

## Part 1.2 Review: How secure was the Weimar Recovery 1924–9?

### ACTIVITY

- 1 Look at the points jumbled up in the table below. Sort them out into three lists:
- promising developments
  - worrying aspects
  - mixed (i.e. it could be argued to be either i) or ii) or both).

#### Developments 1924–9

a) Dawes Plan	m) Attitude of army
b) Allied occupation of Ruhr/Rhineland	n) League of Nations
c) Young Plan	o) Coalition governments
d) Employers' attitude and Ruhr lockout	p) Wage levels
e) Attitude of administrative elite	q) 'The new woman'
f) Public expenditure	r) Inflation
g) Agriculture	s) Putschs
h) The SPD	t) Election of President Hindenburg
i) Unemployment and the Unemployment Insurance Scheme, 1927	u) Cultural experimentation
j) Locarno Pact	v) Treaty of Berlin
k) Extremist parties	w) Attitude of DNVP
l) Industrial investment and production	x) Support for DDP

- 2 Essay: 'By the beginning of 1929, the prospects for the survival of the Weimar Republic looked good.' Discuss.

#### Essay-writing exercise: developing a structured, well-supported argument

One major technique when writing an essay is to organise your ideas into neat paragraphs, each covering a major idea. It is often very effective to make the basic point in the first sentence of the paragraph, then develop this idea in the rest of the paragraph.

- First, try to write down between five and seven basic points that could be used to answer question 2 above, some agreeing with the statement, some disagreeing. Later, compare your points with those in the exercise below.
- Opposite are a series of sentences that could form part of the essay. Part one covers the first part of the essay and includes a possible brief introduction. Here the optimistic viewpoint is argued. Part two covers the last part of the essay, where points challenging the quotation are made, and includes a possible brief conclusion.
- Take one set of sentences. Try to pick out the three key idea sentences that could be used as the opening sentence of a paragraph. Then find the two sentences that develop this key idea. Identify the possible introduction/conclusion.
- Compare your results with those of other students.
- Try to place the key sentences in an order. There is no one fixed way of ordering the points. Discuss various possibilities.
- Study the facts in the 'Possible Supporting Evidence' section, and find evidence to support each paragraph.

NB The completed essay would require these ideas to be further developed with more supporting detail.

The paragraphs do not cover all the possible points that could be made.

When written as an essay, some sentences would be slightly rephrased in places to read more fluently.

Instead of writing the essay in this way (arguing in favour of the question, then against), you could discuss each area (political, economic, diplomatic) in turn, making optimistic and pessimistic points in each one.

### Structuring paragraphs for essay: 'By the beginning of 1929, the prospects for the survival of the Weimar Republic looked good.'

#### Part One: The Optimistic Case

- a) By 1929 the Weimar system of government seemed to have become well established.
- b) Inflation had been cured, there had been five years of virtually continuous growth in production, and unemployment remained low.
- c) Reparations had been reorganised once, and the improved terms of the Young Plan were near finalisation.
- d) Many historians would agree with the above quotation and take an optimistic view of the Weimar Republic's prospects, arguing that it was strong by 1929 and could have survived if the Depression had not occurred. Others disagree, and stress some key weaknesses in the Weimar Republic that were still present in 1929.
- e) More money was entering Germany through foreign loans than was leaving through reparations, and this investment boosted industrial expansion and social expenditure.
- f) The 1928 elections had seen a growth in support for parties committed to democracy, with extremists of Left and Right doing badly. There had been no coups since 1923, and by 1929 Germans had had ten years of democratic, republican government.
- g) By 1929 there were many encouraging signs in the economy.
- h) Stresemann's conciliatory foreign policy can be seen as laying the basis for the long-term consolidation of the Weimar Republic.
- i) The election of Hindenburg as President in 1925 reassured many conservatives that the Republic might protect their interests.
- j) Germany could use its membership of the League of Nations to raise the issue of German minorities in its lost lands, and links with the USSR strengthened Germany's bargaining position.

#### Part Two: The Pessimistic Case

- aa) Although extremists posed no direct threat, the Republic still faced opposition from both left- and right-wing parties who were biding their time.
- bb) There were some crucial underlying weaknesses in the economy.
- cc) The Weimar regime was still blamed for accepting the Treaty of Versailles, and there had been no major revision of the hated treaty.
- dd) Close examination suggests that fundamental political problems still remained.
- ee) Although there had been some successes, Stresemann's diplomatic achievements looked paltry to many Germans.
- ff) We will never know whether the Weimar Republic could have developed into a stable parliamentary system if it had not been for the impact of the Depression. Some argue that the success of parliamentary government in Germany since 1945 illustrates how democracy could flourish in Germany, but the evidence identified above does seem to suggest that there were major weaknesses within the Republic even before the double blow of the death of Stresemann and the Great Depression of 1929.
- gg) Any payment of reparations, no matter how repackaged, would be resented by most Germans.
- hh) No party had been able to achieve a majority in the Reichstag, so the Weimar Republic was still plagued by weak, short-lived coalition governments.
- ii) Industrial production grew at a far slower rate than in other European countries, and unemployment remained a running sore. Employers considered their prospects for expansion were hindered by the too powerful trade unions.
- jj) From 1927 farmers were increasingly hit by falling food prices, and were getting into debt.

#### Possible supporting evidence

- i) There were six changes of government during 1924-8.
- ii) The Young Plan reduced the overall figure for reparations from 132,000 million marks to 37,000 million.
- iii) Overall industrial production by 1927 had recovered to 1913 levels.
- iv) The pro-Weimar parties' share of the vote went up from 52 per cent in May 1924 to 73 per cent in May 1928.
- v) Germany's share of world production fell from 14.3 per cent in 1913 to 11.6 per cent in 1926-9.
- vi) President Hindenburg stuck to his oath to uphold the Weimar constitution.
- vii) Allied troops still occupied much of the west bank of the Rhine; Germany had not regained any of the land lost in 1919.
- viii) In the 1928 elections the KPD gained over 10 per cent of the vote; the Nazis made significant gains in northern rural areas.
- ix) Between 1924 and 1931 Germany received 18,000 million marks in foreign loans and paid out 11,100 million marks in reparations.
- x) Under the Treaty of Berlin Germany provided the USSR with economic expertise in return for Soviet help with rearmament.
- xi) Under the Young Plan Germany would be paying reparations until 1988.
- xii) From 1928 over one-third of farms were running at a loss.