the Dolchstoß legend was being born--the myth that the invincible German armies had been defeated, not by the

enemy, but by a 'stab in the back' inflicted by pacifists, socialists, and defeatists on the home front. They found it equally easy to forget that a renewal of hostilities was completely beyond Germany's capacities in 1919; and they were to claim repeatedly in the years to follow that the Socialists and other supporters of the Republic had willingly accepted a shameful peace, when they might have resisted it successfully with arms in hand.¹⁰

With the second order of business concluded, the National Assembly proceeded to the final task of drawing up the impressive Weimar Constitution.

CHAPTER THREE

"The Constitution of the Weimar Republic"

The Constitution of the Weimar Republic was the most liberal, progressive and well-advanced document that the world had ever known. The document was based on other democratic constitutions such as those which existed in Great Britain, France, Switzerland, and the United States of America.

The Constitution which the National Assembly drafted and finally accepted on July 31, 1919, largely incorporated the views of the 'Weimar Coalition.' Every member state had to have a republican constitution, and representatives had to 'be elected by the universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage of all German citizens, both men and women, according to the principles of proportional representation.' The chancellor and ministers required for the administration of their offices the confidence of the Reichstag and had to resign if the latter by formal resolution withdrew its confidence. The republic was therefore a truly representative democracy.¹¹

The author of the Constitution, the liberal Hugo Preuss of the Handelshochschule (university for trade and commerce), based the constitutional framework on the rights and liberties of the German people. "To reconcile liberty with national unity and strength."¹² Perhaps, the basis of the Constitution appeared too optimistic, however, the emphasis should be stressed on the fact that the Constitution was drawn up with the people of Germany as the basis.

Konstantin Fehrenbach, a member of the Center Party and president of the National Assembly, added: 'We

now lay the constitution in the hands of the German people, whom we have made thereby the freest people on earth.' But a democracy is not made by a constitution; traditions of liberty under law, which become part of the moral and social climate, are its premise. Such traditions existed in Germany, but they had not become a part of the national mores and were without vitality. They were unable to assert themselves against nationalist pride and passion. Nationalism, the drive for national power and unity, undermined democracy after 1918 as it had done in 1848.¹³

"In the German Republic all power emanates from the people."¹⁴

The most important parts of the Constitution, patterned after other democratic constitutions, guaranteed that all citizens were equal before the law and were guaranteed the freedom of speech, freedom from arrest-at-will, and more importantly, freedom of conscience.

Again, the emphasis of the Weimar Constitution was on the people and it was the people who were to benefit from it and who were to take an active role in the governing of Germany by democratic means.

The executive branch of the new Republic was composed of the President and his cabinet. The Chancellor and other ministers composed the cabinet. The President was elected by direct vote of the people and his term of office lasted for seven years. After his seven year term of office, the President was eligible for re-election. The President had limited power in the execution of his office. Every Presidential order

was required to be counter-signed by the Chancellor or one of his ministers. The Chancellor, then, assumed the role of higher power in the Republic.

Perhaps the most significant and certainly the most controversial item in considering the functions of the President, was to be found in Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution. This article stipulated that if any Land could or would not live up to the obligations imposed on it by the Constitution, the President had the executive power to force the Land to do so by making use of military power. The article further explained, that if the security and the public order were threatened or disturbed in any manner whatsoever, the President could take any necessary measures to insure peace and order within the Republic. The armed forces were to be the measures used to carry out this design. The President could, temporarily, suspend certain articles which provided freedom of the individual, press, assembly, residency, organization, and so forth. If the President invoked Article 48, he had to report this action to the Reichstag which could abrogate his action. A working majority was needed among the members of the Reichstag to make this abrogation effective.

In analyzing Article 48, most historians and critics of history would agree that this particular article in the Constitution of the Weimar Republic was a very dangerous mistake which would and eventually did, become a pitfall to the very existence

of the Republic. It played havoc during the existence of the Republic, especially in the latter period of its existence. Article 48 was abused to such a degree that Adolf Hitler used it for his own personal gain--a gain that led him to the highest ranks of power and ultimately to the citadel of complete master of Germany. Article 48 was formulated, with all sincere intentions, to effectively control the Right and Leftist groups which proved to be an ever-present, potential danger to the very existence of the Republic. However, Article 48 proved to be the deadly weapon which the enemies of the Republic used to murder the very life which the Republic possessed.

The Reichspräsident was to be elected for a period of seven years by the direct ballot of the people, and was re-eligible. His powers were in some respects greater than those wielded by the German emperor. Thus he could dissolve the Reichstag, even without the consent of the Reichsrat, a measure which in the Imperial Constitution had required the consent of the Bundesrat. He could invoke a popular referendum against decisions of the Reichstag. He was commander in chief of the armed forces, a power which the emperor had only exercised in time of war. Finally, he could be given extraordinary emergency powers under Article 48 of the Constitution. In case 'public safety and order were seriously disturbed,' the Reichspräsident could rule by decree laws, suspend certain Grundrechte (fundamental rights)--the right of habeas corpus, secrecy of the mails, freedom of expression, inviolability of home and of private property, and the right of coalition--and could call on the Reichswehr to enforce his emergency decrees. While the exercise of such virtually dictatorial power was theoretically subject to endorsement by the Reichstag, this check was almost voided by the provision that the President could dissolve the Reichstag, and, in the interim of the required sixty days between dissolution and re-election, could rule without a parliament. This article, obviously was an offshoot of a period of insecurity and crisis, was later on to prove fatal to the very existence of the Weimar Republic.¹⁵

The legislature was divided into two houses. It was stated in the Constitution that the Republic was to consist of a democracy of federated lands and that the individual states were to be known as Länder or lands. The Länder were to yield their authority and power to the central government. The legislature consisted of the two houses: Reichsrat which replaced the old formerly existing Bundesrat and the Reichstag composed the two distinct legislative divisions. In the Reichsrat, the members were chosen from the Länder sector. The Länder members represented each of the governments (state) in Germany.

