

GERMANY'S PARTY PLATFORMS

In 1932, Hitler ran for president against a Communist candidate and Hindenburg, the incumbent president. The election was a spirited one, in which 84 percent of all eligible voters cast ballots. Those voters had to decide which party offered the best solution to the nation's problems. The decision was not an easy one. To appreciate those choices, compare the platforms of the Social Democratic party (SPD), the Nazis, and the Communist Party.

COMMUNIST PARTY PLATFORM

We are committed to the overthrow of the presently existing, oppressive Republic and all of its economic and social institutions. The party favors:

1. The abolition of private property
2. The establishment of land reform programs, in which the government will take over the land and distribute it for the common good of all.
3. The ownership of all industrial productive forces by the government, so that they can be operated for the benefit of all the people rather than the capitalists.
4. A foreign policy that will build friendly relations between Germany and the Soviet Union, since both are allies against capitalism.

To the German people: The cause of your misery is the fact that French, British, and American capitalists are exploiting German workers to get rich themselves. Germans, unite to get rid of this terrible burden.

PRO-WEIMAR PLATFORM

This party wishes to maintain the Republic and to allow Germany to take its place among the free governments of Europe.

1. We support the present German Republic so that freedom, democracy, and justice will live in the hearts of our German countrymen.
2. We will honor all of Germany's obligations, political and financial, in order that Germany's honor and respect will not be decreased in the eyes of the world.
3. We plan to create more jobs by undertaking an extensive program of public works.
4. We will establish unemployment compensation up to a six-month period.
5. We will cut government expenditures to lower taxes.
6. We believe in the right of those who disagree with the party to speak and write on those issues without interference.

TEN MAJOR POINTS OF THE 25 POINT NAZI PROGRAM

We demand:

1. A union of all Germans to form a great Germany on the basis of self-determination of peoples.
2. Abolition of the Treaty of Versailles.
3. Land and territory (colonies) for our surplus population.
4. German blood as a requirement for German citizenship. No Jew can be a member of the nation.
5. Non-citizens live in Germany as foreigners only, subject to the law of aliens.

6. Only citizens can vote or hold public office.
7. The state insures that every citizen live decently and earn his livelihood. If it is impossible to provide food for the whole population, then aliens must be expelled.
8. No further immigration of non-Germans. Any non-German who arrived after August 2, 1941, shall leave immediately.
9. A thorough reconstruction of our national system of education. The science of citizenship shall be taught from the beginning.
10. All newspapers must be published in the German language by German citizens and owners.

VOTERS

Otto Hauptmann

Otto Hauptmann works in a factory in Berlin. Although his trade union has actively worked for better conditions and higher wages, it has not made many gains. Hauptmann blames their lack of success on the 1923 inflation and the current depression. He believes that the union would be more successful if the economy were more stable. Still, it is the union that has kept him employed. At a time when many of his friends have been laid off, his union persuaded the owners of the factory to keep men with seniority. In factories with weaker unions, managers kept only the young, claiming they are more productive.

Hauptmann worries about some of the idea his fellow workers have expressed recently. They argue that when the owners are forced to cut back production, they take it out on the workers. So the only way to end the depression is to let the workers control the factories and the government. Hauptmann disagrees. He thinks that the workers do get fair treatment as long as they have a strong union. Moreover, he believes that managing the factories and government should be left to those who understand these complicated jobs.

Gerda Munchen

Gerda Munchen is the owner of a small Munich grocery store started by her parents. For years, the parents had saved to send her to the university. But Munchen chose not to go and the money stayed in the bank. In 1923, she had planned to use the money to pay for her children's education. But that year inflation had hit Germany. Just before her older daughter was to leave for the university, the bank informed the family that its savings were worthless. This was a blow to Munchen, but even more of a blow to her daughter, whose future hung in the balance.

Munchen does not think she will ever regain her savings. With so many people out of work, sales are down sharply. And Munchen's small grocery is having a tough time competing with the large chain stores. They can offer far lower prices. She and her children question a system that has made life so difficult for hardworking people.

