What were the effects of WW1 on Germany?

- November 1918, the Kaiser abdicated.
- Frederick Ebert and the SPD (socialists) took control of Germany and declared a republic.
- June 1919 had to accept peace terms laid down, or Allies would invade Germany. (Armistice)
- Political effects: Reichstag was weak, working and middle class had little say to how Germany was run, no effective opposition to the Kaiser, Germany was ruled by dictatorship by Kaiser and army leaders; Ludendorff and Hindenburg.
- Anarchy: Germany was extremely unstable, armed demobilised soldiers were returning home and joining violent demonstrations against the war and Kaiser.
- Physical: farming was disrupted because farmers went to war, production of milk, butter and meat had halved, couldn’t import goods due to British navy blockade of German ports, many German people faced starvation, were vulnerable to disease, ¼ of a million died from the effects of hunger and disease.
- Psychological: before war Germans were proud and ambitious and prepared to work hard for success of country, the war made Germans bitter and angry and looked for someone to blame, post war unity and obedience was replaced by squabbling and conflict of the people.

What threats did the Weimar Republic face from political extremists 1918-23? Why did the extremists fail and the Government survive?

Problem 1: Blame for defeat in the First World War

- Leaders of Weimar Republic signed the Armistice, this shocked the German citizens.
- Not told by the Kaiser they were losing the War, and victory seemed possible.
- Felt betrayed and were looking for someone to blame.
- The people believed that Germany could have won the war if the army had not been stabbed in the back by the weak politicians who lacked the will to fight on.
- This was known as the ‘stab in the back’ myth.

Problem 2: The Treaty of Versailles

- Germany had to give up 13% of its land including colonies and important areas with raw materials such as coal.
- The army was reduced to 100,000 (was 1.75 million); no aircraft or submarines and the navy was reduced to 15,000.
- Germany had to pay back money – 6.6 billion- as reparations to countries such as France and Belgium which had been devastated by trench warfare.
- The ‘war guilt clause’ meant that Germany accepted blame for causing the war.

These terms were hard. Opponents of the Weimar Republic saw the government as weak because it had signed the Treaty and agreed to these terms.

Problem 3: Proportional representation

- In the old government, the Kaiser had chosen the ministers who would help him run the country.
- New constitution allowed the German people to choose who they wanted in their government.
- Germans over the age of 20 could vote and all adults had the right to free speech.
- The government counted the votes using system known as proportional representation.
• Because of this, the parliament was made up of lots of different minor parties which had too much influence on policies.
• The major parties in the Reichstag had to make deals with the minor parties because they needed their support.

Problem 4: Political violence

Extreme left wing

The Spartacist Rising, 1919

The members of the Spartacist league were communists who wanted a revolution in Germany. The government ordered the army of Freikorps to crush them. Leaders were executed for their part in the rising.

The Red Rising, 1920

A communist army of around 50,000 workers occupied the Ruhr. The army and the Freikorps crushed the with a loss of around 1000 communists.

Extreme right wing

The Kapp Putsch, 1920

The leader of the Freikorps, Wolfgang Kapp, attempted to seize power using the Freikorps. Workers went on strike to protest, and managed to stop the uprising.

The Munich Putsch, 1923

Adolf’s Hitler’s Nazi Party of around 50,000 members and their own private army (the SA), wanted to seize power. Their plan was to take over the government and set up a new one in Munich. Poor planning meant it failed and Hitler and the other Nazi leaders were arrested and sent to prison.

Why was the Treaty of Versailles hated by the German people?

Consequences of the terms of the Versailles Treaty...

• Loss of territory. (lost 13% of land and 6million people.)(representing 10% of industry and 15% of agricultural land)(lost overseas colonies e.g: parts of Africa)
• Payment of 6 600million in reparations. (pounds)
• Reduce of the size of army to 100k and navy 15k and no airforce or submarines.
• Demilitarisation of the Rheinland. (territory of Germany)
• Admit blame for causing the war (War Guilt Clause)

Important Note:
1. Most Germans hated it! ‘Stabbed in the back myth’ by the Weimar politicians who agreed to the armistice (ceasefire) in November 1918 where most Germans thought they were on the brink of winning the war.
2. Payment of reparations and the loss of important industrial areas meant that Germany would have economic problems for years.
Why did this happen?

- The SA was no longer needed for the Nazis to maintain power.
- The army wanted the SA to be controlled, and was powerful enough to overthrow Hitler if he didn’t do something.
- The SA had nearly 2million violent members and was a threat to Hitler.
- The SA leaders had bad reputations.
- There was an ongoing power struggle between Heinrich Himmler (the SS leader) and Rohm (the SA leader).

How were civil liberties eroded 1933-34? What threats to Nazi control were removed or eliminated 1933-34?

1. **The Reichstag Fire:**
   Building was burned down, 4000 communists arrested, 28th February Hindenburg passed an emergency decree.

2. **Emergency decree:**
   - Arrest and detain people without trial for as long as they wanted.
   - Search and confiscate property.
   - Read post and listen to telephone calls.
   - Stop people organising meetings.

3. **The Enabling Act, March 1933:**
   - Gave Hitler the power to make any law for 4 years without consent of Reichstag.
   - The Act meant that Germany was no longer a democracy.

4. **Passing the act:**
   The enabling act needed the support of 2/3 of the deputies in the Reichstag for the Enabling Act to be passed. It was passed with 444 to 94 votes. Because...
   - An emergency decree meant the 81 communist members couldn’t take up their seats.
   - Hitler made deals with the National and Centre parties.
   - The SA surrounded the meeting and threatened opposition politicians.

5. **Nazi police state:**
   - New laws made it a crime to listen to a foreign radio station, say anything against Hitler or tell an anti-Nazi joke.
   - The SS (the main enforcers of the police state) arrested anyone who broke the new laws or opposed the Nazis. This was called ‘protective custody’.
   - The Gestapo (the secret police) spied on people by reading their mail and listening to phone calls.
   - Block wardens were each given 40 households to spy on for suspicious behaviour.
   - People were encouraged to inform on friends, family, work colleagues and neighbours.
   - Many prisoners were taken to concentration camps.

6. **Catholic Church:**
   Hitler worried that the catholic church would oppose him because Catholics:
   - Were loyal to the pope.
   - Usually supported the centre party.
   - Sent their children to Catholic schools and the Catholic youth organisation.
   By 1934, despite an initial agreement, Catholic schools had to remove Christian symbols from classrooms and were later closed.