The national legislature consisted of two houses, the Reichstag and the Reichsrat. The former was composed of members elected for a term of four years by the direct vote of all men and women over twenty years of age. The Reichsrat, like the former Bundesrat, represented the states. In it each state had at least one vote for each 700,000 inhabitants; but no state might have more than two-fifths of all the votes. The Reichsrat functioned merely as a sort of 'brake on legislation,' and contrary to the condition of the empire, the Reichstag was by far the more powerful branch of the legislature.¹⁶

The major change was not so much in the composition of the Reichsrat as in the title of its authority and power. While the old Bundesrat had derived its federal power from the Union of Princes, the Reichsrat derived its authority from the will of the people. In addition, its power as an administrative and legislative body was greatly restricted by the fact that both its enactments and its vetoes could be overruled by a two-thirds majority of the Reichstag or by popular referendum. With all its checks and balances to insure a division of power, the Weimar Constitution leaned toward a unicameral system centered and anchored in the Reichstag.¹⁷

The Reichstag was the supreme law-making body in the legislature. It consisted of approximately 580 members and the elections to this governing assembly were based on proportional representation. It was impossible for any one political party to hold a majority in the Reichstag. As a result, coalition governments had to be formed so that a majority could be obtained.

The definitions of the rights of the people, executive branch of the Republic, power of the Reichspräsident, and the legislative assembly, composed of the two houses (Reichsrat and the Reichstag), completed the first part of the Constitution.

The second major portion of the Constitution, which was called the Grundrechte, or Bill of Rights, outlined the laws and the rights of the people as citizens of the new Republic.

The Grundrechte were championed in particular by Catholic Centrists, the Democrats, and the Majority Socialists. All Grundrechte were anchored in the dignity of the human person, their common denominator and raison d'être. Accordingly, the respective articles deal with those legal decrees and measures which were to safeguard social equality, personal freedom, and social justice. Class privileges were to be done away with. Titles of nobility were to become part of the family name, and no new ones could be conferred. Special guarantees were to protect the right of coalition, the rights of national minorities, the independence of courts, democratic principles of education, freedom of the press, freedom of worship, and the rights of youth.¹⁸

The central government was no longer made dependent upon the financial contributions of the separate estates but was granted the right of direct taxation, which the im-

perial government had never possessed. The national government was given exclusive jurisdiction over foreign and colonial affairs, citizenship, travel and residence, national defense, currency, customs duties, posts, and telegraphs and telephones, and it assumed ownership of the railway system. Its laws were given priority in matters in which the separate states had the right of concurrent legislation--civil and criminal law, judicial procedure, social welfare and insurance, expropriation and socialization, press laws, and the like. The national government also claimed the right to lay down normative regulations concerning religion, education, and housing.¹⁹

In view of the educational means in Germany, the Constitution ordered the closing of all private schools and that children must be sent to public schools. Education, by the new law, was made compulsory.

Education in general was to aim at 'moral training, public spirit, personal and vocational fitness, and, above all, the cultivation of German national character and of the spirit of international reconciliation.'²⁰

The Constitution upheld the theory of the separation of Church and State. It also stipulated that the Churches could collect taxes from members; and, in some circumstances, the State would even support the Churches.

The most important part of the Constitution dealt specifically with the social and economic life of the Weimar Republic.

Article 151 stated that 'the organization of economic life must conform to the principles of justice to the end that all may be guaranteed a decent standard of living. Within these limits the economic liberty of the individual shall be assured.'²¹

The right to own private property was structurally defined and outlined in Article 153. "Property imposes obligations; it must be used in the service of the common good."²² This particular article was based on the old Germanic concept of private ownership.

Finally, in the area of economics, Article 165 outlined the formation of the Wirtschaftsräte (Economic Councils).

The most important and socially most progressive innovation in the economic field was the creation of the Wirtschaftsräte (economic councils), to culminate in a central Reichswirtschaftsrat, as outlined in Article 165. These economic bodies were to serve as instruments of social peace and social justice and were intended to supplement and complete the system of social legislation....The article stipulated that workers and employees were 'to cooperate on an equal footing with employers in the regulation of wages and the conditions of labor, as well as in the general development of productive forces.' To achieve this end it was decreed that workers and employers receive 'legal representation in the form of District Workers' Councils, Regional Workers' Councils, and a Reich Workers' Council.' These chosen representatives of labor were then to 'combine with the representatives of the employers...to form Regional Economic Councils and a Reichswirtschaftsrat. Bills dealing with basic social and economic questions shall be submitted to the Reichswirtschaftsrat before being presented to the Reichstag....With the creation of the Reichswirtschaftsrat the Weimar Constitution had, in theory at least, pointed a way to resolve the conflict between capital and labor, the two warring contenders in the "labor market", without resorting to the extremes of either excessive capitalist individualism or State socialism.' ²³

The Constitution of the Weimar Republic was, indeed, a very impressive document. Its formulation provided the people

of Germany with all the hallowed ideology of a true democracy --ideals based on equality, liberty, freedom of expression and conscience. All of these ideals were locked in the ancient and revered concepts of nationalism and pride.

With such a magnificent manuscript containing the essential elements of democracy, the Republic could forge ahead into a new era of national pride and reconstruction. However, as the annals of history testify, the Weimar Republic forged ahead into years of struggle and failure with the ultimate prize of collapse as its final reward.

The Constitution was pure disaster from its very conception. Disaster brought about by the tragedy of war, the ominous peace of Versailles, a nation uneducated in the handling of democracy, and finally, by a series of internal, sporadic uprisings that tore the embryo of democracy.

