

To what extent can the years 1924 – 1929 be described

Literature



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My aim in this essay is to answer the Essay Title question. I am going to try to determine whether or not the phrase, "The Golden Years" is the correct description of the time period 1924 - 1929. I will be looking at Germany's Social, Economical and Political areas in the years slightly before and during the apparent "Golden Years". The mid to late 1920s are sometimes described as the "Golden Years" of the Weimar Republic. In some ways it is an appropriate term.

Between 1924 and 1929 Germany's international standing improved; a measure of economic recovery took place; the social welfare system was strengthened; the arts flourished; and there was no putsch attempts. On the other hand, the problems of political instability and paramilitary violence did not go away and serious conflicts occurred between employers and unions. In addition, an avowed monarchist was elected President. For these reasons some historians use the term "relative stabilisation" rather than "Golden Years" to describe the years 1924 - 1929.

It was only shortly after the first world war had finished and in comparison to the previous 10 years in Germany, 1914 (start of WW1) and 1924, then of course the years after the War were better than they had been. The mid 1920s, 1924 onwards, were the turning point for the Weimar Republic, this was the starting point of things getting better for Germany. In the years previous to the war, 1911/12/13 Germany was an economically stable country. The war left Germany ravaged of everything it had built up, by the "Golden Years" Germany had caught back up to where it was before the war.

All Germany had achieved was in catching back up to where it left off, it had become stable once more after bringing all the troubles of WWI and the results of the War on itself. The depression in Germany after the war added to the struggle of rebuilding itself. Compared to the War years and the years that followed, 1918-1923, then of course the years 1924-1929 seemed "Golden" to the German people. Yet to the rest of the world it was just a country picking itself back up and carrying on from where it let itself go into War. Politically the years 1924-29 were both good and bad in Weimar Germany.

In August 1923 Gustav Stresemann, head of the DVP (peoples party) became Chancellor. He reintroduced the "Fulfilment" Foreign Policy which turned around the way German citizens saw themselves, one of Stresemann's ministerial colleagues said, "We were a people of helots, and today we are once more a state of world consequences". Stresemann ruled Germany by the Versailles Treaty terms, not breaking any with the hope that relations between Germany, Britain and France would improve and then Germany's good intentions would shine and the two Western powers would be willing to modify or even reverse the treaty.

Britain and France did not want to see Germany driven into the arms of the Soviet Union. Luckily the two Western European powers did what Stresemann had hoped and this led to a series of international agreements from which Germany benefited substantially; * In 1924 French troops withdrew from the Ruhr on the basis of the Dawes Plan * In 1925 the Locarno Pact was agreed. Under the Pact, Germany, France and Belgium pledged

themselves not to use force to change the borders laid down in the Versailles Treaty In 1925 the Allies agreed to remove their occupation forces from the Cologne area; In 1926 in accordance with an understanding reached at Locarno, Germany became a member of the League of Nations with a permanent seat on its council

* In 1929 Stresemann agreed to the Young Plan, which took its name from the American Financier who chaired negotiations between Germany and the Allies Stresemann, through "Fulfilment" hoped to eventually remove the reparations burden, regain the territory lost to Poland, to bring about Anschluss and to re-establish Germany's military - basically he wanted to restore German Power in Europe.

Although Stresemann was at the Political turn point for Germany he only got the ball rolling. He only served as Chancellor for a mere 103 days in August - November 1923. The Governments in Weimar Germany 1924 - 1929 were incredibly unstable. There were simply too many Governments about, in the four and a half years between November 1923 - June 1928 there were six Governments, on which the average that each lasted was only about nine months. Another political problem that arose in the mid 1920's was "Political Violence".

Nothing as bad as the Spartacist rising or the Kapp Putsch took place but there were attempts to challenge the authorities by lawless and violent means. It was the Nazi's who took lead. Hitler's SA took to the streets attempting to destabilise the Republic by street violence. Many of the worst clashes broke out in Berlin between the Nazi party and the Communist party.

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In the mid to late 1920's Germany had a stable currency, competitive interest rates and an increasingly settled place within the international community.

Due to this many foreign country's saw it as a good place to invest in.

Between 1924 - 1930 almost 5 billion dollars was invested in Germany from abroad, much of it from the United States. The German economy grew and in 1928 industrial production exceeded pre-war levels, export performance was also strong: in 1929 exports were 40% higher than they had been in 1925. Economic Plans such as the Young and the Dawes Plan were introduced so that Germany would be able to build up their financial reserves and be able to pay back the Reparations.

