

Braunschweig 1932: Hitler's Citizenship

*Why did politicians of the middle classes
help the Nazis gain power in Germany?*

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September 2019

Background

Hitler's Dilemma

- 1890: born in Braunau, Austria***
- 1913: left Austria to avoid draft***
- 1915: German soldier in World War I***
- 1923: Munich Beer Hall Putsch***
- 1925: Imminent deportation***
 - Hitler resigns Austrian citizenship***



Munich 1923

1932: Hitler is national leader of the NSDAP (Nazi Party) and wants to run for presidency of Germany.

But he is stateless, with a criminal record.

Background Germany in the 1920s

Free State of
Braunschweig
(Brunswick)



Alt-Braunschweig

Nickelnkulk.



Background Mediaeval Town

Braunschweig

Steckerstrasse.



Background

Growth Outside the Historical Core



Braunschweig

Altewiekring



Braunschweig

Wilmerdingstrasse.

Expansion in the 1890s/1900s



August Bebel Hof, established 1929

Background

State Election 1927

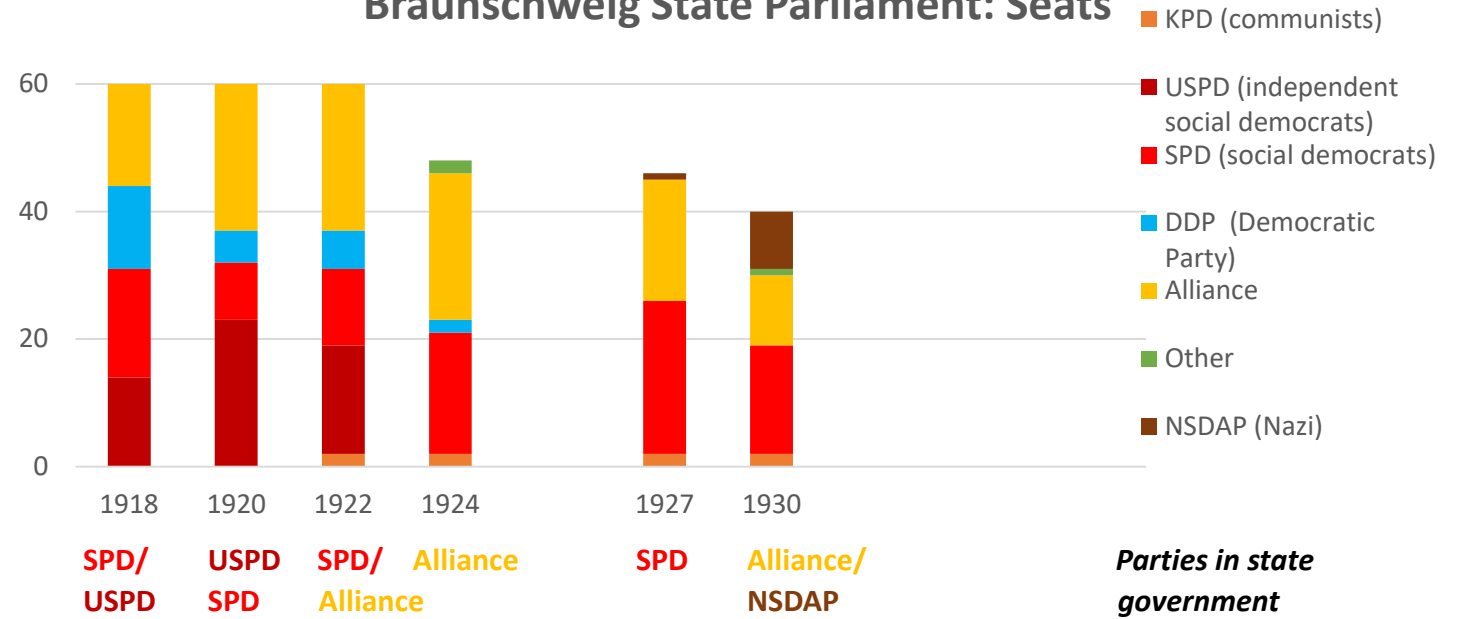
Social Democrats gain 24 of 46 seats = absolute majority, Unique at the time!

