

# Part One:

## Germany and the growth of democracy

### How was Germany governed under Kaiser Wilhelm?

Wilhelm II was the **Kaiser** of Germany. He did not allow the **Reichstag** to interfere with his decisions on how Germany should be governed.

- The Kaiser chose who was Chancellor and could also decide to sack the Chancellor and shut down the Reichstag if he didn't like their decisions.
- The Chancellor controlled the government – like the Prime Minister in Britain. The Chancellor did need to get the Reichstag to agree new laws but he could ignore the Reichstag's views if he wanted to. The Chancellor was always a **Prussian**.
- Reichstag representatives were elected: all German men over the age of 25 had a vote. However, the Reichstag's powers were weak. Its main role was to discuss new laws, put forward by the Kaiser and his government, not to make new laws itself.

#### NAILIT!



This section of the course is focused on why Germany was difficult to rule before the First World War. Make sure you are clear on the different factors that contributed to this difficulty – industrialisation, socialism, parliamentary democracy, the Prussian elite and militarism.

#### Why was Germany difficult to rule?

The Kaiser was a Prussian and wanted to keep Germany under the control of the Prussian elite, but Germany was changing. **Industrialisation** created new social and political pressures, as described in the table at the top of page 13.

#### Who were the Prussians?

Rich Prussian landowners had controlled Germany's government and military since Germany became a country in 1871. The German royal family were Prussians.

The Prussian elite had always been able to control Germany's peasants, because they owned their land. But now peasants were leaving the land to work in factories in towns and cities. As a result of industrialisation, Prussians felt they were losing power.