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A Secure Alliance

Showmen's Associations in Germany

At the end of the 19th century, trade unions were formed in Western Europe, including artists' unions and showmen's associations. They campaigned for the interests of their members and tried to create economic security.

The *International Artists' Lodge* was founded in Berlin in 1905. For almost 20 years, it was an international network that formed a legal defence commission and established a pension and burial fund for its members. In 1933, the *International Artists' Lodge* is brought into line and incorporated into the *Reichsfachschaft Artistik* of the *Verband der Deutschen Theaterangestellten* (Association of German Theatre Employees).

Other showmen's associations were banned. The artists' association *Sicher wie Jold* was hit particularly hard. Many of its members were Jewish. Leading representatives were arrested and the association's assets were confiscated.

After 1945, artists and showmen formed new alliances. Numerous Rhenish showmen's businesses are also represented in organisations such as the *Deutscher Schaustellerbund e.V.* (German Showmen's Association) (1950) and the *Europäische Schausteller-Union* (European Showmen's Union) (1954).

Fun Fact

In 1934, the Nazi authorities forced the association *Sicher wie Jold* to surrender all of its associations' symbols. The artist Klara Ksoll hid their hand-embroidered banner in the attic of her house. It was considered lost until she handed it over to the International Artists' Museum in 1999. Today, this club symbol is one of the oldest artist banners in Germany.