State Election 1930

Social Democrats (17 Seats), Alliance (11), Nazis (9) Communists (2), Others (1)

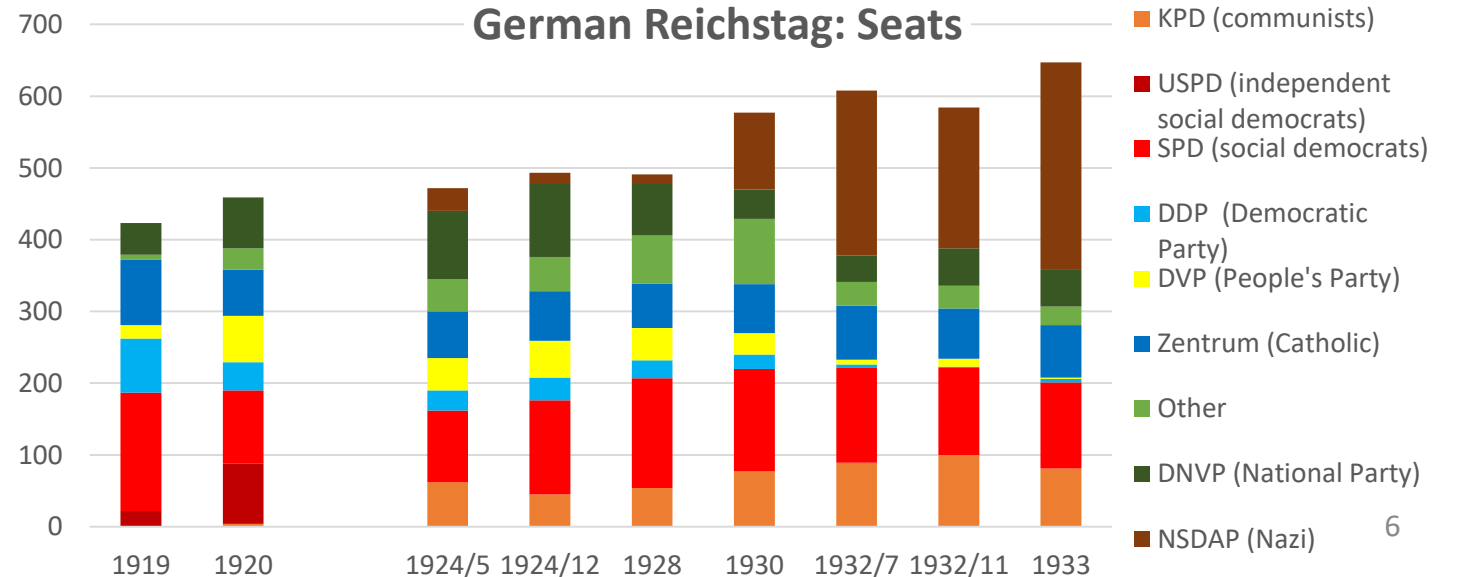
Nazi support especially in the rural and mountain districts

Braunschweig State Parliament: Seats



Note: DVP, DNVP and other centrist parties formed a joint list ('Alliance') in Braunschweig for the 1918, 1920, 1922 and 1930 elections.

German Reichstag: Seats



Background Braunschweig 1930

Alliance forms coalition with NSDAP

- together 20 of 40 seats
- NSDAP
 - Speaker of Parliament (**Zörner**)
 - Minister of Interior (**Klagges**)
- Roll-back some SPD policies
- First wave of dismissals of teachers & officials
- Harassment of opposition politicians

The People's Party (DVP) was in coalition with SPD nationally but part of the 'Alliance' in Braunschweig.

By 1932, this was the only state government with Nazi involvement; a similar coalition in Thuringia had failed.

