



The Golden Age of Weimar

1924-29

After the turmoil of 1918-23, liberal constitutional democracy survived in Germany, that is until the disastrous Wall Street Crash of 1929. These years became known as the “Golden Years” of the Weimar Republic.

1924 – 1929

The Golden Age of Weimar?

PREP ESSAY QUESTION:

What evidence is there that life improved for the majority of Germans between 1924-29?

Politically

Economically

Culturally

The period between 1924 and 1929 is known as a 'Golden Age' or 'The Years of Hope'

Economic and political stability returned

This was largely due to the policies of Gustav Stresemann

He improved Germany's situation both economically and politically

Gustav Stresemann

1878 – 1929

German liberal politician, leader of the German People's Party (DVP)

Served as Chancellor (Aug 1923-Nov 1923)
Foreign Minister (1923-29)

Credited with stabilising the Germany economy following “The Year of Crises in 1923, which included the invasion of the Ruhr by the French, hyperinflation, communist uprisings in Thuringia and Saxony, and the Beer Hall Putsch (started by Hitler in Munich)



Stresemann

Called off the passive resistance at the Ruhr

Ended the hyperinflation crisis by introducing a new currency backed by US loans

Reassured Germans that the democratic system was willing and able to solve urgent problems

Restarted reparation payments, importantly, this led to assistance from the US and a greater willingness of other Western nations to negotiate with Germany

Ended German diplomatic isolation

Dawes Plan (Economy)

Stresemann negotiated the Dawes Plan in 1924

Helped secure US loans (\$800 million)

Reparations were renegotiated

Aided German economic restructuring

Aided normalisation of diplomatic relations, esp. with France



Charles Dawes, US Banker and Vice President

Dawes Plan

August 1924, the main points of The Dawes Plan were:

1. The Ruhr area was to be evacuated by Allied occupation troops (1925)
2. Reparation payments would begin at “one million marks the first year, increasing to two and a half million marks annually after five years”
3. The German Reichsbank would be reorganized under Allied supervision.

Dawes Plan - effects

The Dawes Plan provided short-term economic benefits to the German economy.

It softened the burdens of war reparations

Stabilized the currency

Increased foreign investments and loans to the German market. However, it made the German economy dependent on foreign markets and economies, and therefore problems with the U.S. economy (e.g. the Great Depression) would later severely hurt Germany as it did the rest of the western world, which was subject to debt repayments for loans of US dollars.



Rentenmark

Stresemann introduced a new German Currency, the Rentenmark replaced the worthless mark (backed by US Gold)

This encouraged foreign investment in Germany's economy

This led to an increase in new factories, industry, infrastructure AND employment

Foreign Policy

Stresemann helped to end Germany's isolation:

Adhered to the Treaty of Versailles (policy of Fulfillment)

Signing the Treaty of Locarno 1925

Germany was invited to join The League of Nations in 1926

Treaty of Locarno 1925

Non-aggression pact between Germany, Belgium, Britain, France, Italy

Pledge to recognise German, French and Belgium (western) borders

Normalised relations

This policy of co-operation led to:

1926 the first of the three Rhineland zones which had been placed under Allied military occupation by the Treaty of Versailles were evacuated

1927 the Inter-Allied Control Commission to supervise German disarmament was withdrawn.

1928- Kellogg-Brian Pact

1929 - Young Plan reduced German reparations to a figure of £2 billion and Repayments were to be made over a period of 59 years.

Gustav Stresemann died of a stroke in October 1929 at the early age of fifty-one, and is remembered for restoring German economic and political stability and as an advocate of peaceful solutions to complex international problems

Between 1924 and 1929, German industry forged ahead. Factories were equipped with new machinery and German industrialists used the most successful techniques of American production. ..The result was a much faster economic growth rate than either France or Britain. By 1929, Germany was producing 33% more than it had in 1913, despite losing its major industrial areas under the ToV.

‘Life seemed more free, more modern, more exciting than in any place I have ever been... Everywhere there was an accent on youth. One sat up with young people all night in the pavement cafes, the plush bars, on a Rhineland steamer or in a smoke filled artist’s studio and talked endlessly about life . Most Germans one met struck you as being democratic, liberal, even pacifist. One scarcely heard of Hitler or the Nazis except as butts of jokes- usually in connection with the Beerhall Putsch as it came to be known’

William L Shirer, Berlin Diary, 1941

Art and Culture in Weimar Germany



Karl Schmidt-Rottluff - (German 1884-1976)
Head of a Woman, 1916 - Woodcut on wove paper
Syracuse University Art Collection



Lyonel Feininger (1871-1956)
Das Tor (The Gate) ca. 1920
Woodcut, image/sheet:16 x 17 1/2 in.



Max Pechstein - Dancer Reflected in a Mirror - 1923
Museum of Modern Art, MoMA

"Weimar culture was the
creation of outsiders,
propelled by history into the
inside, for a short, dizzying
fragile moment"

-Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture*



Cultural flowering

The Weimar Republic, however ailing in economic and political terms, was one of the most fertile grounds for the modern arts and sciences. Berlin, in particular, became a thriving center of many new art movements such as **Dadaism** and **expressionism**, whilst the **Bauhaus** school near Weimar revolutionised architecture.

Modernism

The sense of loss, breakdown, chaos and meaninglessness which characterized German society after World War One was reflected in artistic movements which stressed such things as

- Making art practical
- The rejection of tradition
- A stress on individual freedom of expression

	<i>Name of movement</i>	<i>Sample leading figure</i>
Art	Dadaism	George Grosz
Architecture	Bauhaus	Walter Gropius
Philosophy	Existentialism	Thomas Mann
Cinema	Modernism	Fritz Lang

Influences

(a) United States of America

Much of Weimar culture showed great interest in the "American" form of life: the assembly line technique (developed in the American auto industry), the skyscraper, mass consumption and advertisement seemed the epitome of modernity to Weimar artists. They adapted some American forms but often used them critically and creatively.

Influences

(b) Russia

In addition to the importance of American patterns, one can discern a strong influence of Russian modernism on Weimar culture. The posters, graphics, and architecture of the young Soviet Union to many Weimar artists seemed to represent the manifestations of a new and more humane world.

Decadence?

- Many Germans saw the new trends in culture and thought as a threat to civilization.
- This was especially so given that many artists were associated with the Communist Party (which was fashionable in intellectual circles all over Europe)
- They blamed the emergence of these movements on the moral laxity of the new Republic.
- The strong representation of Jews in the new artistic currents underscored rightist critique of a "Judaized Republic."

- <http://www.artknowledgenews.com/files2008a/Head.jpg>
- RJ Tarr at www.activehistory.co.uk
- [http://www.artknowledgenews.com/German Expressionist Prints.html](http://www.artknowledgenews.com/German_Expressionist_Prints.html)
- <http://matthewasprey.wordpress.com/2007/11/29/reading-notes-weimar-a-cultural-history-by-walter-laqueur/>