

GCSE History

Weimar and Nazi Germany 1918-1929 Key Topic One

Verlorenes — doch nicht vergessenes Land



Fns Herz sollst du dir graben
Dies Wort als wie in Stein:
Was wir verloren haben,
Darf nicht verloren sein!

Paul Warnke

Weimar and Nazi Germany Key Topic One the Weimar Republic 1918-1929

End of WW1: 11th November 1918

Following the German Revolution including a naval mutiny and revolts in Germany the German Kaiser (Emperor) is forced to **abdicate** (give up the throne). WW1 ends in November 1918 with an '**armistice**' (ceasefire). As German soldiers are still in the trenches, Germany does not believe it has been defeated.

Germany becomes a democracy as is known as the **Weimar Republic**. The **Social Democratic Party** (SDP) runs the government. **Fredric Ebert becomes its first Chancellor** and later President of the Weimar Republic.

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| The Treaty of Versailles | Signed 28 th June 1919 |
| Diktat | The treaty was written by the allies and Germany was given 15 days to accept it of face invasion. The terms were dictated to Germany and it was forced to accept |
| LAMB | The four key terms of the Treaty of Versailles |
| Land | Territorial losses (Land) – Germany lost all overseas colonies, significant land including Alsace and Lorraine, Danzig and Posen |
| Army | Arms reductions – 100,000 army, 6 warships, no submarines or air force. Rhineland demilitarised |
| Money | Reparations – compensation set at £6.6bn |
| Blame | Blame – Germany was forced to accept the blame for the outbreak of, and damage caused by the war (war guilt clause 123) |
| Dolchstoss | The belief that the German army had been stabbed in the back by the new government who signed the treaty |
| November Criminals | The politicians who signed the Treaty of Versailles. Many Germans felt they had betrayed Germany |

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| Weimar constitution | |
| Constitution | The rules of how a country should be governed |
| Democratic | The new constitution was more democratic, which gave the German people more power through voting |
| Reichstag | The main house of the German parliament (Like the House of Commons) |
| Proportional Representation | The voting system used in the Weimar Republic. It is very fair but could create weak governments and coalitions |
| Reichsrat | The other house of the German Parliament (Like the House of Lords) |
| Chancellor | The Head of the government (Like a Prime Minister) |
| President | The Head of State (Like the Queen, but with more power) |
| Article 48 | The President could suspend the constitution in an emergency and rule without parliament |

Strengths: Democratic, Proportional Representation – very fair – Article 48 – to make laws in times of emergency

Weaknesses – PR – makes lots of small political parties = difficult to make laws. Article 48 could be used to make undemocratic laws – possibility for a **dictator**.

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| Spartacist Uprising January 1919 | Kapp Putsch March 1920 | Munich Putsch November 1923 |
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| <p>Extreme-left wing group of Communists (KPD) party Led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. Wanted a communist government Took place in Berlin (German Capital) 1919 100,000 communist rebels attacked and took over key government building in the capital. Weimar Govt asks the Freikorps to defeat the communist rebels. 7000 communists were arrested or killed Leaders murdered by Freikorps.</p> | <p>Right-wing group made up of Freikorps and nationalists Led by Dr Wolfgang Kapp Wanted to bring back the Kaiser. Took place in Berlin (German Capital) 1920 Freikorps took over Berlin forcing the Weimar Government to flee to the city of Dresden. Weimar Government asked workers to go on strike Revolt collapses because of little support from the people Leader arrested and sent to prison</p> | <p>Extreme right-wing group (Nazis) Led by Adolf Hitler Wanted to get rid of the Weimar Republic and have a strong leader to rule Germany. 1923 Took place in Munich (Bavaria) 600 SA (Nazi soldiers) Fighting in the streets of Munich to start a revolution and take over the Weimar Republic. Police and army used to defeat uprising. 14 Nazis killed. Hitler arrested and sentenced to prison.</p> |

