

Weimar Germany

Germany 1918-1920:

The Kiel Mutiny:

- On the 3rd of November 1918, German soldiers became frustrated with their orders and mutinied (meaning to refuse to obey orders from a person of authority). This means they didn't attack the British Royal Navy like they were asked to.
- This sparked rebellions in Germany, leading to Kaiser Wilhelm II to abdicate (resign) on the 9th of November.
- Following this, Friedrich Ebert (the leader of the Social Democratic Party) became Chancellor and took power in Germany.

The end of World War One:

- On the 11th of November 1918, Germany surrendered and World War One came to an end.
- An armistice was agreed by Germany, France, and the USA which confirmed the war was over.
- The armistice was signed by representatives of the SDP including Ebert. Later, they were nicknamed the "November Criminals" because they were believed to have backstabbed the army. This became known as the Dolchstoßlegende - the "stab-in-the-back" theory.

The terms of the Treaty of Versailles:

- In early 1919, Britain, France and the USA met to discuss how to punish Germany.
- On the 28th of June 1919, the new German government was forced to sign a peace settlement called the Treaty of Versailles.
- The best way to remember the main terms of the treaty is the acronym BRAT.

B - Blame

Germany was forced to accept full blame for starting the war. This was known as the War Guilt Clause.

R - Reparations

This refers to the money that Germany had to pay Britain and France for the damage they caused during the war. In 1922, the amount set was £6.6 billion.

A - Army

Germany's army and navy was significantly reduced in size and their air force and tanks were completely abolished. They were only allowed to have 100,000 troops and 15,000 army personnel.

T - Territory

Germany lost land on all sides of its borders as well as its oversea colonies.

The threat from the left - The Spartacist Uprising:

- During the 5th-12th of January 1919, 50,000 members of the post-war Communist Party (left wing), known as the Spartacists, rebelled in Berlin. This was led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.
- The government was saved by a group of ex-soldiers called the Freikorps who defeated the Spartacist rebels.
- Luxemburg and Liebknecht were killed after being arrested by the Freikorps on the 15th.
- In May 1919, the Freikorps had defeated all of these uprisings.

The threat from the right - The Kapp Putsch:

- The terms of the Treaty of Versailles meant that the Freikorps had to be disbanded.
- During the 13th-17th of March 1920, as a reaction to this, the right wing nationalist Wolfgang Kapp led the Freikorps to take over Berlin.
- The army refused to attack the Freikorps. Kapp was only defeated when the workers of Berlin went on a strike and refused to cooperate with him.

Further Violence:

- Nationalist terrorists assassinated 356 government politicians.
- Judges in their trials, many of whom preferred the Kaiser's government, consistently gave these terrorists light sentences or even let them go free.

The Hyperinflation Crisis:

Why?:

- The Weimar government's main crisis happened in 1923 after Germany missed a reparation payment late 1922.
- This caused a chain of events that included the occupation of the Ruhr and hyperinflation.
- Hyperinflation = very rapid and high increase of prices, paired with the decrease in the value of money.

French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr:

- In November 1922, the first reparation payment was all that Germany was able to afford. The French believed that Germany could afford it but were simply choosing not to, however the German government argued that they were wrong.
- In response, France and Belgium sent troops into Germany's main industrial area known as the Ruhr. Their aim was to confiscate industrial goods as reparation payments. They occupied coal mines, railways, steel works and factories. All of these were important to Germany's economy.
- The German government ordered their workers to follow a policy of "passive resistance". This means that they refused to work and cooperate with the foreign troops and, in return, Germany continued to pay them their usual wages.

- The French didn't like this and they reacted violently. Anybody who refused to work or take orders were shot at. 132 German workers were killed.
- Germany was only losing money to France and Belgium so they decided to print more money so they could continue to pay their workers. This contributed massively to hyperinflation.
- A general strike was called (all workers in the country stopped working), causing the government to be very unstable.

Hyperinflation:

- Germany was already suffering from high levels of inflation because of the effects of the war and the increasing government debt.
- "Passive resistance" meant that fewer industrial goods were being produced, which further weakened Germany's economy.
- The government simply printed more money in order to pay the workers who were on strike. This led to hyperinflation. The more money there was in Germany, the lower its value was and the higher prices were.
- Prices had run out of control. For example, in January 1923 a loaf of bread would cost 250 marks but in November 1923, the price rose to 200,000 million marks.
- During the crisis, workers were paid twice a day because prices rose so quickly that their wages were virtually worthless before the day was even over.

People who benefited:

- People such as businessmen, landowners and those with mortgages found they were able to pay back their loans easily.
- People on wages were relatively safe because they renegotiated their wages everyday. However, eventually their wages failed to keep up with the prices.
- Farmers coped well, since their products remained in demand and they received more money for them as prices rose.

People who suffered:

- People on fixed incomes like students, pensioners or the sick found that their incomes didn't keep up with the prices.
- People with savings and people who had lent money, for example to the government, were the most badly hit as their money became worthless.