Elisabeth von Kohler

Elisabeth von Kohler, a prominent attorney who attended the University of Bonn, has a strong sense of the German tradition. She believes that her people's contributions to Western civilization have been ignored. Kohler would like to see the republic lead a democratic Europe. She disapproves of the methods the Weimar Republic often uses to repress extremist parties. Her sense of justice is even more outraged by the

way the Allies, particularly France, view Germany. She would like to prove to the world that the Germans are indeed a great race. She is proud to be an attorney and a German woman in the Weimar Republic.

Wilhelm Schultz

Wilhelm Schultz works with his father on the family farm in East Prussia. The treaty has had a profound effect on Schultz and his family. The treaty turned part of East Prussia over to Poland. So even though his uncle lives just a few miles away, his home is now in Poland rather than Germany. Schultz's grandfather lives in Danzig. Although it is still part of Germany, it cannot be reached without traveling through Poland. As a result, the family cannot visit him without a passport and other official documents. That does not seem right to Schultz. As a child, he was taught to admire Germany's heroes, some of whom fought the Poles. So he is dismayed that his government signed a treaty that has subjected many Germans, including his uncle, to Polish rule. He is also bothered by greed and corruption he sees in government leaders. This is not the way Prussians should act.

Schultz also worries about the Communists. Neither he nor his father wants a system that would eliminate private property. Both are proud to own their own land and anyone who wants to take it away is the enemy.

Karl Schmidt

Karl Schmidt is an employed worker who lives in the rich steel-producing Ruhr Valley. Like so many men in the Ruhr, he lost his job because of the depression. Yet Schmidt notes that the owners of the steel mills still live in big houses and drive expensive cars. Why are they protected from the depression while their former employees suffer? Although the government does provide unemployment compensation, the money is barely enough to support Schmidt, his wife, and their two children. Yet the government claims that it cannot afford to continue even these payments much longer.

Schmidt feels that the government would be in a stronger position to help people if it cut off all reparations. But he also knows that if the government did so, the French might occupy the Ruhr Valley just as they did in 1923. What is needed is a government that is responsive to the workers – perhaps even one that is run by the workers, as some of his friends maintain. And he is convinced that Germany needs a government strong enough to stop reparations payments.

Eric von Ronheim

Eric von Ronheim, the head of a Frankfurt textile factory, is very concerned about the depression. Sales are down and so are profits. If only Germany had not been treated so ruthlessly at Versailles, he argues, the nation would be far better off. Instead the government has had to impose heavy taxes to pay reparations to its former enemies. As a result, Germans are overtaxed with little money to spend on textiles and other consumer goods. The worldwide depression has made matters worse by eliminating possible foreign markets for German products. Even if the depression were over, Ronheim does not think taxes would come down because of reparation payments.

Ronheim considers the Communists a serious threat to Germany. He fears that if they set up a government like the one in the Soviet Union, capitalists like him would receive no mercy from the workers. He also thinks that Germany would become subservient to its old enemy, Russia.

Hermann Struts

Herman Struts, a lieutenant in the German army, fought bravely during the war. He comes from a long line of army officers and is himself a graduate of the German military academy. Struts has always taken pride in the army's able defense of the nation and its strong leadership.

Yet Struts is bitter about the fact that he has not had a promotion in over ten years. Few soldiers have, mainly because the Treaty of Versailles drastically reduced the German army. In the old army, Struts would have been at least a captain by now and possibly a major. The treaty, he argues, has done irreparable harm not only to Germany's honor but also to his own honor as a soldier. He feels that if the civilian government had refused to sign the treaty and allowed the army to fight, both he and Germany would be better off.

ELECTION RESULTS:

Seven people in Germany during 1932 election.

- | | | |
|----|----------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Otto Hauptmann | Weimar |
| 2. | Gerda Munchen | Nazi |
| 3. | Elisabeth von Kohler | Weimar |
| 4. | Wilhelm Schultz | Nazi |
| 5. | Karl Schmidt | Communist |
| 6. | Eric von Ronheim | Nazi |
| 7. | Hermann Struts | Nazi |