

What kind of problems did the Weimar Republic face 1919 – 1924?

Below is a list of problems faced by the Weimar Republic in the period 1919-1924. Your task is to identify what kind of problems the Republic faced by colour-coding each issue to show if they were economic, social, political, or a combination of these.

Types of problems

Economic: to do with money and business

Social: to do with people

Political: to do with the government and running the country

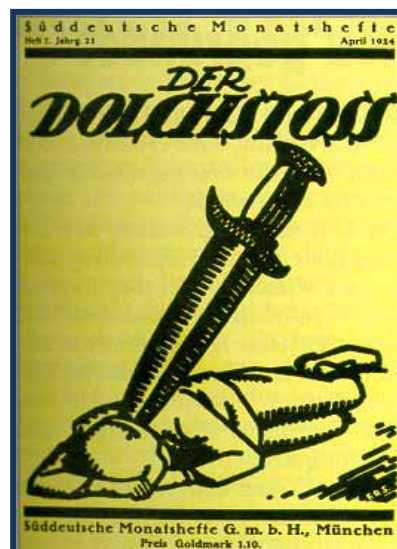
The problems

Problem 1 – suffering

The people had suffered terribly because of war. All of the country's resources had been poured into the war effort.

Problem 2 – the 'stab in the back' theory

This is the idea that the politicians who had signed the armistice to end the war, and later the Treaty of Versailles, had stabbed the nation in the back. People who believed this thought that Germany had not really lost the war and that the politicians were cowards. Those who signed the armistice were sometimes called the 'November Criminals'.



Problem 3 – war guilt clause

Germany was humiliated by the war guilt clause of the Treaty of Versailles. This blamed Germany and her allies for starting the war.

Problem 4 – reparations

Germany had to pay reparations of 132 billion marks, which is roughly the equivalent to £284 billion in today's money, to the countries damaged by the First World War.

Problem 5 – loss of resources

The Treaty of Versailles took areas of land containing valuable resources from Germany. For example, Germany lost Alsace-Lorraine containing iron ore and Upper Silesia which had coal.

Problem 6 – changing borders

Because of the Treaty of Versailles, many Germans were now living outside the borders of Germany in places like the Sudetenland, Poland and Austria. They felt that their rights were not recognised properly.

Problem 7 – ineffective constitution

The new constitution which created the Weimar Republic was very democratic, but there were problems:



- The voting system of proportional representation allowed extreme groups to get into power.
- Germany was ruled by coalitions of several parties. It was hard for them to make decisions and there were frequent changes in government.
- The President could rule by decree (on his own) at a time of national emergency, something he did often.

Problem 8 – rebellions and terrorism

Extremist groups, who were discontented with the Republic, tried to seize power by force, e.g. the Spartacist Rebellion of 1919, the Kapp Putsch of 1920, and the Munich Putsch of 1923.

Problem 9 – Ruhr invasion

Germany got behind with reparations payments, so French and Belgian troops invaded the Ruhr in 1923. This humiliated the German government who ordered a general strike.

Problem 10 – hyperinflation

In 1923, German money became worthless when the government printed more money to pay the workers who went on strike in response to the Ruhr invasion. German banknotes were even used as wallpaper.

Discuss



- Were the problems faced by the Weimar Republic in 1919-1924 mainly economic, social or political?
- What do you think was the biggest problem faced by the Weimar Republic at this time?