

SOURCE 3

There was a lot of official harassment. There was widespread hunger, squalor and poverty and – what really affected us – there was humiliation. The French ruled with an iron hand. If they disliked you walking on the pavement, for instance, they'd come along with their riding crops and you'd have to walk in the road.

The memories of Jutta Rudiger, a German woman living in the Ruhr during the French occupation.

Think!

- 1 Work in pairs. One of you study Source 4 and the other Source 5. Explain the message of each source to the other person in your pair. Remember to make a valid inference (for example, the cartoonist is saying ...). Then remember to support the inference with a detail from the cartoon (for example this is shown in the cartoon by ...).

Economic disaster

The Treaty of Versailles destabilised Germany politically, but Germans also blamed it for another problem – economic chaos. See if you agree that the Treaty of Versailles was responsible for economic problems in Germany.

The Treaty of Versailles forced Germany to pay reparations to the Allies. The reparations bill was announced in April 1921. It was set at \$6,600 million, to be paid in annual instalments of 2 per cent of Germany's annual output. The Germans protested that this was an intolerable strain on the economy which they were struggling to rebuild after the war, but their protests were ignored.

The Ruhr

The first instalment of \$50 million was paid in 1921, but in 1922 nothing was paid. Ebert did his best to play for time and to negotiate concessions from the Allies, but the French in particular ran out of patience. They too had war debts to pay to the USA. So in January 1923 French and Belgian troops entered the Ruhr (quite legally under the Treaty of Versailles) and began to take what was owed to them in the form of raw materials and goods.

The results of the occupation of the Ruhr were disastrous for Germany. The government ordered the workers to carry out passive resistance, which meant to go on strike. That way, there would be nothing for the French to take away. The French reacted harshly, killing over 100 workers and expelling over 100,000 protesters from the region. More importantly, the halt in industrial production in Germany's most important region caused the collapse of the German currency.

Think!

Is it possible to answer the question 'Could Germany afford the reparations payments?' with a simple yes or no? Explain your answer.

SOURCE 4



A TRANSPARENT DODGE.

Germans: "HERE I BROWN! SHOW ME THE LIFE LINE!"
Mr. Davis (France): "THEY STANDING UP ON YOUR FEET!"
Mr. Dumas: "..."

A British cartoon from 1921. The two watchers are the leaders of France and Britain.

SOURCE 5



A 1923 German poster discouraging people from buying French and Belgian goods, as long as Germany is under occupation. The poster reads, 'Hands off French and Belgian goods as long as Germany is raped'. Bochum and Essen are two industrial towns in the Ruhr.

SOURCE 6



A photograph taken in 1923 showing a woman using banknotes to start her fire.

SOURCE 7

	1918	0.63 marks
	1922	1.63 marks
January	1923	250 marks
July	1923	3465 marks
September	1923	1,512,000 marks
November	1923	201,000,000,000 marks

The rising cost of a loaf of bread in Berlin.

Think!

- 1 Use Sources 6–8 to describe in your own words how ordinary Germans were affected by the collapse of the mark.
- 2 Read Source 10. Choose two of Sources 6–10 to illustrate a leaflet containing a simplified version of Hitler's speech. Explain your choice.
- 3 Explain why people might agree with Hitler that a dictatorship would solve Germany's problems.

Hyperinflation

Because it had no goods to trade, the government simply printed money. For the government this seemed an attractive solution. It paid off its debts in worthless marks, including war loans of over £2,200 million. The great industrialists were able to pay off all their debts as well.

This set off a chain reaction. With so much money in circulation, but not enough goods to buy with it, prices and wages rocketed, but people soon realised that this money was worthless. Workers needed wheelbarrows to carry home their wages. Wages began to be paid daily instead of weekly. The price of goods could rise between joining the back of a queue in a shop and reaching the front!

Poor people suffered, but the greatest casualties were the richer Germans – those with savings. A prosperous middle-class family would find that their savings, which might have bought a house in 1921, by 1923 would not even buy a loaf of bread. Pensioners found that their monthly pension would not even buy one cup of coffee.

It was clear to all, both inside and outside Germany, that the situation needed urgent action. In August 1923 a new government under Gustav Stresemann took over.

- He called off the passive resistance in the Ruhr.
- He called in the worthless marks and burned them, replacing them with a new currency called the Rentenmark.
- He negotiated to receive American loans under the Dawes Plan.
- He even renegotiated the reparations payments.

The economic crisis was solved very quickly. Some historians suggest that this is evidence that Germany's problems were not as severe as its politicians had made out.

It was also increasingly clear, however, that the hyperinflation had done great political damage to the Weimar government. Their right-wing opponents had yet another problem to blame them for, and the government had lost the support of the middle classes.

SOURCE 8

One afternoon I rang Aunt Louise's bell. The door was opened merely a crack. From the dark came a broken voice: 'I've used 60 billion marks' worth of gas. My milk bill is 1 million. But all I have left is 2000 marks. I don't understand any more.'

E Dobert, *Convert to Freedom*, 1941.

SOURCE 9

... the causes of hyperinflation were complex, but the Germans did not see it that way. They blamed reparations and the Weimar Republic which had accepted them and had presided over the chaos of 1923. Many middle-class Germans never forgave the republic for the blow they believed it had dealt to them.

British historian Finlay McKichan, writing in 1992.

SOURCE 10

Believe me, our misery will increase. The State itself has become the biggest swindler ... Horrified people notice that they can starve on millions ... we will no longer submit ... we want a dictatorship!

Adolf Hitler attacks the Weimar government in a speech, 1924.