In evaluating the Constitution one dare not forget that its consideration and adoption were carried out under the strong pressure of tumultuous domestic and, most particularly, foreign events, as well as the popular excitement kindled by these events.²⁴

The Weimar Constitution, the formulation of a stalemate, was a compromise document which accepted the outer forms of democracy, but breathed no democratic life into the structure that had been created. It satisfied no political party: designed to please all, it gratified none. The Majority Socialists had not been able to achieve even their minimum program. The Independent Socialists regarded the constitution simply as a betrayal of the people. The Democrats considered its language far too proletarian and charged that it had loopholes which would lead to radical

experimentation. The Centrists denounced it for its attention to secular ideas. The Nationalists damned it as an inexcusable break with Germany's traditional past; they wanted nothing to do with an opening clause stating: "The German Reich is a Republic. Political authority emanates from the people." Preuss' original draft of the constitution had called for the fragmentation of Prussia into several smaller states. But the final draft left Prussia territorially intact. Once more Prussia had survived a crisis. Throughout her history she had shown a persistent will to overcome adverse circumstances. True, the new constitution shattered Prussian executive authority, including her key position in the Reichsrat. But because of her size Prussia still retained an important influence in German affairs.²⁵

CONCLUSION

The Weimar Republic existed as a weak democracy from 1919 to 1933. Its Constitution had promising hopes for the political well-being of the German nation. The Republic witnessed the devoted and toilsome efforts of two Presidents, Friedrich Ebert and the old monarchist, Paul von Hindenburg. The nation also witnessed the devoted and toilsome efforts of a man who would eventually seize the control of the Republic as Chancellor and destroy every trace of democracy. This man was the future Führer, Adolf Hitler. Hitler, the master of Nazism--the executioner of democracy.

Perhaps, there are many reasons involved in the collapse of the Weimar Republic. A few of these reasons have been mentioned in this paper. After the formulation of the Constitution in 1919, the Republic suffered from internal and external governmental ills: the Kapp Putsch, Ruhr Invasion, currency inflation, domestic crisis involving political parties, the great stock market crash in 1929, which rocked the world, and the depression. The death-blow which caused the collapse of the Republic came with the rise of Nazism in Germany and the advent of its leader, Adolf Hitler, in 1933.

Such was the Weimar Republic--a democracy rooted in failure and the transportation of this failure all the way to the end. The Republic was certainly a noble attempt at democracy, but such an attempt was hastily founded on the ruins of war and many years of previously-existing monarchy.

FOOTNOTES

¹Kurt F. Reinhardt, Germany: 2000 Years, Vol. II (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1961), p. 645.

²Ibid.

³Richard Grunberger, Germany 1918-1945 (Philadelphia: Dufour Editions, 1964), p. 57.

⁴Hans Kohn, The Mind of Germany (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1960), p. 307.

⁵Ibid., p. 308.

⁶Gordon A. Craig, Europe Since 1815 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1966), p. 615.

⁷Thomas Kingston Derry and Ernest John Knapton, Europe, 1815 to the Present (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1966), p. 189.

⁸Craig, op. cit., p. 618.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 619.

¹¹F. Lee Bennis, European History Since 1870 (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1950), p. 494.

¹²Craig, op. cit., p. 619.

¹³Kohn, op. cit., p. 306.

¹⁴Grunberger, op. cit., p. 56.

¹⁵Reinhardt, op. cit., p. 649.

¹⁶Bennis, op. cit., p. 494.

¹⁷Reinhardt, op. cit., p. 648.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 650.

¹⁹Craig, op. cit., p. 620.

²⁰Reinhardt, op. cit., p. 650.

²¹Eugene N. Anderson, Modern Europe In World Perspective: 1914 to the Present (New York: Rhinehart and Co., 1958), p. 226.

²²Reinhardt, op. cit., p. 650.

²³Ibid., pp. 650-51.

²⁴Erich Eych, A History of the Weimar Republic, 2 Vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 77.

²⁵Louis L. Snyder, The Weimar Republic: A History of Germany from Ebert to Hitler (New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1966), p. 43.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Eugene N. Modern Europe in World Perspective: 1914 to the Present. New York: Rhinehart and Co., 1958.
- Benns, F. Lee. European History Since 1870. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1950.
- Brandenburg, Clough, Gay, Payne, and Pflanze. A History of the Western World: 1715 to the Present, Vol. II. Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Co., 1969.
- Bullock, Alan. Hitler, A Study in Tyranny. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1962.
- Craig, Gordon A. Europe Since 1815. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1966.
- Davis, William Sterns and Hall, Walter Phelps. The Course of Europe Since Waterloo. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1947.
- Derry, Thomas Kingston and Knapton, Ernest John. Europe, 1815 to the Present. New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1966.
- Dorpalen, Andreas. Hindenburg and the Weimar Republic. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964.
- Erfang, Robert. Europe Since Waterloo. Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1961.
- Eyck, Erich. A History of the Weimar Republic. 2 Vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962.
- Gössmann, Wilhelm. Deutsche Kulturgeschichte im Grundriss. München: Max Hueber, Verlag, 1966.
- Grunberger, Richard. Germany 1918-1945. Philadelphia: Dufour Editions, 1964.
- Hayes, Carloton J.H. Contemporary Europe Since 1870. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1958.
- Holborn, Hajo. A History of Modern Germany 1840-1945. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969.
- Kohn, Hans. The Mind of Germany. New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1960.

Lutz, Hermann. German-French Unity. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1967.

Mann, Golo. Deutsche Geschichte des 19 und 20 Jahrhunderts. Hamburg: Druck Gutmann, 1967.

_____. The History of Germany Since 1790. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1968.

Nicholls, A.F. Weimar and the Rise of Hitler. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968.

Reinhardt, Kurt F. Germany: 2000 Years, Vol. II. New York: Frederick A. Ungar, Publishers, 1961.

Schultz, Klaus. Aus Deutscher Vergangenheit. München: Max Hueber, Verlag, 1965.

Snyder, Louis L. The Weimar Republic, A History of Germany from Ebert to Hitler. New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1966.

Tenbrock, Robert Hermann. Geschichte Deutschlands. München: Max Hueber, Verlag, 1965.

Von Papen, Franz. Memoirs. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1953.

APPENDICES

TEXTS: (From) The Weimar Republic, A History
of Germany from Ebert to Hitler,
by Louis L. Snyder

MAP: (From) A History of Modern Germany 1840-
1945, by Hajo Holborn

POSTSCRIPT: THE TRAGEDY OF HISTORY

The Child of Defeat. Although they were enduring hunger, privation, and misery, the German people hoped for a miracle of victory until the closing months of World War I. They lived in a curious dream world. Everything would straighten itself out. They were sure that eventually German streets would resound with cries of joy and the ringing of bells. The official communiqués still referred to German victories on the battlefields. Not a square inch of German territory had been invaded by the enemy.