Economic Recovery:

Gustav Stresemann:

- Gustav Stresemann became Chancellor in August 1923 during the hyperinflation crisis. He was only in the position of Chancellor for three months. In these three months, he managed to completely end hyperinflation.
- He called off "passive resistance" for the German workers in the Ruhr. This helped Germany's economy because industrial goods were back in production and the government was able to stop printing money to pay striking workers.

- He promised France and Belgium that Germany would begin paying reparations again. This persuaded France and Belgium to end the occupation of the Ruhr by 1925.
- He introduced a new currency called the Rentenmark. This stabilised prices and raised the value of money.
- He reduced the amount of money the government spent, which caused 700,000 government employees to lose their jobs.

Renegotiating reparations:

- The reparations payment is what had caused hyperinflation in the first place, and this gained Germany sympathy. They agreed to renegotiate payments which led to two new repayment plans.

	The Dawes Plan	The Young Plan
Date	Proposed in April 1924, agreed to in September 1924.	Proposed in August 1929, agreed to in January 1930.
Amount to be paid	1 billion marks per year for 5 years, 2.5 billion marks per year after that. Total = 50 billion marks.	Reduced the total (50 billion marks) by 20%. They were to pay 2 billion marks per year.
Amount of time	Indefinite	59 years, payments to end in 1988.
Loans for Germany	Germany was loaned 800 million marks from the USA.	US banks would continue to loan Germany money.

Did the Weimar Republic really recover?:

- The years 1924-1929 have been referred to as Weimar's "Golden Age". However, historians question just how much the German economy recovered from the effects of World War One and hyperinflation.

Signs of recovery	Signs of continued weakness
By 1928, industrial production levels were higher than those of 1913.	Agricultural production did not recover to its pre-war levels.
Between 1925 and 1929 exports rose by 40%.	Germany spent more on imports than it earned from exports. Germany was annually losing money
Hourly wages rose every year from 1924-1929.	Unemployment was at 1.3 million, and in 1929 it increased to 1.9 million.
A German chemical manufacturing company became the largest industrial company in Europe.	German industry became dependent upon loans from the USA.
Health and unemployment schemes were introduced in 1927.	The government ended up spending more than it received in taxes.

International Relations:

Germany and Europe:

- After the war, Germany was considered an international outcast. Yet, the Germans were still very bitter about their treatment in the Treaty of Versailles.
- After resigning from Chancellor, Stresemann became the Foreign Minister and he oversaw the dramatic improvement in Germany's relationship with the rest of Europe between 1925 and 1928. This is best illustrated by these three events:
 - Locarno Treaties (1925)
In October 1925, Germany, France and Belgium agreed to respect their borders. Meanwhile, Germany agreed with Poland and Czechoslovakia to settle any border disputes peacefully.
 - League of Nations (1926)
When the League of Nations was set up as a part of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was initially excluded. By signing the Locarno Treaties Germany showed that it was accepting of the Versailles settlement and so a year later Germany was accepted and a permanent member of the Council of League, making it one of the most powerful countries in the League.
 - Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928)
Germany was one of 62 countries that signed this agreement, which committed all of these countries to settle disputes between them peacefully.

What this meant:

- These developments mean that Germany was accepted into the international community that sought to work together during the 1920s to avoid another destructive war.
- It helped Germany's internal wounds to heal - the government was seen to be taking decisive action to make life better for people.
- This led to greater political stability and less extremism.
- However, this collaboration and peace only lasted until the onset of the Great Depression following the Wall Street Crash of October 1929.

The Golden Age (1924-1929):

Changes in society:

- Hourly wages rose every year even as hours decreased.
- Pensions and sickness benefit schemes were introduced.
- Compulsory unemployment insurance was introduced in 1927, which covered over 17 million workers.
- The government started to put their money towards building local parks, schools, housing and sport facilities

Changes in the position of women:

- Women were welcomed into the workforce. The number of women in work was 1.7 million higher in 1925 than it had been in 1907.
- Women were elected to local and regional assemblies all over Germany.
- Women had more freedom to wear what they liked, go out and spend money with their friends and family.
- Women no longer had to form their traditional role in society, meaning they weren't expected to stay home, look after children, cook and clean.

Changes to arts, cinema and architecture:

- An "expressionist" style became common in films and they often had unrealistic sets and exaggerated acting techniques which flourished Germany's creativity.
- Germany was one of the first countries to create storylines in films based around horror and crime.
- Walter Gropius was regarded as a pioneer in modern architecture and was the founder of the Bauhaus theory. This was the theory that all architecture and design was an opportunity to introduce beauty and quality to all, through well-designed and industrially produced items.
- He became famous for iconic door handles, and several public buildings across the country. He even designed several apartment blocks still in use today.
- The Dada movement was a protest against the traditional conventions of art and western culture. This led to Germany becoming more accepting of art forms such as photography, sculpting, poetry, painting and collages.

Below the link to this document, there will be a similar revision document focusing on the Nazis and what Germany was like when they came to power. Some of the years will overlap and could go hand-in-hand in the exam.