

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

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Stresemann, the Republic's most able politician, saw a "streak of silver" on the horizon, and later people even spoke of the "golden" Twenties.

The introduction of the Rentenmark in 1923 to overcome inflation was a great technical feat in the currency sphere, but it would not have been possible had there not been a change in political views in Germany and the world. Only fresh insight could bring about a change for the better, and that meant confidence. France and Germany both had new Governments in the mid 1920s, and the distrust that governed the two peoples up to then – an all-too-understandable heritage from the bitter war – at last gave way to the reconciliatory recognition that hostility should not be perpetuated.

The good years that followed inflation lasted up to the outbreak of the world economic crisis in 1929. These five years seemed "golden" for various reasons. First of all, they ended the chaos of inflation, and then, on the strength of Franco-German understanding (It was then that Gustav Stresemann, the Reich's Foreign Minister, spoke about the "streak of silver", the streak of hope on the horizon of the future), Germany was led back into the community of nations. In 1925, the Locarno conference, which materially helped to reduce tensions, took place on Stresemann's initiative. In 1926, Germany was admitted to the League of Nations at Geneva. For this, in 1926 the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the initiators of the new policy – Aristide Briand in France and Stresemann in Germany. In 1925, the same Prize had been awarded to Sir Austen Chamberlain and Ch. G. Dawes – a sign that the importance of this understanding was widely appreciated in the rest of the world. Stresemann's early death, in 1929, was as heavy a loss as that of Friedrich Ebert had been four years before. Political developments would have taken a totally different course, and not just in Europe, had the forward-looking policy of these statesmen been continued, and understood and supported by larger sections of the population. Calls for



Five Rentenmark note, 1923

reconciliation came only from individuals. On the French side, the writers included Romain Rolland, on the German Annette Kolb who, even before the First World War and then during the war, had uttered a passionate plea for the reconciliation of the two peoples with her "Letters of a Franco-German". Her great essay on Briand remained a proclamation without response.

Most of the European countries, and the United States as well, experienced their own "Twenties", which can be regarded as a reaction to the war and its immediate consequences. It was not that the people had, logically enough, become pacifist, but the belief that only power politics could produce results had been shaken by Germany's defeat, and appreciation of the need for sensible mutual agreements had grown with democratic principles increasingly gaining the upper hand. Literature, music, art, and architecture were all imbued with a new feeling for life, at least as far as the educated were concerned. The question as to the meaning of life was posed afresh. Had man made technical progress merely for utilisation in hostile offensives and counter-offensives? Had not the outcome of the World War shown that even a democratic society possesses the power to come to decisions, and that it had been reason on





"Sketch of a group from Munich", Drawing by Herbert Marxen, ca. 1930. Upper row (from left): Max Halbe, Oskar von Miller, Ricarda Huch, Gustav Waldau; second row: Hans Knappertsbusch, German Bestelmeyer, Oswald Spengler, Karl Vossler; third row: Thomas Mann

the part of the Allies which, in the final analysis, had gained the victory over German jingoism?

Under the impact of the disaster, a humane spirit born of reason and a sense of responsibility started stirring among peoples, as it did among progressive forces in Germany. Something happened in Germany after 1924 which would have been thought impossible only ten years before. Monuments were erected with the inscription "Never Again War".

The years between the Wars were characterised by tradition becoming more European and international, by scholarship becoming more widespread, and by a German return to intellectual powers. Against this background, a rich cultural life could develop, and for the first time Berlin made its appearance as a European cultural capital, standing alongside London and Paris.

Shortly before war broke out, Max Reinhardt, the producer, had already touched the heights as "magician of the theatre", and he again became prominent with a long series of outstanding and trend-setting productions of plays both classical and contemporary. Together with Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Richard Strauss, and others, he had in 1911 launched the Salzburg Festival. Now he secured worldwide fame for Berlin. In economic terms, Reinhardt's Berlin theatres – the Deutsches Theater, the Kammerspiele, and the Großes Schauspielhaus – were private undertakings. There was also the Prussian State Theatre where, as general manager and producer, Leopold Jessner radically made up for the omissions of the past, specialising in giving young dramatists' plays their première. Apart from Viktor Barnowsky and Felix Saltenburg, the most notable theatre directors of these years included Erwin Piscator, the propagandist of political theatre who staged plays by Ernst Toller and Walter Mehring – extremely bitter attacks on the war and evils in post-war society with scenery consisting of scaffolding and filmed inserts. The first of Bertolt Brecht's plays, such as *Trommeln in der Nacht*, *Im Dickicht der Städte*, and *Mann ist Mann*, were premiered, to be greeted by applause and anger. In 1928, the première of his *Dreigroschenoper* with music by Kurt Weill took place at the Berlin Theatre on Schiffbauerdamm. It was and still is Brecht's most popular work.