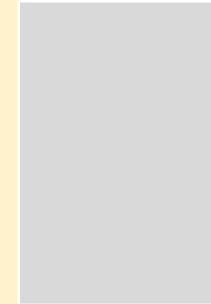
Liberal/Conservative Alliance



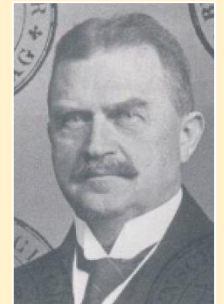
Werner Küchenthal,
DNVP, Prime Minister



E.A. Roloff, DNVP
Alliance leader,
Professor



Albert Brandes,
DVP group leader
Judicial official



Heinrich Wessel,
DVP, Publisher

11 seats



Ernst Zörner,
Speaker of Parliament



Anton Franzen,
Minister of Interior
9/1930-7/1931



Dietrich Klagges,
Minister of Interior
Since 9/1931



Friedrich Alpers,
SS leader

Nazis

9 seats

Events of 1931

University leaders stand up to Nazis 1



November 5

- NS Student Group accuses a Bulgarian student of insulting a female German student and demands dismissal of the Bulgarian.
- Vice President Carl **Mühlenpfordt** initiates an investigation → reprimand but no strong penalty.
- **Mühlenpfordt** becomes focus of personal attacks by NS student group.

November 21

- Senate outlaws the NS student group, but is overruled by the Minister of Interior (**Klagges**).
- A new investigation leads to the dismissal of the Bulgarian student

January 1932

- Personal attacks by NS students (backed by **Klagges**) of President, Vice-President and Senate.
- Polarization among student groups NS-students vs. others esp. architecture students.
- University conflict triggers a crisis in government.



Otto Schmitz,
Prof of Engineering
TU President
dismissed 1932



Gustav Gassner,
Prof of Botany
TU President 1932
Arrested 1933

Carl Mühlenpfordt,
Prof of Architecture
TU Vice-President
dismissed 1933/4



Events of 1932

Professor Hitler?

February 2

National NSDAP asks **Klagges** (Minister of Interior in Braunschweig) to arrange German citizenship for Hitler

February 13

Klagges prepares the appointment of Hitler for a vacant professorship at the Technical University Braunschweig, without consulting the TU.

→ *The appointment carried with it German citizenship*

February 15

Rumors are leaked to the press and trigger strong opposition

February 20

University President **Schmitz** intervenes directly to Prime Minister **Küchenthal** to object, bypassing **Klagges**.

Big controversy within the Alliance, national politicians intervene

Küchenthal refuses to sign the appointment.

March

Klagges complains about **Schmitz**' intervention. Senate supports **Schmitz**.

“Hitler’s Inaugural Lecture”
“as Professor of applied pedagogics at TU Braunschweig”



Caricature in SPD-related newspaper, 1932

Events of 1932

Hitler appointed to a governmental position

February 22

Alliance politicians propose appointing Hitler to senior role in Braunschweig-representation in Berlin instead of professorship.

DVP reluctantly agrees on condition that it is not a sham contract.

February 26

Hitler is formally appointed – just-in-time for nomination deadline

March 13

1st round of presidential election: Hitler (30.2%) triggers run-off election against incumbent President Hindenburg (49.6%)

April 10

2nd round of election: Hindenburg 53.1%, Hitler 36.7%
Major propaganda success for the still young Nazi party.



Citizenship certificate dated
February 26, 1932

*Hitler never actually worked
in the role to which he was
appointed*

Events of 1932 What if?

Discuss:
Would Germany have evolved substantively differently if the Alliance in Braunschweig had refused to appoint Hitler to a government position in February 1932?

Professor Ulrich Menzel @ TU Braunschweig argues in 2014 that:

- **If** no government job in Braunschweig, **then** no Braunschweig citizenship
- **If** no Braunschweig citizenship, **then** no German citizenship
- **If** no German citizenship, **then** no candidature in 1932 presidential election
- **If** no candidature, **then** Hindenburg would not have stood either (he has old, and only motivated by the need to prevent Hitler)
- **If** no candidature by Hitler and Hindenburg, **then** an entirely different slot of candidates would have been available.
- **If** no Hitler candidature, **then** Hitler would not have enjoyed the propaganda success of the run-off election
- **If** no such propaganda success, **then** further vote increases in 1932 would have been smaller
- **If** less increase in voter support, **less** pressures to replace Brüning government and more time for Brüning negotiations with allies regarding reparations.
- **If** no Hindenburg as re-elected as president, **then** no appointment of Hitler in January 1933
→ German history would have been very different

Possenspiel um Staatsbürger Hitler

Ulrich Menzel erzählt die Geschichte der Einbürgerung im Land Braunschweig.