Then, seemingly overnight, came the heartbreaking news of defeat. William II was thrust aside and the Republic was proclaimed. The new government was tarnished from its very beginning with the odium and odor of frustration. The victorious Allies occupied German territory; war prisoners were not sent home; the naval blockade was maintained. All this was fiercely resented, and all of it was associated in the German mind with the Weimar Republic, the illegitimate child of defeat.

The new Republic was born without adequate planning or preparation, almost as an afterthought. The architects of Weimar worked in a hurry to produce a government which they believed would be regarded with favor by the Allies and which would assure them an easier peace. There was little mass support. If it is true that a democracy can be successful only if it is wanted by the people, then the German democracy was doomed from its very start. Most Germans saw the Weimar Re-

public as a kind of artificial creation, a stopgap, caretaker government pending recall of the Hohenzollerns. They were much less interested in political democracy than in their own day-to-day problems. From the days of its origin the Weimar Republic was unwanted and unloved. It died unhonored and unsung.

The basic weakness of the Weimar Republic was the same one that burdened every other political movement in German history—the feebleness of the German brand of liberalism. It was this fragility that led to the failure of 1848. There was always a great disparity between the political aspirations of German leaders and the mass support and actual influence they commanded. In 1848 it had seemed that the streams of rationalism—liberalism, democracy, social contract, egalitarianism, tolerance, and constitutionalism—were converging at long last in a common stream. For the first time in their history the German people had an opportunity to determine their own destiny. But when the wave of revolution receded, liberal nationalism was buried in its dregs and the Prusso-German symbiosis was triumphant.

In 1919 came another opportunity. But again there were too few democratically minded people, and once again those who did profess liberal democracy diluted its content until it became all but unrecognizable. It was a Republic without republicans; too few Germans preferred the democratic way of life.

Added to this fundamental weakness inside Germany was critical misunderstanding from the outside. Not only were the Germans ill-prepared for an advanced form of democracy, but the triumphant Allies showed little sympathy for the Weimar Republic. In the heat of war propaganda, the Allies had made a careful distinction between the German people and their reactionary rulers. That discrimination was dropped once the war was won. Germans, who believed that they had laid down their arms on the basis of the Wilsonian Fourteen Points, cried that they had been victimized in a gigantic hoax. They complained that they had placed their trust in Allied promises and as a reward they had been treated ignominiously.

The Weimar Republic, constructed on a weak frame, unsupported by public opinion, lacking help from the outside, was unable to weather the storms of opposition from both Right and Left. It was betrayed by friends and foes alike. It was not strong enough to withstand political chaos, economic trials, social distress, and psychological anxiety. What had started out as a bold experiment in democracy, degenerated into the nightmare of Hitlerism.

Part II

READINGS

— Reading No. 1 —

THE FIRST GERMAN PEACE NOTE,
OCTOBER 3, 1918¹

On October 6, 1918, a communication from Prince Max of Baden, chancellor of the German government, to the president of the United States, transmitted through the Swiss legation in Washington, requested steps for the restoration of peace.

The German Government requests the President of the United States of America to take steps for the restoration of peace, to notify all belligerents of this request, and to invite them to delegate plenipotentiaries for the purpose of taking up negotiations. The German Government accepts, as a basis for the peace negotiations, the program laid down by the President of the United States in his message to Congress of January 8, 1918, and in his subsequent pronouncements, particularly in his address of September 27, 1918. In order to avoid further bloodshed the German Government requests to bring about the immediate conclusion of a general armistice on land, on water, and in the air.

MAX, Prince of Baden,
Imperial Chancellor

¹ United States Public Information Committee, *Official United States Bulletin*, October 9, 1918, Vol. II, No. 433.

— Reading No. 2 —

EBERT'S MANIFESTO,
NOVEMBER 9, 1918²

On the morning of November 9, 1918, Prince Max, with the understanding that a constituent assembly would be invoked, yielded his office as chancellor to Friedrich Ebert. The latter immediately issued a manifesto urging the country to remain tranquil.

FELLOW CITIZENS:

Prince Max of Baden, Reich chancellor up to now, with the consent of all the state secretaries, has turned over to me the task of carrying on the affairs of the Reich chancellor. I have in mind to form a government by consent of the parties and will give a public report on this shortly.

The new government will be a people's government. Its goal will be to bring peace to the German people as soon as possible, and to establish firmly the freedom which it has achieved.

Fellow Citizens: I ask you all for your support in the heavy tasks that await us. You know how seriously the war has threatened the sustenance of the people, the first basic condition for political life.

The political revolution should not interfere with the feeding of the population.

It must remain the first duty of all, both in the city and on the farms, not to hinder but rather to further the pro-

² Quoted in Koppel S. Pinson, *Modern Germany* (New York, 1954), p. 362. Courtesy of The Macmillan Company.

EBERT'S MANIFESTO, NOVEMBER 9, 1918

105

duction of food supplies and their transportation to the cities.

The want of food supplies means plunder and looting and suffering for all. The poorest will suffer most, the industrial workers will be hit hardest.

Whoever uses force to seize food supplies or other consumer needs or interferes with the means of transportation necessary for their distribution, sins heavily against the entire community.

Fellow Citizens! I implore you most urgently to leave the streets and maintain calm and order!

7. The law concerning military service is revoked, subject to settlement of controversies still to be determined.

8. Regulations for servants are cancelled. Also the exceptional laws against farm workers.

Furthermore, ordinances, social and political, will be published shortly. At the latest on January 1, 1919, the 8-hour working day will come into effect. The government will do its utmost to provide work. A decree for the support of the unemployed is ready. It divides the costs among Reich, state, and community. In the matter of sickness insurance, the payments will be stretched beyond the 2500 mark point. Steps are being taken to insure a regular food supply.

Production will be maintained in all branches of the national economy. Property rights will be protected against infringement by private individuals.

All elections to public bodies are henceforward to be conducted according to equal, secret, direct, and universal suffrage, based on proportional representation, for all males and females from 20 years old. This electoral law applies to elections for the Constituent Assembly, concerning which further instructions will follow.