| Problems in the Weimar Republic | |
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| Bankrupt | Germany had no funds due to the war and the terms of the Treaty |
| Occupation of the Ruhr | French troops took control of the industrial heartland of Germany in January 1923 with 750,000 troops. German workers ordered on strike by the Government. (Passive resistance) |
| Inflation | Factories stopped producing, created shortages and increased prices (inflation). Government printed more money which resulted in Hyperinflation. |
| Hyperinflation | Huge increase in the prices of good and a fall in the value of money. Prices soared (200,000bn marks for bread in Nov 1923) |
| Consequences | Shortages, savings and pensions wiped out. Weimar Republic and politicians look very weak |

In 1923, the Weimar Republic was on the verge of collapse, but, surprisingly, the crisis was the start of a period of stability and success. The period 1923-1929 was a time when the economy boomed and cultural life flourished in Germany. This dramatic turnabout happened because of the role of **Gustav Stresemann**.

Chancellor of Germany in 1923

Foreign Minister of Germany from 1923-1929

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Economic Improvements under Stresemann

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| Rentenbank | Stresemann creates a new bank to issue a new currency. |
| Rentenmark | New currency introduced to end hyperinflation. Created economic stability, people trusted their money. |
| Dawes Plan (1924) | Agreed with USA in April 1924. Reduced annual reparations payments to an affordable level. Secured American \$800 million investment in German industry. Led to increases in production, employment and wealth. |
| Young Plan (1929) | Agreed in August 1929. Reduced reparation debt from £6.6bn to £2bn. Germany given longer (59 years) to pay. Boosted German economy and increased employment levels. Real success for Stresemann. |

Political Improvements under Stresemann

Stresemann managed to organise a Grand Coalition of moderate, pro-democracy parties in the Reichstag. At last, Germany had a government that could make laws. It also overcame the problems of Proportional Representation.

International Relations Improvements under Stresemann

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| Locarno Pact (1925) | New 1919 borders agreed with Germany, Britain, France, Italy and Belgium in October 1925. Allied troops left the Rhineland, France and Germany promised peace, opened talks to allow Germany to join the league of nations. Germany now an equal in Europe. |
| League of Nations (1926) | Germany joins having been excluded at Versailles. League was an international organisation to help solve the world's problems as an alternative to war. Symbolic of Germany's return to world power status. |
| Kellogg-Briand Pact 1928 | Signed with 61 other nations in August 1928. International non-aggression pact. Closer ties established with the USA and France. Shows Germany has become a respected member of the world community. |

| Success of Stresemann | |
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| Successes | Germany was now economically stable and its economy was growing = greater prosperity Germany accepted in the international community Kept the support of moderate parties in the Reichstag and able to make laws Improved the reputation for the Weimar Republic in Germany |
| Failures | Those who lost savings and pensions during hyperinflation were not compensated Germany and its recovery heavy reliance on American money Many Germans still angry that Versailles had not been destroyed. |

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Changes to the standard of living

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| Unemployment | Unemployment was a big problem in the early years of the Weimar Republic. In 1924, over 4% of the work force was unemployed. There were improvements in 1926 2 million people were unemployed but by 1928 this had decreased to 1.3 million The Weimar Government also provided support for the unemployed. The Unemployment Insurance Act of 1927 charged workers 3% of their wages and in return, they could claim 60 marks per week if they lost their jobs and became unemployed. |
| Work and wages | Working conditions improved: real wages rose by 25% from 1925-1928 and the average working hours reduced from 50 hours in 1925 to 46 hours by 1927. |
| Housing | Housing also improved. There had been a major shortage of homes in Germany. In 1925 a 15% rent tax was introduced to fund building associations. From 1925 private companies built 37,000 homes whilst the new building associations built 64,000. There was still a housing shortage but it wasn't as bad as it had been. |
| Other improvements | War veterans received help: Under the 1920 Reich Pensions Law, pensions were paid to 750,000 war veterans, 400,000 war widows and 200,000 partners of dead soldiers. Education improved and there were greater educational opportunities for the young. The number of students going to university increased from 70,000 before WW1 to 110,000 by 1928. |