Von Harald Dün

Braunschweig. Wie war das noch, als Adolf Hitler 1932 im Land Braunschweig eingebürgert wurde? Professor Ulrich Menzel hat jetzt auf Einladung des Braunschweiger Geschichtsvereins versucht, das Puzzlestück einer wochenlangen Diskussion zu entwirren. Zwei Stunden praller Gesprächsstoff. Und so wie Menzel das Thema vor hundert Besuchern im blauen Saal der Stadtbibliothek ausdramatisierte, musste es geradezu zu Reaktionen der Heiterkeit kommen. Eine Heiterkeit föhlich mit einem bitter-süßen Hintergrund.

Hitler, damals staatenlos, hätte ohne Einbürgerung in Deutschland keine höchsten Ämter anstreben können. Die Reichspräsidentenwahl stand bevor. Es hatte ja schon mehrere Einbürgerungsversuche gegeben, die misslungen. Die Chancen, Deutscher zu werden, schienen schließlich im Land Braunschweig am größten. Denn hier waren die Nationalsozialisten an der Regierung beteiligt.

Zu den wichtigsten lokalen Akteuren des Geschehens, das weitgehend Züge einer Posse trägt, gehörten Klagesche Herren: Dietrich Klages, Völkungs- und Innenminister, Landtagspräsident Ernst Zörner, Ernst August Roloff, Fraktionsvorsitzender der bürgerlichen Einzelstimmten, Werner Kichenthal, Vorsitzender des Staatsministeriums und Finanzminister, der Kaffeehändler Carl Hiltner, Zeitungsvorleger und Abgeordneter der Einzelstimmten, Heiterich Wessel.

Fast acht Wochen lag sich der Machtpoker um Hitlers Einbürgerung hin. In Heftig fangerte unter anderem Joseph Goebbels als Drahtzieher. Goebbels war, so Menzel, hoch nervös. Denn mit jedem Tag, der im Land ging, wurde das Dilemma größer. SÄle mussten genötigt, Plakate gedruckt und der Wahlvereins mit Hitler musste rechtzeitig eingeregelt werden. An der Technischen Hochschule (TH) Braunschweig wurde für Hitler eine „Professur für Organische Geschichtswissenschaft und Politik“ reserviert. Klages hielt den „Schriftsteller Hitler“ gegen seines Wortes „Mein Kampf“ für ausreichend qualifiziert, was aber einige Professorennvillier anders sahen. Für sie war Hitler ein Urneh-stifter. Und so einen wollten sie nicht.

„Hitlers Ernennung zum Regierungsrat – alles auf den letzten Drücker.“

Ulrich Menzel, Heiterich

Die Option „Professor“ wurde bis zum Schluss offengehalten. Mittlerweile, deutete Menzel an, wundert das Hochschulpersonal wie auch jene Politiker, die in Braunschweig Karriere machen wollten, von Zweifeln geprägt. Anwandlungen von Opportunismus waren nicht zu übersehen. Menzel: „Klages wollte mit der Beratung Hitlers die TH zu einer Art ideologischer Kaderniederlande machen.“ Es tat sich eine zweite Chance auf. Hitler durch Verbannung zum deutschen Staatsbürger zu machen. Dafür wurden bei einem geheimen Treffen im Café Lück gegenüber dem Staatstheater – die Weichen gestellt. Hitler sollte nun Regierungsrat beim Landes- und Vermessungsamt werden, sich aber eigentlich in Berlin als Sachbearbeiter der Braunschweiger „Gesellschaft nützlich machen – als Lobbyist für das Land Braunschweig.“

An dem Treffen im Café Lück nahmen teil: Hans Frank, Hitlers Rechtsberater, Ernst Zörner, Carl Heimbis (beide waren verschwiegen) sowie wahlrechtlich auch Minister Friedrich Alberts, Klages-Vertrauter.