Never had Germany had such a wealth of outstanding actors and actresses. Names such as Elisabeth Bergner, Till Durioux, Käthe Dorsch, Agnes Straub, Albrecht Bassermann, Heinrich George, Emil Jannings, Alexandre

Moissi, and Albert Steinrück stand here for many others. Only a few though were able to retain their fame by way of films and then later in Hollywood.

In 1926, official representation for German literature was at last established with the institution of a *Section for Poetry* in the Prussian Academy of Arts. Exactly 230 years after the foundation of this Academy writers were also admitted to membership. Till then they could only function as “honorary members”. Goethe, Herder, Wieland, Tieck, and A. W. Schlegel had been so honoured, but not Schiller whom the French revolutionaries had celebrated. Members of this “Academy of Poets” included Hermann Hesse, Ricarda Huch, Georg Kaiser, Bernhard Kellermann, Oskar Loerke, Heinrich and Thomas Mann, René Schickele, Arthur Schnitzler, Jakob Wassermann, and Franz Werfel. Later, Theodor Däubler, Alfred Döblin, Leonhard Frank, Alfred Mombert, and Fritz von Unruh were also elected. Theirs were brilliant names, and the fact that in 1929 the Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded for the first time in seventeen years to a German, Thomas Mann, was a sign that

the war hostility against Germany had finally been overcome in the sphere of culture. Thomas Mann’s novel *Buddenbrooks*, which was the main reason for his being awarded the Prize, was published in the winter of 1929 at the sensationally low price of 2.85 Marks with several hundred thousand copies being sold.

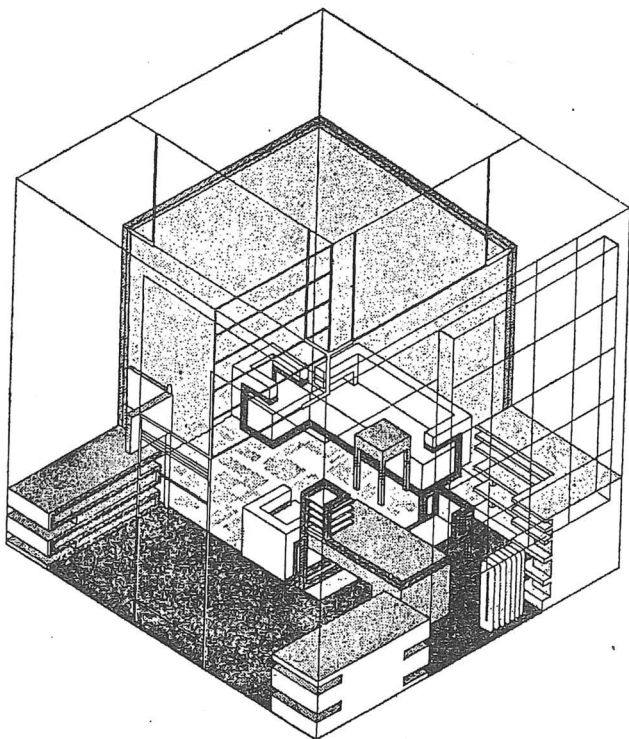
Apart from literature, which regained a worldwide reputation, Germany was particularly responsible for new ideas in architecture. They received their most effective expression in the work of Walter Gropius – not only because he used concrete and glass for his buildings, and had as early as 1910–11 been responsible, together with Adolf Meyer, for designing a factory, the Fagus Works at Alfeld on the Leine, which became a model for future industrial architecture, but above all because he instilled a new attitude towards building out of the conviction that future large – scale projects could be accomplished only by employing new methods in which teamwork played a major part in architectural planning, and harmony in design was regarded as a combination of craftsmanship, art, and technology.

In 1915, Gropius had been appointed director of the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar’s School of Arts and Crafts and Academy of Fine Arts at Weimar by the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar, and in 1919 he amalgamated both institutions as the *Staatliches Bauhaus Weimar*. In the inaugural manifesto he wrote: “Today the visual arts are enveloped in a self-contented singularity from which they can be freed only by the conscious cooperation and interaction of all workmen. Architects, painters, and sculptors must once again learn to recognise and comprehend the polymorphic nature of a building in its entirety and its separate parts ... All must return to craftsmanship. There is no ‘professional art’. There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman ... The foundation of workmanship is indispensable for every artist. That is the original source of creative design”.