Changes for women

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| Women in politics | In November 1918, women were given the vote and the right to stand at elections. Almost 10% of members of the Reichstag were female by 1932. The new constitution stated that women had equal rights with men; Marriage was an equal partnership, with equal rights on both sides. Women should be able to enter all professions on an equal basis with men. |
| Women at work | During WW1, many German women worked in factories to support the war effort. By 1918, 75% of women were in work often doing jobs previously performed by men. After the war, most women lost their jobs and returned to their traditional roles in the home and as mothers. By 1925, only 36% of women were in work. Improvements: There was some progress for women in work. 1) The booming retail sector provided many part-time jobs in shops and offices. 2) In the more liberal professions like education and medicine, women made much more progress: In 1925, there were only 2,500 female doctors; by 1932, there were over 5,000. By 1933, there were over 100,000 female teachers. |
| Women at leisure | For some young and unmarried women living in the cities there were plenty of employment opportunities. As a result by the 1920s these women had much greater financial independence. Women could now spend this money on leisure activities, fashion and makeup. These women were called 'New Women' These New Women also enjoyed much more social freedom as a result. They wore their hair short, wore make-up, more jewellery and more revealing clothes. They smoked and drank in public and went out unaccompanied. Some women expressed less interest in getting married and having families. These New Women were not popular with all Germans. Many Germans, mainly men, believed that growing equality and female independence threatened traditional German values and the whole concept of the family. The birth rate was falling in Germany and many were alarmed by this. They wanted women to stay at home and be mothers. The divorce rate was also rising. Many Germans felt that Germany needed women to be wives. |

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Cultural changes in the Weimar Republic

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| Art | <p>Before the war, most art had been traditional focusing on landscapes and romantic scenes. However, during the Weimar Republic art concentrated on showing ordinary people and everyday life. This new approach was given the name 'New objectivity', because artists were trying to portray life in a more objective way. Two artists became famous with 'New objectivity':</p> <p>George Grosz: He had served in the trenches of WW1 and his paintings often showed disabled people. Along with robot-like or doll-like figures who seemed to have no control over their lives. His characters were often in depressing cities. He used expressionist images of people to show the boredom of most people's lives.</p> <p>Otto Dix: He lived in Dresden and Berlin during the 1920s. He searched for personalities he could include in paintings to show the uglier side of human nature. He said it was his wartime experiences, which had made him aware of this.</p> |
| Architecture | <p>Architecture also flourished in Germany. The Bauhaus movement, established by Walter Gropius, developed a style of design, which stressed the beauty in technology, simple lines, basic shapes and colour and careful craftsmanship. These architects designed such various things as chairs, housing estates and public buildings.</p> |
| Cinema | <p>This was a golden age for the German cinema with is between-known director Fritz Lang who produced the film Metropolis, released in 1926. It was a science fiction film about life and technology in the 20th century.</p> <p>Some German films were very innovative. The Cabinet if Dr Caligari, was one of the world's first horror films. It was also an example of a new style of film known as The Kammerspiel. This style was a close and surreal drama that avoids huge sets and thousands of extras. This style of film till influences modern directors today such as Tim Burton.</p> <p>German actress Marlene Dietrich became one of the most popular film stars in the world and often played strong mysterious and glamorous women.</p> <p>Some of the money for the film was provided by a Government agency called the UFA. Germany's first sound film was made in 1930 and by 1932, there were 3,800 German cinemas showing sound films.</p> |
| Literature | <p>This period encourage literature from both the right wing and left wing.</p> <p>On the political right writers such as Arthur Moeller and Oswald Spengler were highly critical of German democracy and glorified the experience of WW1.</p> <p>On the left, writer such as Erich Remarque and Ludwig Renn were very anti-war. Remarque wrote a moving anti-war novel called All Quiet on the Western Front. It described the horrors of the First World War and was turned into a very successful film.</p> |