



## Coffeehouse (Anarchist) Republic of 1919

The Great War had ended with the German people hungry and exhausted. They had been told that victory was close at hand when suddenly the government collapsed, with a peace that did not look at all like the peace without victory President Woodrow Wilson had promised. German soldiers marched back home with their weapons and were hailed as heroes. The country was in chaos, with the political left and right battling in the streets. In Berlin, the Spartacist (German Soviet) movement took power following the Russian Soviet example. The Bolsheviks and anarchists were pushing world revolution. Berlin was in Prussia, which had dominated the other German states.

The city of Munich in Bavaria resented Berlin's domination before and after the war. Munich was the gathering place for bohemian writers, poets and artists and had the largest number of cabarets east of Paris. The city was a gathering place for the modern art world and intellectuals. Political leader Kurt Eisner was on his way to resign his post when he was assassinated.

Then on April 6, 1919, Ernst Toller and Erich Muhsam set up the Bavarian Soviet Republic. The government they set up was established on nontraditional rules. Franz Lipp was in the foreign office and declared war on Switzerland for not lending railroad engines to the republic. He had been in psychiatric hospitals on several occasions and claimed that someone had stolen the key to the lavatory. The chief of police was a convicted burglar with questionable moral behavior.

The leaders set about on social reforms. Paper money was outlawed, no house could have more than three rooms, and education saw drastic changes. Tuitions were abolished for universities, and there would be no exams, degrees or titles given. Also, history would be removed from the curriculum. History was denounced as a threat to civilization and was "bunk." Primary education would center around the writings of Walt Whitman so society could become a "garden of flowers" where anyone could pick his or her share.

On April 13, 1919, the Bolsheviks removed Ernst Toller from power and replaced the government with a Russian Soviet system. Aristocrats were rounded up and executed on April 30, 1919. The Bolsheviks were removed from Munich by right-wing paramilitary and army units after four weeks of control of the city. Gustav von Kahr took control and established the Citizen Militia (*Einwohnerwehren*), which according to France claimed broke the treaty and demanded its disbandment. The members of this organization would blend into other right-wing organizations. Many would walk with the Nazis in November 1923 in a beer-hall putsch.

History is how we learn from the past, saving us from what Einstein said about insanity—doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.

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