The industrial buildings of Peter Behrens and Hans



Max Reinhardt stage-rehearsal, Drawing by Emil Orlik (1870-1932)



Walter Gropius, Design for the furnishing of the Director's room at the "Bauhaus", Weimar, 1923

Poelzig had been functional constructions at a time when every brewery or hat factory was built to look like some neo-Gothic castle, but now it was a question of developing the Bauhaus teaching and working community into a model instructional centre through the appointment of outstanding artists.

The teachers at the Bauhaus included painters Lyonel Feininger, Paul Klee, Oskar Schlemmer, and Wassily Kandinsky, sculptor Gerhard Marcks who designed pottery, and painter Georg Muche who designed textiles. As early as 1925 the Bauhaus had to cease its activities in Weimar as its

artistic direction was too modern, too "international", for the Rightist government in Thuringia. It was transferred to Dessau with Gropius designing the building and the teachers' quarters. The number of students hardly amounted to more than two hundred at any one time, but the influence of this comparatively small group exceeded anything previously devised in terms of modern ideas about building and thus reforms aimed at making existence more humanly worthy.

In 1933 the Bauhaus was disbanded as the Third Reich persecuted those who followed modern artistic schools of thought as "cultural Bolsheviks", whether they embraced "New Objectivity" or abstract art. Many Bauhaus teachers and pupils continued their activities at art schools and institutes in Europe and America, extending the theories and methods evolved up to then. In 1934 Gropius left Germany for the United States where in 1937 he was given a chair at Harvard University. The "Museum of Modern Art" organised an exhibition entitled "Bauhaus 1919 to 1928" which attracted a widespread response.

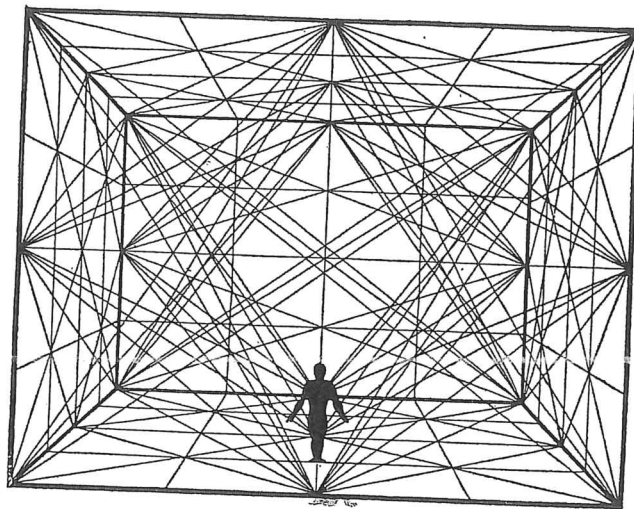
"America seems to have inherited a great European idea", wrote the Italian Carlo Argan in a study on "Gropius and the Bauhaus", and continued: "... an idea the Nazis had outlawed. Around the colleagues of Gropius, who like him had fled to America from Nazi persecution, just as many small Bauhauses are forming. László Moholy-Nagy is taking over the direction of the 'New Bauhaus' in Chicago, and other centres for design are springing up ... However, even if the influence of these centres for instruction in design have become decisive for the development of American art... above all for the development of 'industrial design' - their sphere of action has never been able to extend as far as that of the Bauhaus in Dessau".

The "Bauhaus" and its fate are representative of a number of other achievements which contributed to the cultural diversity of the 1920s. There was the "Dada" movement that had started with the "Cabaret Voltaire" in the Spiegelgasse

in Zurich on February 5, 1916, which poets, painters, and actors had joined out of protest against memorial tablets and museums, against tradition and conventional aesthetics. Hans Arp, Richard Huelsenbeck, Hans Richter, George Grosz, Hugo Ball, Emmy Hennings, Walter Mehring, Kurt Schwitters, Max Ernst, and many others constituted this rearguard of Expressionism. It was a movement which spread rapidly with outposts in Berlin and Paris, Vienna and Budapest, Rome and New York. Today, it is scarcely possible to imagine the influence Expressionism and Dadaism – as a passionate rebellion against a bourgeois art which, at a time of the individual's highest need, had contemptibly let the people down – exerted on intellectuals and the art of the world. Most of the later forms of non-conformity fed on this heritage.

In the field of music, new trends also appeared. The works of Anton Webern, Alban Berg, Arnold Schönberg, Paul Hindemith, Ernst Toch, and Wladimir Vogel attracted attention. Musical life in post-war Germany was conspicuous for a hitherto unexcelled wealth of talent in opera and concert which in a few years reached the highest international standard. The conductors included Clemens Krauss, Otto Klemperer, Bruno Walter, Erich Kleiber, Hermann Scherchen, Wilhelm Furtwängler, and Hans Knappertsbusch.

