

# “A Bloody Conclusion to the Election Campaign” (August 2, 1932)

## Abstract

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In the run-up to the Reichstag elections on July 31, 1932, violent riots broke out in numerous places, often involving the use of weapons. In mid-June of that year, the Papen government had lifted the ban on the SA and SS, which had been imposed only a few months earlier by then Chancellor of the Reich, Heinrich Brüning. As a result, National Socialists and Communists, but also groups loyal to the Republic such as *Reichsbanner* and *Eiserne Front*, attacked each other in their meeting places and on the streets. It was the bloodiest election campaign that the Weimar Republic had experienced thus far; 12 people died on election day alone. Nevertheless, at over 84%, voter turnout was higher than in any previous Reichstag election.

After the elections, the Nazi Party (NSDAP) became the largest party in the Reichstag for the first time, but they did not win an absolute majority. The Nazi Party and the Communist Party now held over half of the seats in the Reichstag, making it impossible to form a moderate government. On August 2, 1932, the conservative *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* published this article describing the aftermath of violent altercations that took place between the armed supporters of the NSDAP, the Communist party, and the Republic during the election campaign. The article provides evidence of the ubiquity of political violence in the Weimar Republic, where election rallies often descended into violent intimidation and deadly street fighting, especially from the late 1920s. The use of firearms by radical groups also indicates that many former soldiers had retained their weapons illegally after the war ended.

## Source

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### Serious Clashes on Saturday and Sunday Night

#### Eleven dead and many gravely injured

After the election itself proceeded quite peacefully overall, on Sunday night political hooliganism ensured that there would be additional terrible fatalities on both the right and left. These were not random, spontaneous clashes between hotheads, but in nearly all cases carefully orchestrated plans. These acts demand harsh punishment. After the exciting period of protracted election campaigns, the German people as a whole has not merely earned the right to peace and quiet, it also has the duty to keep its house in order and tranquility. Dr. Bracht's appeal will thus be welcomed with complete agreement in the broadest circles.

In the north of Berlin, at the corner of Anklamer- and Zionskirchstraße, a police officer acting in self-defense shot the Communist Artur Ziegalski dead late Sunday night.

#### Dr. Bracht intervenes

Königsberg, August 1

In light of today's incidents in Königsberg, on instructions from Deputy Reich Commissioner for Prussia Dr. Bracht, currently acting as Prussian interior minister, the Oberpräsident made the police academy in Sensburg available for deployment in Königsberg.

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## **Reward of 5,000 marks for the apprehension of the perpetrators**

At the request of the chief of police, the acting president of the administrative district in Königsberg is offering a reward of 5,000 marks for the apprehension of the perpetrators.

In the course of the morning, all of the plate-glass windows in the low-price Epa department store were smashed.

### **North Germany**

ws. Hamburg, August 1. (report by the author)

While election day itself was peaceful in Hamburg and all of North Germany, a series of violent acts perpetrated in various North German cities late Saturday and Sunday night have claimed four lives thus far. In Itzehoe, Social Democrats and Communists tried to remove a swastika flag from a building but were prevented by storm troopers.

A short while later, when three storm troopers went to their group leader to report this incident, they came under fire. One storm trooper collapsed and died. The police investigations led to several arrests that night.

That same night in Lübeck, the National Socialist Benno Meinen fell victim to an attack by members of the "Iron Front." Two men from the Reichsbanner tore off the National Socialist's party badge in a pub. When he then left the pub, the two Reichsbanner men followed him and confronted him on the street.

As he tried to flee, he was stopped by a group of working-class sportsmen, knocked to the ground and repeatedly stabbed. One of the stab wounds severed his carotid artery, killing Meinen immediately. None of the perpetrators has been apprehended thus far.

Late Sunday night saw serious unrest in Hamburg's Gänge district. A bicycle patrol of two policemen was lured to the Gänge district and shot at from houses and from the street. One of the officers collapsed from a serious shot to the stomach, while the other was shot in the foot. When other policemen came to remove their wounded comrades from the Gänge district new salvos rained down upon them. The police returned fire. One of the assailants was immediately killed by a shot to the neck, a second died on Monday at the Harbor Hospital from a shot to the lung. Three further individuals were gravely injured. In order to restore the peace, larger numbers of police had to be equipped with steel helmets to clear the Gänge district.

### **West Germany**

pl. Essen, Aug. 1 (author's own report)

On Sunday morning in Essen-West there was a major shoot-out between a National Socialist and a Communist propaganda gang, in which one man on each side was seriously wounded. When two policemen arrived, they were also shot at. One of them was grazed by a bullet. The officers returned fire, and an eighteen-year-old National Socialist was killed by a shot to the head.

### **Saxony**

Leipzig, Aug. 1

A group of ten National Socialists was attacked by about 100 Communists and some 40 Reichsbanner men in the "Tiergarten." The group later received support from additional members of the party. Several shots were fired during the assault. One National Socialist had a bullet lodged in his head, another was

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shot in the arm and a third had his nose smashed in. One Communist was found shot dead, but this fatal shot may have come from a party comrade who mistook him in all the confusion for a member of the other side.

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