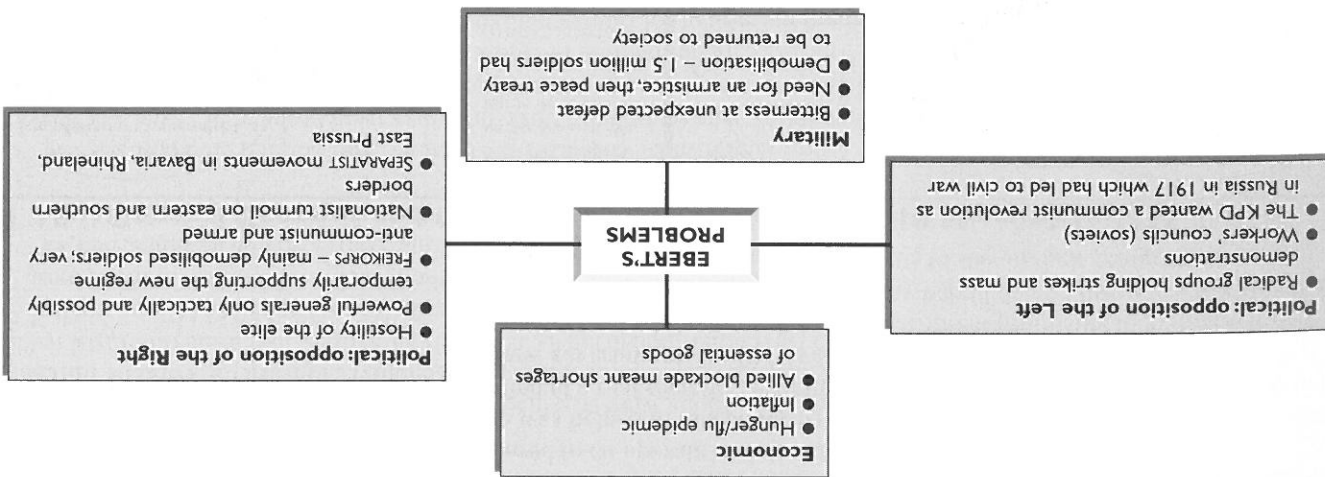


On 9 November 1918 Friedrich Ebert, the former saddler and leader of the SPD, found himself at the head of the newly proclaimed republican government. The future of Germany would be determined by the decisions he and his colleagues took. You are going to carry out a decision-making exercise to decide what you would have done in Germany in 1918-19. As a class, divide into three groups, then:

- 1 Each group should choose one of the socialist parties (KPD, USPD or SPD). Ensure you understand its political position (see Chart 1E opposite).
- 2 Look through Ebert's problems shown on the diagram below.



- 3 Look through Ebert's options on the five topics below. Decide which option your party should support. In each topic, one option is moderate, one more radical and one even more extreme.
- 4 You should then explain your party's policies to the class.
- 5 As a class, decide which party's policies you feel are most likely to succeed in securing effective democracy, given the conditions in Germany.
- 6 Read pages 20-3. How did your decisions compare with what Ebert did?

Ebert's options

1 POLITICAL

Elections

- Call an election for a new parliament as soon as possible
- Take revolutionary measures (without calling elections) immediately as the people have given you power
- Delay elections for a new parliament until major measures weakening the position of the elites are taken

Councils

- Give workers' councils extensive powers to negotiate improved working and living conditions
- Create a new government structure based on workers' councils
- Allow existing workers' councils to continue only until a newly elected assembly takes over

2 INDUSTRY

- Pass decrees nationalising major industries, and enabling workers' participation in management
- Take over all industry and hand it over to workers' control
- Persuade industrialists to come to agreements with responsible trade union representatives to give workers more say in their working conditions

3 THE CIVIL SERVICE AND JUDICIARY

- Keep the existing experienced personnel in their jobs
- Purge the administration of conservative officials
- Create a new system of elected officials and judges

4 THE ARMY

- Create a new workers' army, modelled on Russia's Red Army
- Try to win the support of the existing army by maintaining its basic structure
- Create workers' militia alongside the existing army, and remove REACTIONARY elements from the military High Command

5 WORKING-CLASS UNREST

- Organise protests demanding a soviet-style revolution giving power to workers' councils
- Use army and volunteers to suppress revolutionary communist elements
- Pass radical reforms benefiting the working class to reduce potential support for a communist rising