Berlin, November 12, 1919

EBERT HAASE SCHEIDEMANN LANDSBERG
DITTMANN BARTH

— Reading No. 5 —

THE TERMS OF THE ARMISTICE, NOVEMBER 11, 1918⁵

At 5:00 A.M. on the morning of November 11, 1918, the armistice was signed by Marshal Ferdinand Foch, commander-in-chief of the Allied armies, with Admiral R. E. Wemyss, First Sea Lord of Great Britain, on the one hand, and the German plenipotentiaries on the other. The German representatives were Matthias Erzberger, German secretary of state, Count von Oberndorff, Major-General von Winterfeldt, and Captain Vanselow (German navy).

The New York Times reported the event in these banner headlines:

**ARMISTICE SIGNED, END OF THE WAR!
BERLIN SEIZED BY REVOLUTIONISTS!
NEW CHANCELLOR BEGS FOR ORDER:
OUSTED KAISER FLEES TO HOLLAND**

A summary of the terms of the armistice follows.

1. Effective six hours after signing.
2. Immediate clearing of Belgium, France, Alsace-Lorraine, to be concluded within fourteen days. Any troops remaining in these areas to be interned or taken as prisoners of war.
3. Surrender of 5,000 cannon (chiefly heavy), 30,000 machine guns, 3,000 trench mortars, 2,000 planes.

⁵ Official release by the German government, published in the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, November 11, 1918.

4. Evacuation of the left bank of the Rhine, Mayence, Coblenz, Cologne, occupied by the enemy to a radius of 30 kilometers deep.

5. On the right bank of the Rhine a neutral zone from 30 to 40 kilometers deep, evacuation within eleven days.

6. Nothing to be removed from the territory on the left bank of the Rhine, all factories, railroads, etc., to be left intact.

7. Surrender of 5,000 locomotives, 150,000 railway coaches, 10,000 trucks.

8. Maintenance of enemy occupation troops in Germany.

9. In the East all troops to withdraw behind the boundaries of August 1, 1914; fixed time not given.

10. Renunciation of the Treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest.

11. Unconditional surrender of East Africa.

12. Return of the property of the Belgian Bank, Russian and Rumanian gold.

13. Return of prisoners of war without reciprocity.

14. Surrender of 160 U-boats, 8 light cruisers, 6 dreadnoughts; the rest of the fleet to be disarmed and controlled by the Allies in neutral or Allied harbors.

15. Assurance of free transit through the Cattegat Sound; clearance of mine-fields and occupation of all forts and batteries, through which transit could be hindered.

16. The blockade remains in effect. All German ships to be captured.

17. All limitations by Germany on neutral shipping to be removed.

18. Armistice lasts thirty days.

— Reading No. 6 —

DECLARATION BY GERMAN DELEGATES ON SIGNING THE ARMISTICE⁶

When the German delegates, acting on instructions from Berlin, signed the armistice on the morning of November 11, 1918, they accepted terms which all of them regarded as shameful and unfair. Their efforts to obtain milder terms had been in vain. The four plenipotentiaries issued the following statement to indicate the reluctance with which they signed the truce.

German Government will naturally endeavor with all its power to take care that the duties imposed upon it shall be carried out.

The undersigned Plenipotentiaries recognize that in certain points regard has been paid to their suggestions. They can therefore regard the comments made on November 9th on the conditions of the Armistice with Germany and the answer handed to them on November 10th as an essential condition of the whole agreement.

They must, however, allow no doubt to exist on the point that in particular the short time allowed for evacuation as well as the surrender of indispensable means of transport threaten to bring about a state of things which without its being the fault of the German Government and the German people may render impossible the further fulfilment of the conditions.

⁶ Quoted in Ralph Haswell Lutz (ed.), *Fall of the German Empire, 1914-1918* (Stanford, 1932), II, 518. By permission of the Board of Trustees of Stanford University.

— Reading No. 9 —

THE ABDICATION OF WILLIAM II,
NOVEMBER 28, 1918.¹⁰

On November 10, 1918, when it became obvious that World War I was irretrievably lost, William II, Supreme War Lord, fled across the German border to Holland. Two weeks later, William, creator of Germany's New Course, father of her Big Navy, fanatical proponent of "the good old Prussian spirit," issued this abdication proclamation.

I herewith renounce for all time claims to the Throne of Prussia and to the German Imperial Throne connected therewith. At the same time I release all officials of the German Empire and of Prussia, as well as all officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the Navy and of the Prussian Army, as well as the troops of the federated states of Germany, from the oath of fidelity which they tendered to me as their Emperor, King, and Commander-in-Chief. I expect of them that until the re-establishment of order in the German Empire they shall render assistance to those in actual power in Germany, in protecting the German people from the threatening dangers of anarchy, famine, and foreign rule.

Proclaimed under our own hand and with the Imperial Seal attached.

Amerongen, 28 November, 1918

[Signed] WILLIAM

¹⁰ F. Purlitz, *Die deutsche Revolution* (Berlin, n.d.), I, 32.

— Reading No. 10 —

THE SPARTACIST MANIFESTO,
NOVEMBER 29, 1918.¹¹

The establishment of the German Republic was complicated by the existence of a revolutionary movement, inspired by Bolshevism, which became known as "Spartacist," after the pseudonym of its leader, Karl Liebknecht. As Communists, the Spartacists were as much opposed to a liberal or Socialist republic as they had been to the old imperial Germany. They proclaimed "the dictatorship of the proletariat" and established councils in imitation of the soviets in Russia. The following manifesto, which expressed the Spartacist position, was composed by Klara Zetkin, Franz Mehring, Rosa Luxemburg, and Karl Liebknecht.

PROLETARIANS! MEN AND WOMEN OF LABOR!
COMRADES!

The revolution has made its entry into Germany. The masses of the soldiers, who for four years were driven to the slaughterhouse for the sake of capitalistic profits, the masses of workers, who for four years were exploited, crushed, and starved, have revolted. That fearful tool of oppression—Prussian militarism, that scourge of humanity—lies broken on the ground. Its most noticeable representatives, and therewith the most noticeable of those guilty of this war, the Kaiser and the Crown Prince, have

¹¹ *Die Rote Fahne* (organ of the Spartacus party), Berlin, November 26, 1918; quoted in *The New York Times*, November 29, 1918.

fled from the country. Workers' and Soldiers' Councils have been formed everywhere.

