

How golden were the "golden years" 1924- 29

Literature



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During the period of 1919-23 Germany faced many problems. There were challenges to take over the Weimar Republic from the extreme right and left. In January 1919 the Spartacists (communists-extreme left wing) attempted a revolution in Berlin. The provisional government had to use the army and the Freikorps to regain control and the leaders of the communist party, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were killed. Following this in 1920 there was an attempt by the extreme right wing to seize power known as the Munich Putsch.

The Putsch was badly organised and was soon brought to an end by a general strike in Berlin. Germany faced severe economic problems after the war with high unemployment and high inflation. The unexpectedly high reparations bill in 1921 made matters worse. In 1923 it defaulted on its reparation payments and as a consequence of this France occupied the Ruhr. By November 1923 hyperinflation left the mark worthless. In some ways I agree with this statement because Stresemann (chancellor) defused the situation by introducing a new currency in 1924 called the Rentenmark.

He also scaled down the monthly reparations bill by introducing firstly the Dawes plan and secondly the Young plan to make the payments more manageable. The Dawes plan of 1924 reduced the amount of payments and later on in 1929 the Young plan was introduced which rescheduled the payments over 59 years and it took a 1/3 of the original sum because the League of Nations realised because of the depression of 1929 Germany was never going to pay the original sum.

With a stable currency the German economy recovered and German industry was able to develop which meant more money coming in to the country, less unemployment and a better standard of living for the German people. For example a Welfare state was introduced that protected you from the day you were born until the day you die. I conclude the most golden economy action was the new currency introduced in 1924 because it leads to other good reforms. This in my opinion was very golden because it meant the German economy could recover.

In other ways I disagree with this statement because the basis of the German economy was based on huge short term foreign loans with America. This meant that Germany was depending on America and Germany was not stable economically without America and was adding to their bill by the interest added on to their loan each time they renewed it, which meant they were never actually paying off the reparations bill, they were just going into more debt. Gustav Stresemann described the situation as " dancing on a volcano" The new Welfare state took up 17% of Germanys income which meant that taxes had to go up.

The German Rentenmarks value was based on land as opposed to gold which could have been a bad idea because the land may have become barren making the land worthless. Stresemann's idea became real when The Wall Street Crash led to the withdrawal of American loans which financed the recovery of 1924. As a consequence of this unemployment shot up to 4 million in 1931. I conclude that the German economy was " Golden" on the surface but really it was not golden at all. In some ways I agree with this

statement because this period was politically stable. There was growth in democratic parties and a drop in extremist support.

For example in 1928 the Nazi Party (extreme right wing) gained only 2.6% of the votes. During this period there were no attempted coups/ Putsches and the coalition governments were lasting a lot longer. I conclude that during this period the growth in Democratic Party's was a very positive image for the Weimar Republic and was the most golden in my opinion. In other ways I disagree with this statement because the extremist parties were always still lurking in the shadows and there was always potential for them to gain votes.

For example the nationalist party led by press baron Hindenburg after 1928, was strongly anti-Weimar. Hindenburg was much respected as a so called war hero by the German people. This in my opinion didn't make the period entirely politically golden. Weimar lacked a charismatic leader and there was always potential for voters turning to totalitarian parties. The Dawes plan wasn't entirely popular because 1 in 5 was against it which could have had an effect on the proportional representation. This wasn't golden for the Weimar republic. There were some worrying features on the political scene.

Despite their small numbers extremists on the right and left wing engaged into regular street battles. Again I conclude that the political side seemed to be going well and "golden on the surface" but there was still potential for extremists to gain votes. It would have been more golden if the extremist parties had collapsed. In some ways I agree with this statement because in 1926 Germany was allowed to join the League of Nations and was a

permanent member of the council of the League. As a consequence of this it made Germany slightly economically stronger because there was potential for negotiation in trade.

Stresemann also restored Germany's position with the great powers during this period. By the Treaty of Locarno (1925) which took some of the bitterness out of Franco-German relations and for this reason the late 1920s were often described as the period of the "Locarno honey moon". This was good for Germany because it enabled them to build a relationship with France. Also in 1928 it was a signatory of the Kellogg-Briand to outlaw war as an instrument of policy. This was seen as golden by the German people because they were fed up with conflict, they had recently lost a war.

It also allowed France to start building a relationship with Germany because they knew that Germany was not planning to invade them. I conclude that the joining of the league and the signing of the Locarno treaty was in terms of foreign policy alone very successful. In other ways I disagree with this statement because although Stresemann was internationally successful, domestically he was a failure because he failed to gain votes for the Weimar Republic. I believe this was because the German people had not forgotten that the Weimar government had signed the treaty of Versailles.

I conclude on foreign policy alone this period was very golden for Germany but again only on the surface because Stresemann failed to gain votes for the Weimar Republic. In some ways I agree with this statement because this period was of significant development in culture. The arts became more popular among all the classes. For example cinema, poetry, music, paintings,

literature, and architecture- Bauhaus buildings. This was due to new technology and the new democracy in Germany allowing art to be accessible to masses of people. This supposed to be seen as a representation of democracy.

I conclude this on the surface seemed golden and nice. In other ways I disagree with this statement because only a minority supported the changes. For example the Elites and other extreme right wing groups didn't like the changes because they thought it was too democratic. Also I think the right wing thought their position was undermined. The majority of German people thought it was un- German and it added to the feeling that the reforms were influenced by outsiders. The majority of the German people thought the new reforms in culture were un- patriotic (not what their country stood for).

They also thought the new cultural reforms brought about loose morality, for example smutty mud wrestling. I conclude for the ordinary German there was too much change that had happened already and was too much for the German's to cope with. I conclude that culture in Weimar Germany was not golden because it failed to gain votes for the Weimar Republic. Conclusion- I conclude that the period called the " golden years" is deceiving because although on the surface everything seemed to be going well, the back bones of the problems in Germany still remained strong.