

Weimar Republic

- Population was starving after WWI
- Nov. 9, 1918 Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated = "Bloodless Revolution"
 - o Formed a Republic, civilian government
- 1919-1933 Weimar Republic
- Elected parliament = Reichstag, elected by proportional representation
 - o Chancellor, leader of the majority party (i.e. PM) – real power to pass laws
 - o Elected President, could appoint or dismiss the chancellor, could rule by decree in an emergency
- Friedrich Ebert = first President (7 year terms)
 - o Early years most representation was by moderate parties
- Germany had won the war in the East, thought the land would be retained from the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Russia
- Were not invited to the Paris Peace Conferences, instead given a diktat to sign peace given to them or face a new advance
- Ebert signing the treaty was seen as a crime in Germany = "November Criminals"
- Nationalists (rich industrialists) wanted destruction of the Republic and democracy, crush communism, funded ex-soldiers to incite violence (Freikorps)
- Many communist groups pushed for revolution early in the Republic (right-wing groups like the Freikorps would crush them)
- March 13, 1920, Kapp (Dr.) Putsch (take power by force) in Berlin, Ebert stopped them by calling a general strike, Freikorps were allowed to leave (important because they would eventually become part of Hitler's SA)
- \$5 billion in reparations paid with treasures and jewels – upper-class never forgave Weimar for this
- Other reparations had to be paid through short-term loans from the Americans (tied their economy closely to the US)
- Printing money to pay debts

- Occupation and shutdown of the Ruhr in 1923 hurt the economy = hyper-inflation in 1923, wiped out the savings of middle-class, working-class and pensioners (loaf of bread = 16 marks in 1918, 250 marks in Jan. 1923, 201 million marks in Nov. 1923)

Weimar's Golden Age (1924 – 1929)

- Dawes Plan = economic stability for Germany
 - o Ruhr Valley evacuated by allied troops, reparation payments start to gradually go to highest in 5 years
 - o Helped economy, but large reparation payments were still impossible.
- Economy stabilized
- Gustav Stresemann, Chancellor in 1923 = halted inflation by establishing new currency (Reintmark) which was backed by land
 - o Foreign Secretary (1923 – 1929)
 - Dawes Plan and Young Plan – reduced reparation payments by more than half, rescheduled to pay until 1988.
 - 1925 Locarno Treaties, with France solidified their common border
 - 1926, Germany joined the League of Nations
- All resulted in stability, when radical parties never do well.
- When US market crashed in 1929, so did Germany's = rise in radical parties because times were now bad.