The impact of the First World War merely heightened existing social and political tensions which had divided Germany before 1914 – How far do you agree with this judgement?

Intro:

MAKE SURE YOU CONSISTENTLY COMPARE WITH TENSIONS PRIOR TO 1914

Prior to 1914 – Strikes against going to war in the first place, Zabern affair 1913 created tensions with the Reichstag (political tensions)

Geographical differences, religious divisions with the Catholic Centre Party, resentments from the SPD, fear of socialism.

After 1914 – Impact of the war: lack of food, deteriorating working conditions, growing peace movement of 1917-1918

Paragraph 1: Social tensions

Social tensions were present before 1914. Flottenpolitik for example, Von Tirpitz pushed Naval law to expand Germany's navy which led to the Naval race between Germany and Britain. This pushed production to keep up with the mass demand and it was a costly competition.

The 'Silent dictatorship' stemmed tensions, e.g. in 1916 when Bethmann called off submarine warfare he then wanted support of Hindenburg and Ludendorff who proved to be more popular than the Kaiser and Chancellor.

Strikes were occurring before the war began and therefore the war only increased tensions that were already present. The government tried to decrease these tensions however and managed to a certain extent, for example presenting World War One as a nationalistic, defensive war.

Burgfrienden, which was also referred to as the Enabling Act passed by the Reichstag, helped as it united the political parties. Also the rapid growth of industrial production helped contribute to the economy of Germany in the short term (quickly counteracted when Germany lost the war and the Treaty of Versailles 1914 labelled Germany solely responsible for the outbreak of the war and responsible for reparation payments.)

Paragraph 2: Political tensions

Before 1914 - Divisions of political parties who disagreed on how the country should be run suggests that Germany was more a democracy which went against what the Kaiser wanted.

Zabern Affair 1913 – Political crisis as it highlighted the limitations of the Reichstag and its limited influence. The Chancellor ignored the vote of no confidence against him as he was only accountable to the Kaiser.

Conclusion

Tensions prior to 1914, tensions reduced in 1914 but the long term impact meant these tensions were revived and increased within Germany.