

Module 04: The End of Optimism? The Great Depression in Europe

Evidence 11: "Marianne in Clover" by Edward Angly, 1931

A

Introduction

The following explanation for France's apparent escape from the ravages of the Depression was written by an American reporter who had spent considerable time in Europe.

Question to Consider

- How does France's economic situation in late 1931 compare to the situations in Germany, England, and the United States?
- In what areas does Angly note the effects of economic slowdown, and how does he explain their causes?
- Does knowing that France succumbed completely to the effects of the Depression in the years following 1931 affect your analysis of Angly's document?

Document

The trouble with the French, it was remarked by many an important man of affairs in America, Germany, and England, was that they were too avaricious, individualistic, selfish, and small-minded to keep up with the New Era in Big Business. The up-and-coming peoples, they pointed out, had learned to think in terms of efficiency, of mass production, mergers, team work, quick turnovers, scientific salesmanship, and the substitution of corporate ownership for individual proprietorship in everything from farms and factories to retail stores, hot dog stands, and orange juice counters.

Four years later, the Anglo-Saxon business geniuses, surveying the pathetic results of their New Era, glanced over the grousing globe and remarked that France was suddenly and surprisingly standing out as almost the one and only prosperous, contented country in a depressed, deflated, and somewhat disillusioned world. Of all the great nations of the earth, only France strode through the woeful year 1930 without a limp. Until almost Christmastide there was no unemployment in France. Even now, with the world depression approaching its second birthday, with other countries

counting their job-hunting citizens by the hundreds of thousands and the millions, France numbers her own men without work in only five figures. Her steel workers and textile workers have even been able this year to afford themselves the luxury of going on strike. . .

Such unemployment as afflicts France today is largely attributable to the slump in the luxury trades in which she has set the fashion for the world since before the dawn of the machine age. These trades depend for full prosperity on purchases from abroad and on the squanderings of tourists. . . the light depression which lies upon France is due, more than anything else, to the fact this is a pretty small world after all. It was inevitable that France should at least be affected to some extent by the business recession common to every country with which she trades. But where other people have been engulfed in a wave of depression, the French have been only slightly dampened by its spray—blown in, one might say, by the trade winds.

Source:

Edward Angly, "Marianne in Clover." *Forum and Century* 86 (October 1931): 213-214.