Proletarians of all countries, we do not say that in Germany all the power has really been lodged in the hands of the working people, that the complete triumph of the proletarian revolution has already been attained. There still sit in the government all those Socialists who in August, 1914, abandoned our most precious possession, the International, who for four years betrayed the German working class and at the same time the International.

But, proletarians of all countries, now the German proletarian himself is speaking to you. We believe we have the right to appeal before your forum in his name. From the first day of this war we endeavored to do our international duty by fighting that criminal government with all our power, and branding it as the one really guilty of the war.

Now, at this moment, we are justified before history, before the International, and before the German proletariat. The masses agree with us enthusiastically; constantly widening circles of the proletariat share the knowledge that the hour has struck for a settlement with capitalist class rule. . . .

The imperialism of all countries knows no "understanding"; it knows only one right—capital's profits; it knows only one language—the sword; it knows only one method—violence. And if it is now talking in all countries, in yours as well as ours, about the "League of Nations," "disarmament," "rights of small nations," "self-determination of the peoples," it is merely using the customary lying phrases of the rulers for the purpose of lulling to sleep the watchfulness of the proletariat.

Proletarians of all countries! This must be the last war! We owe that to the twelve million murdered victims; we owe that to our children; we owe that to humanity. . . .

We call to you: "Arise for the struggle! Arise for action! The time for empty manifestoes, platonic resolutions, and high-sounding words has gone by! The hour of action has struck for the International!" We ask you to elect Workers' and Soldiers' Councils everywhere that will seize political power and, together with us, will restore peace.

Not Lloyd George and Poincaré, not Sonnino, Wilson, and Erzberger or Scheidemann; these must not be allowed to make peace. Peace is to be concluded under the waving banner of the socialist world revolution.

Proletarians of all countries! We call upon you to complete the work of socialist liberation, to give a human aspect to the disfigured world, and to make true those words with which we often greeted each other in the old days and which we sang as we parted: "And the International shall be the human race."

— Reading No. 17 —

A PAN-GERMAN NEWSPAPER
CALLS FOR VENGEANCE,
JUNE 28, 1919¹⁸

On June 28, 1919, a Pan-German newspaper, the Deutsche Zeitung, appeared with a black mourning band surrounding the following statement on its front page.

Vengeance! German nation! Today in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles a disgraceful treaty is being signed. Never forget it! On that spot where, in the glorious year of 1871, the German Empire in all its glory began, today German honor is dragged to the grave. Never forget it! The German people, with unceasing labor, will push forward to reconquer that place among the nations of the world to which they are entitled. There will be vengeance for the shame of 1919.

¹⁸ *Deutsche Zeitung*, June 28, 1919.

— Reading No. 18 —

THE WEIMAR CONSTITUTION¹⁹

In February 1919 the National Constituent Assembly was convened at Weimar, a small town on the river Elbe. A constitution guaranteeing federal rights, and providing for a bicameral legislative body, a seven-year presidential office, and proportional representation in voting was adopted on July 31, 1919, and signed on August 11, 1919. Extracts from the Weimar Constitution are reprinted here.

Preamble:

The German people, united in all their elements, and inspired by the will to renew and strengthen their Reich in liberty and justice, to preserve peace at home and abroad and to foster social progress, have established the following Constitution:

CHAPTER I: STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF
THE REICH

SECTION I: REICH AND STATES

ARTICLE 1. The German Reich is a Republic. Political authority emanates from the people.

ARTICLE 2: The territory of the Reich consists of the territories of the German member states. . . .

ARTICLE 3. The Reich colors are black, red, and gold. The merchant flag is black, white, and red, with the Reich colors in the upper inside corner.

¹⁹ Translated from *Die Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches vom 11. August 1919*, the official text of the 7th edition (Leipzig, 1930).

ARTICLE 4. The generally accepted rules of international law are to be considered as binding integral parts of the German Reich.

ARTICLE 5. Political authority is exercised in national affairs by the national government in accordance with the Constitution of the Reich, and in state affairs by the state governments in accordance with state constitutions. . . .

ARTICLE 12. Insofar as the Reich does not exercise its jurisdiction, such jurisdiction remains with the states . . . with the exception of cases in which the Reich possesses exclusive jurisdiction. . . .

ARTICLE 17. Every state must have a republican constitution. The representatives of the people must be elected by universal, equal, direct, and secret suffrage of all German citizens, both men and women, in accordance with the principles of proportional representation.

SECTION II: THE REICHSTAG

ARTICLE 20. The Reichstag is composed of the delegates of the German people.

ARTICLE 21. The delegates are representatives of the whole people. They are subject only to their own conscience and are not bound by any instructions.

ARTICLE 22. The delegates are elected by universal, equal, direct, and secret suffrage by men and women over twenty years of age, according to the principle of proportional representation. Election day must be a Sunday or a public holiday.

ARTICLE 23. The Reichstag is elected for four years. New elections must take place at the latest on the sixtieth day after this term has run its course. . . .

ARTICLE 32. For decisions of the Reichstag a simple majority vote is necessary, unless the Constitution prescribes another proportion of votes. . . .

ARTICLE 33. The Reichstag and its committees may require the presence of the Reich Chancellor and every Reich Minister. . . .

SECTION III: THE REICH PRESIDENT AND THE REICH CABINET

ARTICLE 41. The Reich President is elected by the

whole German people. Every German who has completed his thirty-fifth year is eligible for election. . . .

ARTICLE 42. On assuming office, the Reich President shall take the following oath before the Reichstag:

I swear to devote my energies to the well-being of the German people, to further their interests, to guard them from injury, to maintain the Constitution and the laws of the Reich, to fulfill my duties conscientiously, and to administer justice for all.

It is permissible to add a religious affirmation.

ARTICLE 43. The term of office of the Reich President is seven years. Re-election is permissible.