Dramaturgisch – alles auf den letzten Drücker – (Menzel). Ein Postbote eilte mit der Ernennungsurkunde zum Reichser Minister „Kaiserhof“, wo Hitler noch schlief. Keiner traute sich zu rufen, ihn zu wecken. Aber es fehlte noch die Staatsbürger-schaftsurkunde. Diese wurde aus Braunschweig eilig nachgereicht. Und dann musste Hitler, dessen Wahlalter ja München war, nach ganz schnell in Braunschweig wohnhaft werden. Hitler telegraphiert an Zörner, ihn doch bitte schön in dessen Haus am Hoherwall als Untermieter aufzunehmen. Dann das bürokratische Gerangel um die Höhe des Ortsschlags für Hitler. Wohin sollte eigentlich das Gehalt geschickt werden? Und welches Finanzamt war zuständig?

Hitler konnte also letzten Endes kandidieren. Menzel ist sich sicher, dass Hitler sich später voller Dankbarkeit an die Hilfe aus Braunschweig erinnert hat. In einem Gespräch mit Göring Januar 1945 sagte Hitler: „Ich habe dem Land Braunschweig großen Nutzen gebracht.“ Auch ist für Menzel der folgende ungeliebte Innovationswettbewerb im Land Braunschweig nicht zu erklären.

Da sind die Stützgründung Wölfsburg mit dem VW-Werk, die Reichswerke Hermann Göring im heutigen Salzgitter. Dann der ganze Komplex Flugwesen mit dem Flughafen Waggum, mit dem Luftflottenkommando, dem Flugwesen-Institut an der TH. Zu nennen der Siedlungsbau in Braunschweig, der Kanalbau, die Investitionen in Eisenbahn und Autobahn. Das alles zeigt, so Menzel, Hitlers Dankbarkeit.

Die Manöverchen und Intrigen bei Hitlers Einbürgerung wirken auf und heute auch deswegen tolls erheitend, weil die Beteiligten knapphaft noch den Schein des Korrekten wahren wollten.



Hitlers Machtamnestrafen vor dem Schloss. Am dem Aufbruch am 17. und 18. Oktober 1931 nahmen etwa 100 000 SA-Leute aus ganz Deutschland teil. Sie waren mit 30 Sonderzügen und 5000 Lastwagen nach Braunschweig transportiert worden.



Karlhuber „Hitlers Amt-Einbürgerung als Professor der angeregten Pädagogik an der Technischen Hochschule“ am 15. Februar 1932 im „Volksfreund“ zum Wunsch, Hitler in Braunschweig zum Professor zu ernennen.



Events of 1932

University leaders stand up to Nazis 2

May

- Minister **Klagges** suspends President **Schmitz** and initiates disciplinary procedures for research collaboration with the Soviet Union.
 - Schmitz is formally dismissed from university service in November.

August

- Formation of a new Senate: **Gustav Gassner** new President.

November

- NS students attempt to use memorial days to celebrate NS student leader killed in a street battle with communists. → Senate/Gassner prohibit this
- NS students put up their banners across campus → Senate/Gassner prohibit this
- Klagges intervenes in university and overrules Senate on both issues.

December

- German University Presidents' Conference and Alliance parties support Gassner.



Events of 1933

After the national power grab, things get ugly in Braunschweig very quickly.



May 1, 1933, on the main staircase of the university.

Early March

- KDP and SPD outlawed, leaders arrested and many tortured, including major Ernst Boehme

March 27

- Paramilitary storm building where opponents are gathered, arresting 1400 people.

April

- Dietrich Klagges Prime Minister

May

- A Nazi is appointed university president
- First book burning

June

- Murder of 10 randomly picked trade unionists and social democrats by the SS ("Rieseberg Murders")



Gustav Gassner (1881-1955)

PhD (Agricultural University of Berlin)

Early career positions in Montevideo (Uruguay), Kiel, and Rostock.

