



Resource D

How much pressure did the German government put on the German people during the First World War?

- Before the First World War 80% of food eaten in Germany came from abroad. German governments up to 1914 assumed that a war would be over quickly and that the British would not fight. They did not plan for a long war or a naval blockade.
- The German government during the First World War made sure that the best resources always went to the Armed Forces. 83% of German government spending went on the war effort and supplying the Armed Forces. The Hindenburg programme of August 1916 switched more and more factories to producing munitions (shells etc), took more horses from farmers for use in the army and recruited more farm workers as soldiers. This helped to reduce the amount of food that German farmers could produce to feed the people. It also caused worse shortages of basics like clothing which reduced morale.
- The government rationing system never operated fairly. On leave German soldiers noticed how richer families still seemed better off and better fed than poorer ones.
- Food was sometimes poorly distributed. It was easier to eat well in the countryside than in the towns and cities. During the turnip winter of 1916-1917 farmers got away with hoarding potatoes to get a better price for them later.
- Coal was in short supply not just because of the naval blockade but because too many miners were forced to join the army so that there was less coal dug out of the ground in Germany itself.
- Officers in the navy grew out of touch with their sailors. One of the causes of the naval mutiny of 1917 was that officers ate far better food than was given to their men.
- The same officers suggested in November 1918 that the ships of the German Navy should sail in to a last great battle against the Royal Navy “a death ride” even though it was obvious Germany had lost the War by then. The sailors mutinied again.