Before the expiration of his term, the Reich President, upon motion of the Reichstag, may be recalled by a popular vote. The decision of the Reichstag shall be by a two-thirds majority. Through such decision the Reich President is denied any further exercise of his office. The rejection of the recall motion by the popular referendum counts as a new election and results in the dissolution of the Reichstag. . . .

ARTICLE 48. If any state does not fulfill the duties imposed upon it by the Constitution or the laws of the Reich, the Reich President may enforce such duties with the aid of the armed forces.

In the event that the public order and security are seriously disturbed or endangered, the Reich President may take the measures necessary for their restoration, intervening, if necessary, with the aid of the armed forces. For this purpose he may abrogate temporarily, wholly or in part, the fundamental principles laid down in Articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124, and 153.

The Reich President must, without delay, inform the Reichstag of all measures taken under Paragraph 1 or Paragraph 2 of this Article. These measures may be rescinded on demand of the Reichstag. . . .

ARTICLE 50. All orders and decrees of the Reich President, including those relating to the armed forces, in order to be valid, must be countersigned by the Reich Chancellor or by the appropriate Reich Minister. Responsibility is assumed through the countersignature. . . .

ARTICLE 52. The Reich Cabinet consists of the Reich Chancellor and the Reich Ministers.

ARTICLE 53. The Reich Chancellor and, on his recommendation, the Reich Ministers, are appointed and dismissed by the Reich President.

ARTICLE 54. The Reich Chancellor and the Reich Ministers require for the exercise of their office the confidence of the Reichstag. Any one of them must resign if the Reichstag by formal resolution withdraws its confidence.

ARTICLE 55. The Reich Chancellor presides over the government of the Reich and conducts its affairs according to the rules of procedure laid down by the government of the Reich and approved by the Reich President.

ARTICLE 56. The Reich Chancellor determines the political program of the Reich and assumes responsibility to the Reichstag. Within this general policy each Reich Minister conducts independently the office entrusted to him and is held individually responsible to the Reichstag.

SECTION IV: THE REICHSRAT

ARTICLE 60. A Reichsrat is formed to give the German states representation in the law-making and administration of the Reich.

ARTICLE 61. Each state has at least one vote in the Reichsrat. In the case of the larger states one vote shall be assigned for every million inhabitants.²⁰ . . . No single state shall have more than two-fifths of the total number of votes. . . .

ARTICLE 63. The states shall be represented in the Reichsrat by members of their governments. . . .

SECTION V: REICH LEGISLATION

ARTICLE 68. Bills are introduced by the Reich cabinet, with the concurrence of the Reichsrat, or by members of the Reichstag. Reich laws shall be enacted by the Reichstag. . . .

ARTICLE 73. A law of the Reichstag must be submitted to popular referendum before its proclamation, if the Reich President, within one month of its passage, so decides. . . .

²⁰ Amended by law of March 24, 1921, to "every 700,000 inhabitants."

ARTICLE 74. The Reichsrat may protest against laws passed by the Reichstag. In case of such protest, the law is returned to the Reichstag, which may override the objection by a two-thirds majority. The Reich President must either promulgate the law within three months or call for a referendum. . . .

ARTICLE 76. The Constitution may be amended by law, but acts . . . amending the Constitution can only take effect if two-thirds of the legal number of members are present and at least two-thirds of those present consent. . . .

SECTION VI: THE REICH ADMINISTRATION

[Articles 78-101 cover the jurisdiction of the Reich Administration in such matters as foreign affairs, national defense, colonial policies, customs, national budgets, postal and telegraph services, railroads, and waterways.]

SECTION VII: ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

[Articles 102-108 provide for a hierarchy of Reich and state courts, with judges appointed by the Reich President for life.]

CHAPTER II: FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF THE GERMANS

SECTION I: THE INDIVIDUAL

ARTICLE 109. All Germans are equal before the law. Men and women have the same fundamental civil rights and duties: Public legal privileges or disadvantages of birth or of rank are abolished. Titles of nobility . . . may be bestowed no longer. . . . Orders and decorations shall not be conferred by the state. No German shall accept titles or orders from a foreign government.

ARTICLE 110. Citizenship of the Reich and the states is acquired in accordance with the provisions of a Reich law. . . .

ARTICLE 111. All Germans shall enjoy liberty of travel and residence throughout the whole Reich. . . .

ARTICLE 112. Every German is permitted to emigrate to a foreign country. . . .

ARTICLE 114. Personal liberty is inviolable. Curtail-

ment or deprivation of personal liberty by a public authority is permissible only by authority of law.

Persons who have been deprived of their liberty must be informed at the latest on the following day by whose authority and for what reasons they have been held. They shall receive the opportunity without delay of submitting objections to their deprivation of liberty.

ARTICLE 115. The house of every German is his sanctuary and is inviolable. Exceptions are permitted only by authority of law. . . .

ARTICLE 117. The secrecy of letters and all postal, telegraph, and telephone communications is inviolable. Exceptions are inadmissible except by national law.

ARTICLE 118. Every German has the right, within the limits of the general laws, to express his opinion freely by word, in writing, in print, in picture form, or in any other way. . . . Censorship is forbidden. . . .

SECTION II: THE GENERAL WELFARE

ARTICLE 123. All Germans have the right to assemble peacefully and unarmed without giving notice and without special permission. . . .

ARTICLE 124. All Germans have the right to form associations and societies for purposes not contrary to the criminal law. . . .

ARTICLE 126. Every German has the right to petition. . . .

SECTION III: RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES

ARTICLE 135. All inhabitants of the Reich enjoy full religious freedom and freedom of conscience. The free exercise of religion is guaranteed by the Constitution and is under public protection. . . .

ARTICLE 137. There is no state church. . . .

SECTION IV: EDUCATION AND THE SCHOOLS

ARTICLE 142. Art, science, and the teaching thereof are free. . . .

ARTICLE 143. The education of the young is to be provided for by means of public institutions. . . .

ARTICLE 144. The entire school system is under the supervision of the state. . . .

ARTICLE 145. Attendance at school is compulsory. . . .