Professor of Botany and Director of Botanical Garden, TU Braunschweig (since 1918)

1932: Elected President of the TU

Multiple conflicts with Nazi student groups and Minister Klagges

April 1, 1933: Arrested, dismissed from the TU

1934-1939: Exile in Ankara, Turkey

1939: Visiting Germany, surprised by the start of war,
Survived the war in a private research institute,

1945: Reinstated as University President in 1945.

1946: Co-Chair of German University Presidents Conference

1948: Retired from University Presidency

1951: Emeritus



Research interests:

phytopathology and plant
physiology, esp. photosynthesis,
plant diseases

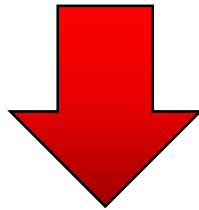


Textbook:

microscopic analysis of
plant-based foods (3rd
ed. 1956; 6th ed. 2007)

Why?

Why did politicians of the middle classes help the Nazis gain power in Germany?*



How did a democracy turn into an authoritarian regime?



[The Economist, September 2019]

* Middle classes = people with typically conservative values, such as small business owners, artisans, shop owners, government administrators, farmers, landowners.

Why?

“Make Germany Great Again”

Prevalence of frustration in German society, especially urban middle classes

National humiliation of World War I

- Lost war,
- Returning soldiers without recognition or purpose in life,
- Versailles treaty: giving Germans all the fault for the war, taking away a lot of territory, occupation of industrial heartland, imposing huge financial burden, ...

Great financial crisis

- Large scale unemployment
 - mainly affecting working class
- Fear of social decline of middle classes
 - Banking collapses
 - Small business failures

Supporters of the liberal and national parties shared a lot of the concerns that the Nazis promised to address.



Why?

Polarization of Society 1

Revolution of 1918 led to a short-lived socialist experiment

November 8-10, 1918

Uprising forced Duke Ernest August to resign. Proclamation of the *Socialist Republic of Braunschweig*

December 22

State parliamentary elections: SPD 27.7%, U-SPD 24.3%, Alliance 26.2%, Democratic Party (DDP) 21.8%.

February 22, 1919

Worker-and-soldier committees formally hands over control to SPD/USPD government.

April 9, 1919

Spartakists initiate general strike; advocating expropriation and dismissal of SPD-led government → *at the brink of civil war*

April 17, 1919

Military Free Corp intervenes, dissolves soldier-and-worker committees



Duke and Duchess,
with Crown Prince, 1915



Worker and Soldier Committee
after receiving resignation
notice from the duke.



Minna Fasshauer
First ever female State
Minister in Germany



Why?

Polarization of Society 2

Locally, the SPD has been the leading political force throughout the 1920s.

- **Reform of education system**
 - Strengthening basic education
 - Reducing influence of the church in the education system
 - Appointment of teachers representing 'reform pedagogics'
 - New Institute of Education at the TU, with social democrat as head (forced early retirement in 1931).
- **Administrative reform**
- **Social housing**



Heinrich Jasper, SPD, Prime Minister of Braunschweig, several times 1919-1930. 1933 arrested. Died in concentration camp Bergen-Belsen, February 1945.



Ernst Böhme, SPD, major of Braunschweig 1929-1933. In 1933 arrested, tortured and forced to resign. Reinstated as city major by British authorities in May 1945.

Why?

Polarization of Society 3

In the 1930 election campaign, the Alliance of DVP, DNVP and others targeted primarily the SPD-government

Wähler, merkt's Euch!

Wieviel Schulden hatte das Land Ende 1927?	15 920 785 RM.
Wieviel Schulden hat das Land heute?	46 765 824 RM.
Wieviel Zinsen- und Tilgungsbeträge zahlte das Land 1926?	1 600 000 RM.
Wieviel Zinsen- und Tilgungsbeträge zahlt das Land heute?	4 175 630 RM.

Dazu Steuern! Steuern! Steuern!

Das danken wir der Regierungshandl. des Herrn **Dr. Jaape**.

Und was beehrte uns Minister **Siebers**?

- Den religionsfeindlichen Schulleter,
- den Ausbau der weltlichen Schule,
- die Berufung der „Schullehrer“ **Pausen, Jansen und Staats** als Professoren an die Lehrerbildende,
- das unendliche „deutsche“ Geschichtsbuch,
- das **Beurteilungsschulgesetz** mit seinen antragbaren Lasten,
- die Berufung des **Rechtsanwalts Kopfflein** zum Oberlandesgericht.

