

GCSE History - 'Germany, 1890-1945'

What problems did Kaiser Wilhelm II face?

Decision 1: What do about the early threat of socialism?

Immediately when you become Kaiser in 1888 you are worried about the political threat from **Socialism**.

Workers in factories are fed up with poor working and living conditions. They might soon get out of control and demand better rights. Do you:

- Pass permanent Anti Socialist Laws to stop the growth of the main Socialist Party the SDP. This law will make it illegal to form **Trade Unions**, close Socialist newspapers and ban any group wanting to spread Socialist ideas.
- Pass a few laws to **improve** the workers quality of life, stopping child labour and Sunday working.
- Pass harsh anti-Socialist laws banning all Socialist Parties and trying to wipe them out.

Decision 2: What to do about your overly powerful Chancellor (Prime Minister)?

In 1890 under your Grandfather's rule, Bismarck was Chancellor. He was very successful but you think he has too much power. God chose you to be Kaiser, not him. Your Grandfather let Bismarck make all the main decisions about government. He was very successful and helped successfully unify Germany in 1871. He could be a good ally:

Do you:

- Agree to everything Bismarck says and allow him to rule as before. He did a great job and could continue to.
- Reach a settlement where you and he can work together to rule Germany. You could be a winning team.
- Force Bismarck to resign and gain back as much power as you can. Making decisions can't be that difficult can it?

Decision 3 : Who to appoint as your new Chancellors and Advisers?

Bismarck retired in 1890 (well, you fired him!), you need to appoint a new Chancellor to help you run the country and make the best decisions:

Do you appoint?

- The smartest most talented person available to you . You may disagree with them but if you work together like Bismarck and your Grandfather did, it will lead to the best decisions and outcomes for Germany.
- No one, you are in charge and although you have to listen to the elected government (the Reichstag) which agrees or stops your laws, you think you can persuade them to listen to you.
- 'c. Yes men'. Individuals who will listen to you and your decisions and will not question you. Even if you change your mind All they need to be good at is paper work . Your chancellor needs to be loyal to you!

Decision 4: How do you deal with the Reichstag / the elected government?

Under the German constitution of 1871 all men over the age of 25 can vote for MPs to represent them in the Reichstag. This sounds fair but in reality the Reichstag's only real power lay in rejecting laws that you and the Chancellor create. The Reichstag will not stop your power but it could stop you making some decisions.

Do you:

- a. Work hard with supportive MPs to pass a law which limits the power of the Reichstag? This will allow you to pass whatever laws you like and increase your power.
- b. Do nothing - the Reichstag isn't really that powerful. It is right that it limits your power sometimes.
- c. Increase its power to pass laws. This will appeal to the workers who want more rights and make you look good amongst your people.

Decision 5: How do you deal with the growth of Industry and the growth of socialism?

In the 1890s and early 1900s Germany is catching Britain up as the world's most industrialised nation. You are producing more steel and nearly as much coal as Britain. This is good but your workers are living in poor conditions and many are voting for the Socialist Democratic Party which wants to end the rule of the Kaisers and give workers more rights and power. You tried to give workers a few more rights in 1890 but they now want more...

Do you:

- a. Try and pass permanent Anti Socialist Laws to stop the growth of the main Socialist Party the SDP. This law will make it illegal to form Trade Unions, close Socialist newspapers and ban any group wanting to spread Socialist principles.
- b. Pass a few more laws to improve workers' rights including giving workers accident insurance. This could make the workers like you and think more is to come.
- c. Try and pass harsh anti-Socialist laws banning strikes and putting workers in prison who support strikes and stop others working hard?

Decision 6: The issue of the Navy

Britain has the largest navy in the world. Germany's is only the 7th largest. How can this be when Germany is now on level terms with Britain in world trade? It could help your economy grow further as ship building will provide plenty of jobs:

Do you:

- a. Carry on as you are. You have the 7th largest navy in the world and you are making more industrial goods (iron and steel) than Britain. You don't need more and you don't want to threaten Britain by competing with her.
- b. Introduce a Navy Law calling for 16 new navy ships to be built. This is backed by steel companies and will help Germany have a bigger navy, similar to Britain's. It will increase jobs but Britain might be threatened
- c. Introduce a Navy Law calling for 16 new navy ships to be built and a further 3 ships to be built every year. This would help create more jobs and it would make Germany's navy bigger than Britain but it could start an arms (weapons) race and make Britain an enemy.