

# The new weimar republic and political opposition essay sample

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How far do you agree that the new Weimar Republic was seriously threatened by political extremists in the years 1919-1924? Throughout the years of 1919 to 1924 the new Weimar Republic experienced political opposition from the extreme left, for instance; The Spartacists. In addition to this, the right posed a threat to the new Republic . They had grown with the Kaiser's government and hence, had political preference over a dictatorial authoritarian constitution. Moreover, the new Republic was prone to other threats during the years of 1919 to 1924. The Weimar Republic had close association with the new government and the November Criminals.

Therefore, the stability of the republic was seriously threatened because from the very beginning, democratic politicians controlling and implementing laws in the system were considered criminals who betrayed their own country. Subsequently, the terms of the Treaty of Versailles exacerbated the republics condition in the year 1919, causing economic disaster, hence forward, providing a serious threat to the system which could be heightened by the violent political extremists demanding reforms.

Broadly speaking, the new Weimar Republic developed a threat to its own democracy, posed from the extreme left. One left wing group was known as The Spartacists. They were led by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. They wanted a communist in government similar to the one spawned from Lenin's Bolsheviks in Russia. Their disagreement with the system led them to try set up a military coup which would aid them in establishing their pipe dream of a communist government. Therefore, the lefts discontent with the present government led them to revolt and present a threat to the government. The Spartacists took vast amounts of control within the republic

such as Berlin, establishing communist control. President Ebert would not tolerate such havoc under his control especially this threat from the extreme left and so sent in the Freikorps to crush the rebellion.

In the end, the Spartacists were unsuccessful and the threat was crushed. Consequently, the leaders of the revolt were killed. Furthermore, between 1919 and 1923, Ebert was faced with more strikes and communist violence in: Bavaria, the Ruhr, Saxony and in Thuringia, outlining the political threat depicted by the left. Again, Ebert turned to the Freikorps for help and the rebellions were quashed. Thus, this exemplifies that although a threat existed within the republic from the political left, it was quickly diminished by the power and might of Ebert who persevered to aid the success of the new Weimar Republic. On the other hand, Ebert was prolonged to violent opposition to the political right. His opposition was largely aristocrats who grown successful during the time of Kaiser Wilhelm II's Germany. Therefore, they elude a serious threat to the system as they had acquired power previous to the establishment of the new republic and hence, obtained the power to change and reform the system. Following the disbandment of the Freikorps group as part of post-war disarmament, a group of right-wing politicians and soldiers, led by Wolfgang Kapp, seized control of Berlin.

The Kapp was able to have significant impact, causing the government to flee to Stuttgart. The army refused to fire on the Freikorps and hence, looked like the government was doomed. Although, this outlines a serious threat to the Republic throughout the period of its survival, it was saved by the German people, especially the industrial workers of Berlin. They declared a general

strike which brought the capital to a halt with no power, transport or water. After a few days the threat diminished, as Kapp realised he could not leave and left the country. The Weimar exhibited its de jure rule, and thus, hunted down Kapp where he died whilst awaiting trial. Therefore, one can identify that the Weimar did have power and support and was able to pulverise any threat towards the system during the years of 1919-1924. Another threat to the Weimar Republic came from Hitler's Putsch in November 1923.

This was a right-wing attempt to, initially, overthrow the Bavarian government and then proceed to march on Berlin to overthrow President Ebert and his national government. This was a real threat to the Republic because it showed that the government was still not in total control of political extremism and violence on the streets. Hitler's attempted Putsch showed many people that the Weimar republic was very unpopular in certain parts of Germany and amongst certain social groups. However, this threat was limited to Bavaria, and Munich city in particular. It was not a national uprising and so its threat-level was not so high. The fact that it was easily suppressed by a few hundred local armed policemen and Bavarian soldiers showed how weak Hitler and the Nazis were and the fact that they lacked widespread support. The failure of the Munich Putsch also showed that the Weimar Republic's government still had the support of the army and police. The French invasion of the Ruhr, in January 1923, was a major threat to the Weimar Republic in two ways.

Firstly, the invasion made President Ebert's government look weak as they appeared powerless to stop French and Belgian troops from marching onto

German soil. This was, in effect, an invasion, which the German government seemed unable to stop. This invasion angered many German people, especially the voters, who wanted the Weimar government to defend them and throw out the invaders. They say this as an example of a humiliation that Ebert seemed unwilling, or unable to do anything about. Furthermore, this invasion threatened the Weimar Republic in an economic sense. The French and Belgian seizure of German industrial goods and raw materials, such as coal and timber, meant that Germany had even less to sell to earn money in order to pay its own crippling war debts and the added burden on reparations payments to the French. The fact that President Ebert also ordered the German industrial workers in the Ruhr to stop working and conduct a non-violent opposition to the invading and occupying forces, better known as 'passive resistance', had the effect of worsening the economic situation.

Even fewer goods were being produced from Germany's Ruhr factories, having the effect of forcing up prices. Hyperinflation was another major threat to the Weimar Republic. It was linked to the French invasion of the Ruhr because fewer manufactured goods were being produced, so prices of goods, already increasing, grew even faster. Besides this, the French expelled at least 150, 000 industrial workers, and their families, from the Ruhr. This meant that the government had to find housing for them as well as food and the money to buy it with. The fact that Ebert had also called on the workers to carry out 'passive resistance' meant that they were not working, so the government had to print more money to give to these

unemployed workers. The result of this was that inflation spiralled out of control as there was now too much money chasing too few goods.

The value of the money depreciated and so hyperinflation set in. German workers, as well as those on fixed incomes, such as pensioners and salaried employees, like teachers, found that the value of their fixed incomes was falling so fast, as the price of goods rose so rapidly, that their money was quickly becoming worthless! This economic crisis, partly of the Weimar government's own making, only served to alienate the German voters and encourage them to start listening to, and supporting, more extremist political parties, on the far-left and far-right of German politics. This whole situation undermined confidence in the Weimar Republic. Hyperinflation was something that successive Weimar government's failed to ever fully recover and disassociate them from. In retrospect, one can clearly identify the threats that existed within the new Weimar Republic during the period of 1919-1924. Overall, it seems that the main threat spurred from a combination of all these events stated. However, more so from hyperinflation.

Hyperinflation impacted on most people's lives as money was needed to do just about everything. What really made this a severe threat was that those who were affected were voters and the government's inability to deal effectively and quickly with the economic crises, indeed they seem to have made it worse by printing even more money, only served to alienate large sections of the German electorate. Many Germans never forgave, or forgot, what happened in 1923, but they especially remembered hyperinflation.

Furthermore, French invasion of the Ruhr did serve to aggravate the economic situation, and so, both the French invasion and hyperinflation are more important than Hitler's localised Putsch in Munich and the Spartacist revolt as they were both quashed and Ebert was able to conceive stability through the new Republic. Thus, with the discoordination from the political opposition, hyperinflation served as the main threat to the Republic which seriously undermined and threatened its doings.