On its way from showmanship to art, the German film, in those days silent, produced some remarkable achievements which entered into the international history of the film. The first consciously artistic films dating from before the war included *Der Andere* (1913) with Albert Wassermann, *Der Student von Prag* (1913) with Paul Wegener, and *Der Golem* (1914) again with Paul Wegener; and among the post-war films were *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* (1919) with Werner Krauss and Conrad Veidt, *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* (1922),⁴ *Die freudlose Gasse* (1925), *Berlin, die Symphonie einer Grossstadt* (1927), *Menschen am Sonntag* (1929), *Der blaue Engel* after Heinrich Mann's novel *Professor Unrat* (1929)



Oscar Schlemmer, Planimetric and stereometric relations in space

with Emil Jannings and Marlene Dietrich, and *Die Dreigroschenoper* (1931) after Bertolt Brecht and with music by Kurt Weill. The most important directors of these years, who achieved an international reputation, were Ernst Lubitsch, Fritz Lang, Leopold Jessner, F. W. Murnau, G. W. Pabst, Walter Ruttmann, Robert Siodmak, and Josef von Sternberg. With interesting and successful works they were able to make theoretical and practical contributions to the history of the artistic film. They were respected even in Hollywood, and it was abroad that many of them, such as Max Ophüls, first gained real prestige and reputation away from the unfavourable political circumstances at home.

With the postwar years came the heyday of the cabaret. Shooting up everywhere, it was here that contemporary satire flourished. In Berlin critical interest was centred on "Noise and Smoke" with Walter Mehring and Kurt Tucholsky providing this cabaret with texts. In the "Wild Theatre" Trude Hesterberg sang her famous "chansons". Claire Waldorff was Berlin's favourite ballad-singer. In Munich people laughed at Karl Valentin and Liesl Karlstadt,

and in Kathi Kobus's "Simplicissimus" Joachim Ringelnatz, one-time mariner, sang, in sailor's costume, his gaily-wistful songs of the sailor Kuttel Daddeldu or his "Gymnastics poems". In the last years of the Weimar Republic, and even up to the spring of 1935, Werner Finck's Berlin "Catacomb" was able, with much wit and a precise feeling for the limits to which its opposition could go, to maintain its ground—until it was closed by the police—for indulging in poisonous political propaganda", and its most active members were "transferred" to the Esterwegen concentration camp. The "Pepper Mill", which was opened on January 1, 1933, by Erika and Klaus Mann, actress Therese Giehse, and musician Magnus Henning as a literary cabaret but actually for attacking National Socialism, soon had to transfer its field of activity abroad.

A listing of the daily newspapers shows how during these years the forming of political opinion was influenced by the press. The radio still had scarcely any impact, and television had not yet been invented. In 1924 there were in all 1,056 newspapers, of which 444 took a national-conservative line, 166 a democratic-liberal, 284 a Roman Catholic, 142 a Social Democratic, and 20 a Communist. As far as quality went, the best—and at the same time they were the ones most internationally known—such as the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, the *Vossische Zeitung*, and the *Berliner Tageblatt* supported a democratic-liberal policy, but those were not mass-circulation newspapers. The average reader got his ideas from the local press, in which almost every day there was repetition of the stab-in-the-back legend, and presentation of an inward-looking and limited picture of the world. The worse the economic circumstances became, the more was it hammered into the reader that the "diktat" of Versailles was responsible for everything. Hitler's papers took a still more disgraceful line. They pilloried the Jews as the people to be blamed for all the difficulties and disasters.

The "Golden Twenties" ended with domestic political struggles which were finally waged day after day and night

after night as the most brutal street fights between the "Red Front" and the "Nazis". With the rapid decline of the economy as a result of the world economic crisis, the weakness of the Republic became so utterly apparent that Alfred Kerr, for years one of Berlin's most prominent drama critics, asked sardonically:

Who has the nicest sheep?
 And classical music?
 Who sleeps the deepest sleep?
 A certain, a certain, a certain
 Republic.
 Who sees a murder daily
 And finds no advice?
 Who tolerates hordes of troopers
 As a brutal State-in-State?
 Who twirls a delicate litte hand
 In the political pot?
 Who lacks this little gift?
 A certain, a certain, a
 Certain Republic.
 Its intentions are chaste,
 Its feelings gentle:
 Before heads start to roll
 It stretches out its own.
 Who sleeps the deepest sleep?
 Despite the military music?

In Germany, the leading circles in business and scholarship were against the Republic, if not downright "non-political". At the universities Rightist forces had long been in the majority. The anti-democrats did not realise that their struggle against Weimar was preparing the way for Hitler.

On October 17, 1930, in the Beethoven Hall in Berlin, Thomas Mann made a passionate "appeal for reason" to all who were trying to listen and understand, and particularly to those masses of extremist voters who shortly beforehand had