Weimar Republic

Keyword: REPUBLIC

Aim:

To understand the structure of the new Weimar Republic
Setting up the Weimar Republic

• Ebert promised the army that he would not reform it in the hope they would support & keep the new government in power.

• Ebert also promised the Trade Unions that he would try to achieve an 8 hour working day

• Despite Ebert’s efforts some extreme political parties were still dissatisfied. Demonstrations and riots took place and Germany was on the edge of anarchy!
What is the message of this source?

Wings of an angel?

Extremist, throwing bombs and causing chaos and anarchy

Weimar holding the constitution (rules which set out how a country is run)

Wounded soldier being looked after and happy behind ‘Weimar’ in the light
National Assembly:

- Elected 19 Jan 1919
- Wrote the constitution
- First met in the town of Weimar due to violence in Berlin
- Reached an agreement in 6 months
- Became known as the Weimar Republic
How is the new Weimar Government set up?

**Head of State**

**President:**
- Head of the WR
- Elected every 7 yrs
- No part in day to day
- Chooses Chancellor

**The Government**

**Chancellor:**
- Head of the Government
- Chooses Government ministers

**Cabinet:**
- The most important ministers
- Worked closely with chancellor
- Decision makers

**The Parliament:**

2 houses, laws pass through both

**Reichstag:**
- More powerful of the two
- Controlled taxes
- Elected by the people every 4 years

**Reichsrat:**
- Elected every 4 years
- Represented regions with numbers based on size

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**Article 48:**

In a time of crisis, the Chancellor could ask the President to pass laws without them being passed through the Reichstag

(This will be important later for Hitler)
Strengths & weaknesses of new Weimar Government

**Democratic:**
- Women could now vote as well as men
- Voting age reduced to 21

**Proportional Representation (PR):**
- Even smaller parties had a share of the seats in the Reichstag (1 MP for every 60,000 votes)

**Checks & balances:**
- No one person or group could have too much power
- President could choose the chancellor
- President could dismiss the Reichstag and call new elections

**Extreme laws impossible:**
- Laws had to be passed through both houses

**Coalition Government (PR):**
- Too many small parties meaning there couldn’t be one party in majority
- Couldn’t agree or pass any laws
- Frequent arguments

**Weakness in a crisis:**
- It was hard in a crisis to make a quick and clear decision
- Article 48 was used too often in a crisis leading to people calling for 1 leader like the old days of monarchy

**Local government:**
- Regional areas had their own local parliament controlling police, courts & schools

**Created out of violence:**
- No public enthusiasm
- Opposed by extremists
- Army too often put down revolts