Und wie hat Minister **Strinckreher** „gehandelt“?

- Er hat drei **Genossen** zu Kreisrichtoren gemacht. Rang und Gehalt der Oberregierungsräte!
- Er hat den früheren Pastor **Eberlein** als Direktor ins Erziehungsdepartement zu versetzen geholfen.
- Er hat redlich dazu geholfen, die Pensionslasten zu vermehren.

**Soll das so weitergehen:
Schulden, Steuern, Versorgung von Genossen,
Zerschlagung der christlichen Schule?**

Nein und tausendmal nein!

Soll's aber anders werden, dann möcht
alle, aber auch wirklich alle, am 14. September
Bürgerliche Einheitsliste!

Braunschweig: Braunschweigische Bürgerliche Einheitsliste. Druck: Ernst Bredde, Braunschweig.

State debt increased from 15.9m to 46.8 m

Taxes! Taxes! Taxes!

School reforms hostile to religion

Appointment of "school reformers"

Appointment of party members to county directors

Everyone, on Sept 14, Vote Alliance!

The People's Party (DVP) was in coalition with SPD nationally but part of the 'Alliance' in Braunschweig.

Why?

Ambivalence towards *Equal-vote* Democracy

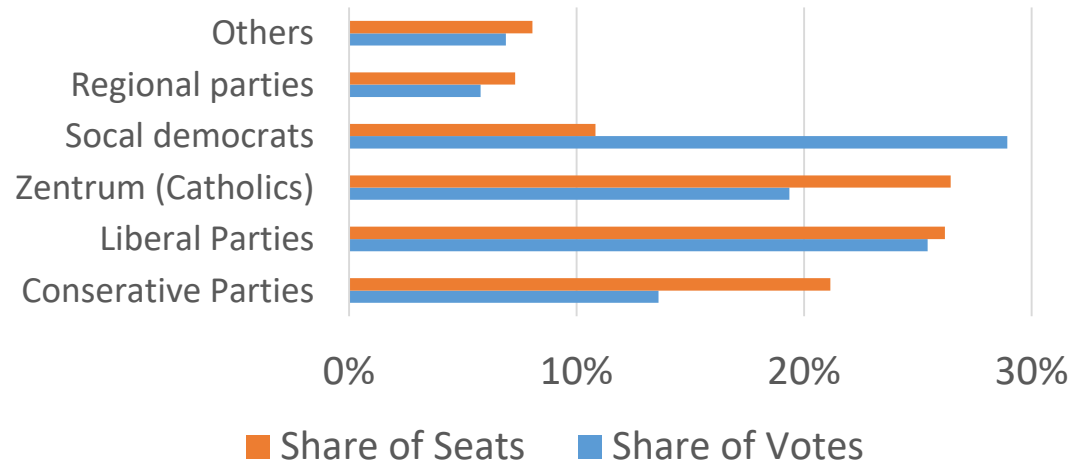
Until 1914:

- Majoritarian system
- Unequal weights
- Women did not vote
- Age limit 25 years

After 1919:

- Every vote counts *equal*.
 - Everyone over 20, including women.
 - Basic principle: 60,000 votes = 1 seat in Reichstag (Parliament)
- share of votes and share of seats closely aligned

National Election 1907



For:
SPD
DDP
DVP
(Zentrum)

Against:
KPD
DNVP
NSDAP

Why?

Ambivalence towards *Equal-vote* Democracy

Weaknesses in the constitution undermined the *division of powers* and the *effectiveness* of democratic institutions

- **Proportional representation**
without minimum threshold
→ lots of small groups in parliament
→ difficult to form a stable government
- **Loopholes** in the constitution allowed abuse of power by government ministers

Braunschweig 9/1931 and 2/1932:

Speaker of Parliament Zörner (NSDAP) dismisses Communist MPs after heated exchanges in parliament
→ the coalition has a majority in parliament.

