

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

### Evidence 21: Diplomatic Reports on Germany, 1930

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#### Documents

British Diplomatic Reports

Sir H. Rumbold (Berlin) to Mr. A. Henderson (Received September 8)

Berlin, September 5, 1930

Sir,

The two outstanding features of the present electoral campaign, in which twenty-four parties are participating, are the apathy of the general public and the pronounced activity of the Nationalist Socialists. The apathy of the general public may be largely ascribed to the fact that the belief is widely held that this election can produce no result and that another election will have to be held in the late autumn. To a great extent, too, the excessive attention which has been paid to foreign policy at a time when internal reforms are obviously more immediate may be attributed to the attempts of the party leaders to arouse some interest in the electorate. In the meanwhile, the activity of the National Socialists has reached such intensity as to cause serious dissensions within their own camp, as a result of which some curious developments, such as the existence of Communist cells in their 'storm detachments,' have been brought to light.

The Nationalist Socialists claim that they represent a movement and not a party. The movement is a new and vigorous one and obviously appeals to youth; and now, during the electoral campaign, its youthfulness and dissatisfaction. In fact, they are often described as the party of the dissatisfied. Their electoral methods are themselves original and often ingenious. Despite their large Berlin headquarters, with its thirty-two rooms, they do not dispose of large funds. But they seem to have found some sources of supply, for they are obviously spending money in distributing large quantities of pamphlets, leaflets and placards. A cheaper and easier method and, for very young men, a more amusing one, is to splash the swastika in red paint together with the number of the party

electoral list on fences, posts and pavements. They also have little rubber stamps with which they stamp their sign and number on motor buses, tube trains and other vehicles. On one occasion, when the owner of a bookstall was not looking, they succeeded in stamping their sign and number on nearly all of his newspapers and publications. Reports from other parts of the country also show that they are extremely active everywhere in devising means of attracting attention. . .

The various acts of rowdyism, often resulting in bloodshed, in which National Socialists are reported from all over the country to be involved obviously offer the Communists opportunities to further their ends; and those who still hope some day to bring about a Soviet revolution in Germany must surely be pleased with the way the storm detachments of their greatest enemies are now behaving. It remains to be seen, however, what effect these serious dissensions within the party, this rowdyism and this smell of communism will have upon the better class supporters of the National Socialist movement, whose number is not insignificant; and also what effect it will have upon that nebulous group of dissatisfied people who have hitherto been attracted by the freshness and youth and vigour of the movement.

Hitler's problem now seems to be how to get rid of these unruly storm detachments. He obviously can do nothing before the election, but rumours are about that he has pledged himself to certain of his financial supporters to dissolve the storm detachments immediately the election is over.

Horace Rumbold

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U.S. Diplomatic Report

The Chargé in Germany (Gordon) to the Secretary of State  
Berlin, September 25, 1930

The development which is now disturbing me the most, and which has become accentuated even in the few days which have elapsed since my telegram under reference, is the accumulation of evidence that the parliamentary parties lying between the extremists to the Right and Left have not yet learned their lesson. These parties, which profess to be most devoted to the maintenance of republican institutions and whose members have the most foreign connections - and consequently cannot be indifferent

to foreign political opinion - have, in the shape of the recent elections, received a sharp warning as to the results which follow upon their inability to agree on questions of fundamental importance to the maintenance of a republican and parliamentary form of government. One would think that an experience of so drastic a nature would awaken them to the necessity of this effect. On the contrary, as far at any rate as all surface indications go, the leaders of these parties are proceeding in the same manner as heretofore, and the jockeying, bickering and bargaining going on between them seems to be as pronounced and obstructive as ever. Only yesterday the People's Party, apparently learning nothing from its signal loss in the election, declared that any compromise with Socialist doctrines was not to be considered and that the grouping together of all government-supporting bourgeois parties would be maintained as the goal of the policy of its parliamentary fraction. As it is still to be presumed that the party is likewise adverse to a coalition with the National Socialists it is difficult to see what meaning the vague words as to the goal of the party's policy can have and how the leaders of this party can delude themselves into thinking that they are by their attitude in any way facilitation the cause of good government.

As developments are now shifting so rapidly, I shall not attempt further to expatiate upon this theme at the moment, but I trust that the brevity of this despatch will not detract from the emphasis which I should like to put upon this present phase of political situation.

Respectfully yours,  
George A. Gordon

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British Diplomatic Report

Sir H. Rumbold (Berlin) to Mr. A. Henderson (Received November 3)

Berlin, October 31, 1930

Sir,

During the recent election campaign, the programme of the National Socialist party was little more than a drum which attracted the crowd. Because of its inconsistencies and manifest absurdities, the payment of too much attention to it then was apt to be misleading. Its immature exaggerations almost insisted that there could really be no substance in the

National Socialist movement.

Since the remarkable successes of the National Socialists in the election, the position has altered. It was the revival of the national spirit and the hope of the re-birth of Germany which largely carried them to victory. Many supporters of the movement, even many young National Socialists themselves, knew little about the programme or paid little attention to it. Now that the party has 107 seats and is the second largest in the Reichstag, the programme has come again into the limelight, and whether they like it or not, it is being forced upon the attention of the National Socialist leaders. The moment, therefore, is appropriate for an examination of the programme in detail, and I have the honour to transmit herewith a memorandum which is a summary in translation of a commentary prepared by Herr Alfred Rosenberg, one of the official spokesmen of the party, explaining in detail each of the twenty-five points of the programme. This commentary was first produced in 1922 with the approval of Hitler and has been re-issued with an introduction dated the 20th September, 1930.. .

In the economic sphere, the programme declares that a citizen's first duty is spiritual or physical creation. Income not arising from manual or mental labour must be abolished and the servitude to interest must be broken. All war profits must be confiscated, and all hitherto syndicated industrial trusts must be nationalised. Participation in the profits of large scale enterprises is demanded. Department stores must be nationalised and rented cheaply to small traders. The old age pension system must be widely extended. A law for the expropriation without compensation of land for public purposes, the abolition of interest based on land, and the stoppage of speculation in land is demanded. Those guilty of crime against the people, usurers, profiteers, &c., are to be punished with death, regardless of religion or race.

Such a programme must obviously be embarrassing to the leaders of a party who are anxious to prove its fitness to participate in the Government. The programme is indeed 'Nationalist' in all its striving for a greater, better, cleaner and less corrupt Germany. That is the healthy side to this national movement with which anyone can sympathise. But it is also 'Socialist,' and in parts almost Communist, and something must be done to satisfy the Left wing, to honour the implications of the programme. Some gesture must at least be made in the direction of election promises. This explains the fantastic motions introduced at the opening of the Reichstag, the number of

which was only limited by the early adjournment...

It is thus definitely too soon to attempt to forecast. All that is clear at the present moment is that, whether the National Socialist party succeeds in holding together in its present form, or whether it splits up, the revival of nationalism in Germany has come to stay. And as I have already indicated in previous dispatches, this revival of nationalism cannot be ignored by any German Government, and it must result in the prosecution of a more forward foreign policy by Germany in the future.

Horace Rumbold

Source:

Diplomatic Reports on Germany, 1930.