SECTION V: ECONOMIC LIFE

ARTICLE 151. The regulation of economic life must be compatible with the principles of justice, with the aim of attaining humane conditions of existence for all. Within these limits the economic liberty of the individual is assured. . . .

ARTICLE 152. Freedom of contract prevails . . . in accordance with the laws. . . .

ARTICLE 153. The right of private property is guaranteed by the Constitution. . . . Expropriation of property may take place . . . by due process of law. . . .

ARTICLE 159. Freedom of association for the preservation and promotion of labor and economic conditions is guaranteed to everyone and to all vocations. All agreements and measures attempting to restrict or restrain this freedom are unlawful. . . .

ARTICLE 161. The Reich shall organize a comprehensive system of [social] insurance. . . .

ARTICLE 165. Workers and employees are called upon to cooperate, on an equal footing, with employers in the regulation of wages and of the conditions of labor, as well as in the general development of the productive forces. . . .

CONCLUDING PROVISIONS

ARTICLE 181. . . . The German people have passed and adopted this Constitution through their National Assembly. It comes into force with the date of its proclamation.

Schwarzburg, August 11, 1919.

The Reich President

EBERT

The Reich Cabinet

BAUER

ERZBERGER HERMANN MÜLLER DR. DAVID

NOSKE SCHMIDT

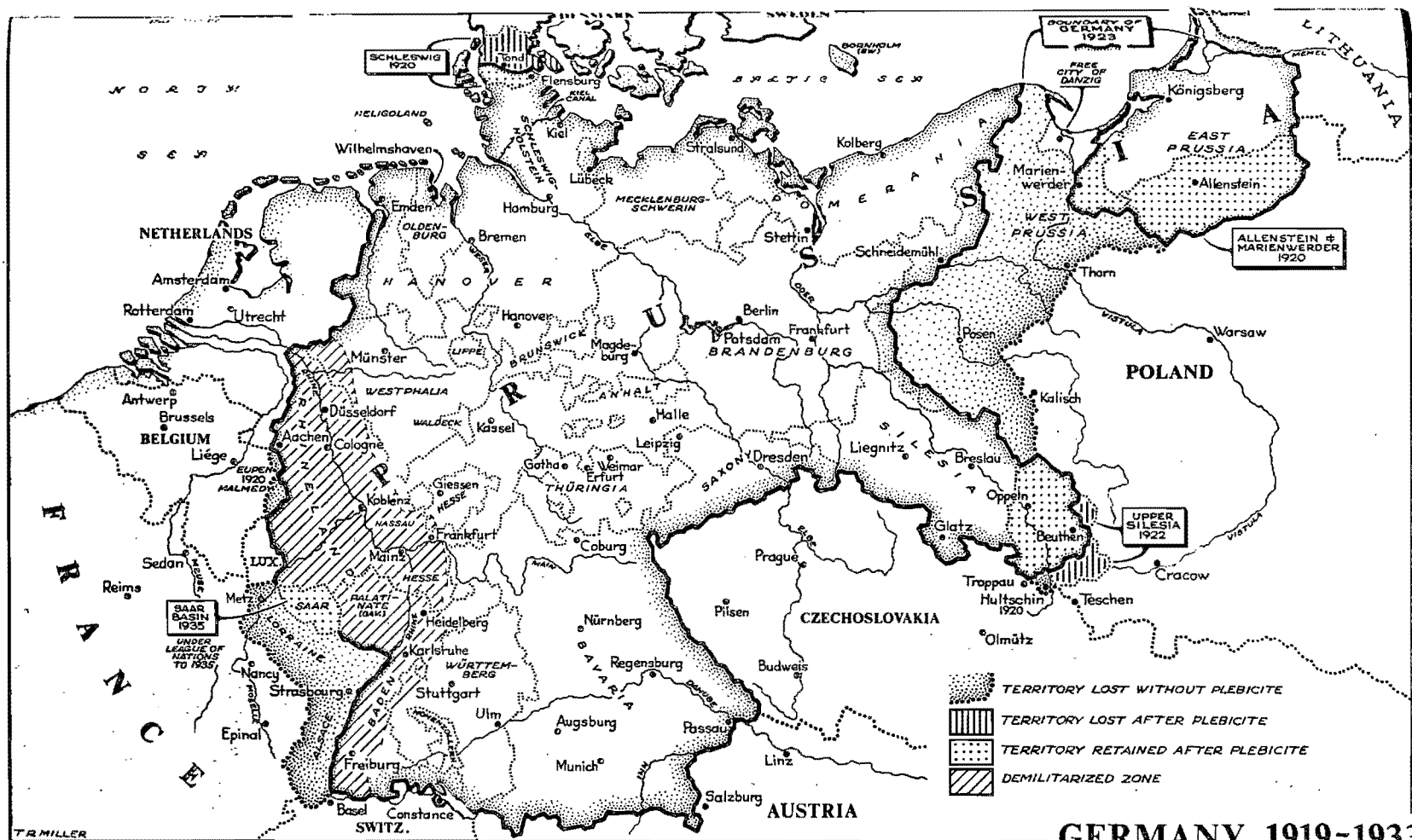
SCHLICKE GIESBERTS DR. BAYER

DR. BELL

APPENDIX

REICH CHANCELLORS OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC, 1919-1933

1919, Feb.—1919, June
Philipp Scheidemann
1919, June—1920, Mar.
Gustav Bauer
1920, Mar.—1920, June
Hermann Müller
1920, June—1921, May
Konstantin Fehrenbach
1921, May—1922, Nov.
Joseph Wirth
1922, Nov.—1923, Aug.
Wilhelm Cuno
1923, Aug.—1923, Nov.
Gustav Stresemann
1923, Nov.—1925, Jan.
Wilhelm Marx
1925, Jan.—1926, May
Hans Luther
1926, May—1928, June
Wilhelm Marx
1928, June—1930, Mar.
Hermann Müller
1930, Mar.—1932, May
Heinrich Brüning
1932, May—1932, Nov.
Franz von Papen
1932, Dec.—1933, Jan.
Kurt von Schleicher
1933, Jan. 30
Adolf Hitler



GERMANY, 1919-1933

