GERMANY IN TRANSITION, c. 1929-1947

The rise of the Nazi Party and its consolidation of power, c. 1929-1934

What was the impact of the Weimar period on the rise of the Nazis?

Political and economic problems of Weimar
• In 1918 Germany signs an Armistice (truce) ending the First World War
• The naval blockade had brought Germany to her knees but no foreign army ever invaded Germany
• In 1919, without any consultation, Germany was presented with the Treaty of Versailles

The Weimar Republic
• By autumn 1918 the German army was on the point of collapse and on 9 November the Kaiser abdicated and fled to the Netherlands
• Germany became a republic and on 11 November the provisional government was set up
• The Weimar Republic lasted from 1919 to 1933 and during that time it was ruled by two Presidents - Friedrich Ebert (1918-25) and Paul von Hindenburg (1925-34)
• They often battled to keep weak and unstable governments in office and the republic faced many weaknesses:
  • Appointment of Chancellor — appointed by the president and was meant to be the leader of the largest party. After 1930 President Hindenburg appointed Chancellors who were not the leaders of the largest party and allowed them to rule using article 48
  • Frequent changes of government — during the Republic there were nine elections which resulted in a weak and often unstable government
  • System of voting — use of proportional representation to elect members of the Reichstag
  • Coalition government — using proportional representation meant that no one party gained the overall majority as the number of seats was directly proportional to the number of votes they got
  • Power of the President — Article 48 was dangerous as it meant that laws could be passed without the approval of the Reichstag
  • Both the Communists and the Nazis wanted to destroy the Republic

The impact of the Treaty of Versailles, 1919 — **LAMB** (Land, Army, Money, Blame)
• Land - Germany lost about 13% of her land as well as 6 million citizens, Alsece-Lorraine was given back to France, they were forbidden to unite with Austria, the Polish Corridor was created to give the new country of Poland a way out to the Baltic. This cut Germany into two, the Saarland was to be administrated by the League of Nations, they also lost land to Belgium, Denmark and Czechoslovakia.
• Colonies - all German colonies were taken away and were handed to Britain and France to look after under League of Nations mandates until they were ready for independence.
• Armed forces - the German army was reduced to 100,000 men and conscription was banned, 6 battleships, no submarines, the air force was completely destroyed.
• The Rhineland - this was to be demilitarised, no soldiers or military equipment were to be kept within 30 miles of the east bank of the river. The Allies would occupy it for fifteen years.
• The Saar - this was to be occupied for fifteen years and France would be able to mine coal in it for those years.
• Reparations - in 1919 the Germans were required to pay for all of the civilian damage caused during the First World War. The final bill was presented on 1 May 1921 and was fixed at £6,600,000,000 to be paid over thirty years.
• War guilt - Germany was to accept the blame for the war alone.
• The League of Nations - international police force that Germany were not allowed to join
• Impacts:
Changing life for the German people, 1933-1939

How did Nazi economic and social policy affect life in Germany?

Tackling economic problems
- When Hitler became Chancellor they'd had 3 years of depression so he introduced measures to reduce the 6 million unemployed
- Creation of the National Labour Service Corps (RAD): from 1935 compulsory for all males 18-25 to serve 6 months in RAD
- Public works programme: building 7,000 km of autobahns, tree planting, building schools, hospitals and houses
- Rearmament: conscription introduced 1935 and army was increased to 1.4 million in 1939 and 3.5 billion marks were spent on producing tanks, aircraft and ships which increased to 26 billion by 1939. Heavy industry expanded and resource usage went up dramatically
- Control of the economy: Four-Year Plan (1936-40) was designed to speed up rearmament and prepare the country for war and make Germany self-sufficient
- Invisible unemployment: unemployment fell dramatically (1933 was 6 million - 1939 was 350,000) but didn't include Jews or women dismissed from jobs or opponent of Nazi regime held in concentration camps
- Control of the workforce: banned trade unions and in 1933 replaced them with the German Labour Front (DAF) which had complete control over workers, regulating hours and pay
- Rewarding the workforce: to reward loyal workers the Joy Movement (KdF) was set up which sponsored leisure activities and cultural events. The Beauty of Work organisation aimed on improving the workplace. In 1938 the Volkswagen (People’s Car) Scheme was introduced so workers could buy their own car for 5 marks a week

Nazi attitudes and policies towards women and young people

Women and work
- Progress made during Weimar period: equal voting rights, encouraged to obtain a good education and take up careers in the professions, follow fashion, smoke, wear makeup
- Nazi attitudes: very traditional which reversed many gains for women, responsible for the home and bringing up children
- Nazi policies:
  - Three K’s: Kinder, Kuche, Kirche — (children, kitchen, church) they were expected to give up their jobs to get married and start a family
  - Law for the encouragement of marriage (1933): provided loans to encourage couples to marry, and were rewarded for large families
  - Lebensborn (Life Springs) programme (1936): unmarried aryran women encouraged to ‘donate a baby to the Führer’ by becoming pregnant by ‘racially pure' SS men

Nazi control over education
- To make people loyal supporters he introduced beliefs to them early on
- Teachers had to belong to the Nazi Teachers’ League and had to promote Nazi ideas
- Curriculum strictly controlled: 15% of timetable devoted to PE to prepare boys for military and girls as homemakers and mothers
- Lessons started with ‘Heil Hitler’ and taught through the Nazi point of view
- Textbooks written to reflect Nazi views - emphasis on German military glory and evils of Communism and Jews who were blamed for the problems such as the Depression

The Hitler Youth Movement
- Influence people out of school as well achieved through Hitler Youth Movement (1925)
- Made difficult for people to avoid joining in 1936 and in 1939 membership was compulsory meaning that there were 7 million members
- Boys instructed in military skills and girls learned domestic skills for motherhood and marriage
• **The Final Solution**: gas chambers and crematoria were built in various camps in Poland and on arrival to the camps the Jews were divided into two groups: those who were forced to work to death in the labour camps; and those who were 'unfit' were sent straight to the gas chamber. By the time the Allies liberated the camps in 1945 up to 6 million Jews and 500,000 gypsies had been worked to death, gassed or shot in what became known as the Holocaust