The Dawes plan helped by loaning Germany around \$200 million to try and bring about a financial reverse. The Young Plan changed the way the reparations were paid as although Germany's economy was flourishing it couldn't continue to pay out such large sums of money, it reduced the total payment in reparations from 132 billion marks to 37 billion marks. An unemployment act was introduced in which a scheme of unemployment insurance, financed by employers, workers and the state, which complemented the generous pensions and sickness insurance scheme introduced in the 1880's.

Although to many Germany now looked economically stable, it was far from it. Germany was heavily dependant on foreign investment, much of which took the form of loans and credits which could be withdrawn at short notice.

The many Governments that were in power in the late 1920's lived beyond

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their means, Public spending was significantly higher than income from taxation. The gap between the two - the budget deficit - was made up of borrowing. The export performance, although strong was accompanied by a surge in imports.

In 1927 - 1928 Germany was importing more than it was exporting. There was, in other words, a trade deficit. Partially due to the rise in the power of workers unions, unemployment rose due to employers refusing to pay the new wage rise the unions had won for the workers (Ruhr steel industry lock out). Agriculture was an economic blackspot. Agricultural prices fell in the later 1920's and as a result farmers were often faced with mounting debts. " In the richness and variety of its cultural accomplishments, the Weimar period is second to none in German history," stated Gordon Craig.

In the years 1924 - 1929 there was certainly a great array of talent at work, there were great talents in literature, dramatists, artists, musicians, directors, architects and designers. The increase in all of the above would have made the entertainment and leisure in Germany higher than it had ever been before. This would have given the people of Germany pride that may have been lost in the years before, as men and women from their country were being recognised all over the world for their talents.

Yet although the Weimar Culture had increased by an incredible amount, it did little to help stabilise the country or to generate support for the Republic. Many artists and writers sympathised with certain political groups and were anti-weimar. In some works the artists/writers attacked the Nazis but they also attacked Republican targets too. An artist named Grossz, for <https://assignbuster.com/to-what-extent-can-the-years-1924-1929-be-described/>

example, produced savage caricatures of Friedrich Ebert as well as Hitler. The "Weimar Culture" provided yet another way of attack against the Republic.

The Nazis and the DNVP said that the outburst of experimentation in the arts was not something to be welcomed but was instead a symptom of decadence and decline. In the later 1920s right-wing extremists campaigned energetically against what they claimed was the tide of filth and rubbish which was sweeping across the country. Out of the three areas, Political, Social and Economical, that I have looked at within Weimar Germany, I think that the most beneficial was the Political area, namely Stresemann.

I believe this as Stresemann called off passive resistance, he proceeded to stabilise the currency, overseeing in November the introduction of a new currency (Rentenmark) which under his order was strictly limited in quantities. His Foreign Policy of "Fulfillment" was greatly successful and allowed Germany to comfortably get around certain points of the Treaty of Versailles, leaving Germany in a very comfy position when he died in 1929, as foreign minister.

I believe that the Economical problems that Germany faced at the time of 1924 - 1929 were not handled very well at all and this is why I think that the Economical area of Weimar Germany was its biggest downfall. Germany was far too over reliant on loans from other countries, namely America.

Germany's economy was resting on the shoulders of America's economy, which whilst America prospered on the Stock Exchange, was fine, yet if there was a crash - and there was - Germany would be left in ruins.

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In many respects Germany put all their Economical eggs in one basket and when the American Stock Exchange Crash occurred Germany was left to pick up the pieces. America could no longer offer to loan money to Germany. The governments that were in power in the " Golden Years" were also greatly at fault. The Governments were spending huge amounts of money and not receiving enough money back from taxes from the public in order to cover themselves.

They were running Germany into even more debt. In my opinion I do not think that the years, 1924 - 1929 were at all " Golden" in Weimar Germany. Compared to the previous 10 years they were incredibly greater, yet in the previous 10 years World War 1 had occurred, the country had gone into depression and was only just starting to pick itself up. The Social side of it all, was indeed " Golden" but that did not help Germany through Economical or Political trouble spots.

There were more talented artists/writers/architects/directors etc, around than there ever had been in Germany, but whilst the Germany people were paying attention to the arts, they perhaps should have been paying more attention to what was going on politically and economically in the country. The so called " Golden Years" was only in fact the years when Germany had caught back up to just before the war, Compared to what other countries were/had achieved then no, I defiantly do not believe that the years 1924 - 1929 in Weimar Germany can be classed as being " Golden" ones.