Braunschweig 1933:

Communists arrested, social democrats prevented from attending
→ NSDAP has control of parliament



Braunschweig State Parliament, final meeting in March 1933.
Note: empty seats on the “left”; speaker in uniform

Why?

Personal Interests

Ever-present Nazi paramilitaries

- Parades through cities and towns
- “100,000 men” parade in Braunschweig, October 1931

Nazi press

- Highly personal attacks on individuals voicing opposing opinions (“character assassination”)

Intimidation
Fear of reprisals

In 1932, the SENATE of the TU formally complained to government about the false allegations, attacks and intimidations in the local Nazi media against university leaders.

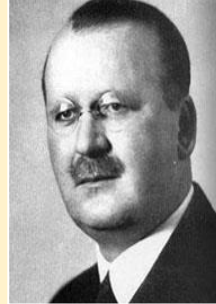


**Nazi paramilitary parade
Braunschweig 1931**

Why?

Personal Interests

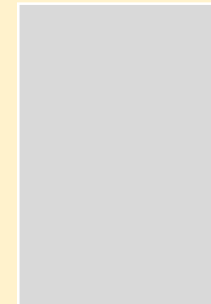
Liberal/Conservative Alliance



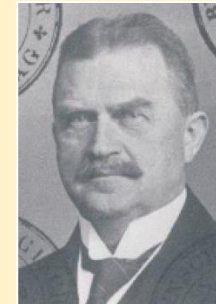
Werner Küchenthal,
DNVP, Prime Minister



E.A. Roloff, DNVP
Alliance leader,
Professor



Albert Brandes, DVP
judicial executive
official



Heinrich Wessel,
DVP, Publisher

11 seats

Personal career, *for example*:

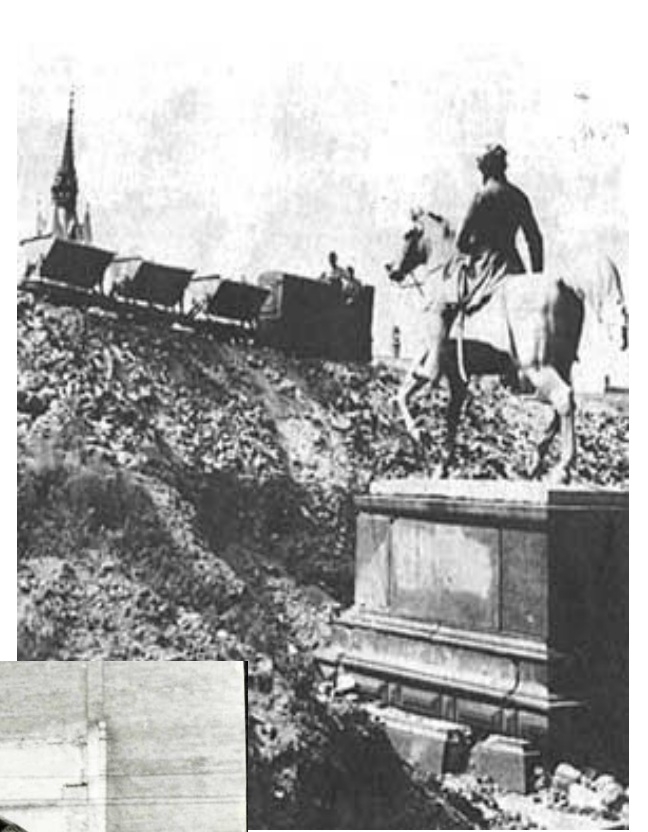
Werner Küchenthal,
→ President of State Bank 1933-45.

Ernst August Roloff,
→ promotion to full professor 1932

Political survival

If Alliance had not cooperated with NSDAP to get Hitler the citizenship,
→ coalition would likely have collapsed
→ new elections in 1932
→ Alliance (esp. DVP) would have lost seats
→ New government under NSDAP or SPD lead?

Epilog 1946



Epilog

November 1946



By order of the British military authorities,

with the support of the relevant German politicians,

*the state of “**Braunschweig**” is dissolved,*

*and integrated in the new state of “**Niedersachsen**” (Lower Saxony).*