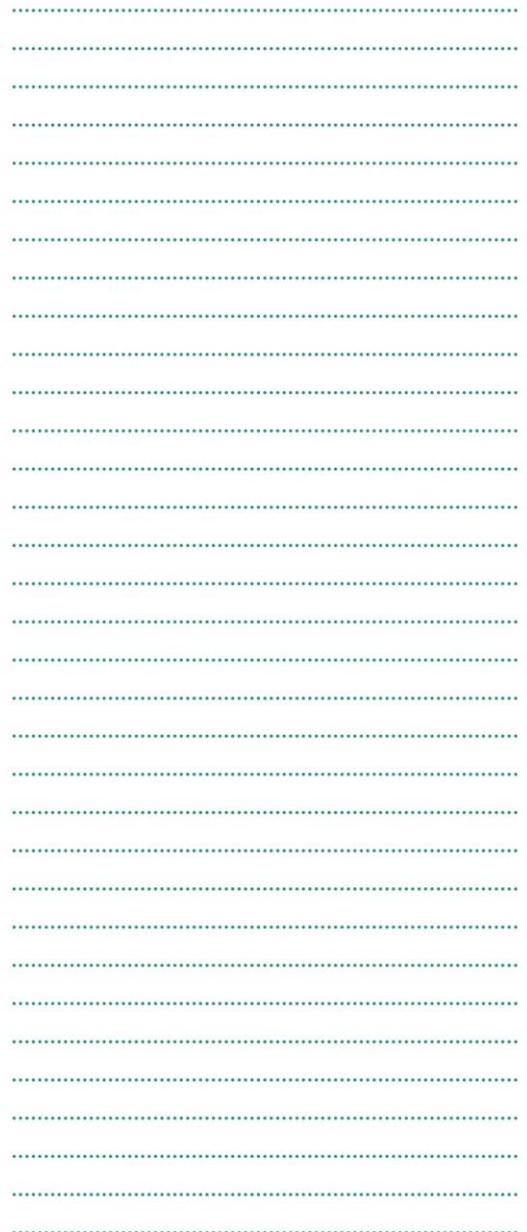


(honourable) naval battle with its ships that had not seen action since the Battle of Jutland in June 1916. Sailors on ships anchored at Wilhelmshaven trigger a mutiny in response to this absurd and senseless order. 1000 sailors are arrested in an attempt to stop the mutiny in its tracks. However, when seven demonstrating sailors are shot on 3 November by a military patrol in Kiel, the situation escalates. On 4 November, insurgent sailors take over power in Kiel and, thus, launch the German November Revolution. Based on the model of the *Soviets* (Councils) in the Russian October Revolution, the first German *Arbeiter- und Soldatenrat* (Workers' and Soldiers' Council) is created in Kiel. In numerous cities over the following days, Workers' and Soldiers' Councils are formed and take over power. Across the entire empire, people go on strike, demanding peace and the abdication of the Emperor, in huge demonstrations. There is also increasing public pressure for the introduction of a socialist German soviet republic, like in Russia, and for the numerous German princes to renounce their titles. In the end, when revolutionaries bring down the monarchy in Bavaria on 7 November and proclaim the republic, the position of the Emperor can no longer be maintained. At this point in time, Emperor Wilhelm II has already fled from Berlin to the Belgian town of Spa, where the headquarters of the Supreme Army Command (OHL) is located. On 9 November, Max von Baden announces Emperor Wilhelm II's abdication. The Imperial Chancellor also resigns and hands over official duties to Friedrich Ebert, the leader of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). On the same day, Philipp Scheidemann, also a member of the SPD, proclaims the republic from the western balcony of the Reichstag building at 2.00PM, under threatening pressure from the workers and soldiers. Schiedemann declares: 'Das Alte und Morsche, die Monarchie ist zusammengebrochen! Es lebe das Neue; es lebe die deutsche Republik!' ('The old and rotten, the monarchy has collapsed! The new may live; long live the German Republic!'). By proclaiming a moderate republic, Scheidemann is acting under the impression that it was necessary to forestall the radical powers from the far-left. In reality, Karl Liebknecht, a former Social Democrat and now member of the socialist splinter party Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD) also announces the end of the monarchy two hours later, and declares the *Freie Sozialistische Republik Deutschland* (Free Socialist Republic of Germany) from a balcony of the Berlin City Palace. However, Scheidemann's proclamation is the decisive statement, and it marks the end of the Empire and the beginning of a democratic Germany.



In the following months, the young republic struggles with challenges from both the left and right wings of politics. Right-wing *Freikorps* (paramilitary units formed of First World War veterans) and fighters from the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) that was established in January 1919, both wage war on the new state. For months, the country becomes bogged down in uprisings and political murders. In an attempt to evade what is tantamount to a state of civil war, the German constituent national assembly meets in the small town of Weimar in Thuringia, which had primarily been known previously for the literary works from Weimar Classicism and, in particular, the poets Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich von Schiller. On 11 August 1919, the constitution is finally signed, and implemented on 14 August. For the first time ever, Germany is a liberal democracy.

Translated from Polish to English by Mikołaj Sekrecki
Proofread by Maria-Philippa Wieckowski

References:

1. Mommsen, Hans (1998) *Aufstieg und Untergang der Republik von Weimar. 1918-1933*. Berlin
2. Haffner, Sebastian (1979) *Die deutsche Revolution 1918/19*. Frankfurt a. M.
3. Ullrich, Volker (2009) *Die Revolution von 1918/19*. München
4. Winkler, Heinrich-August (1998) *Weimar 1918-1933. Die Geschichte der ersten deutschen Demokratie*. München