

# Platform of the German Democratic Party (1919)

## Abstract

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A progressive liberal party, the German Democratic Party [Deutsche Demokratische Partei, or DDP) was a founding member of the “Weimar Coalition,” which also included the Social Democrats and the Catholic Center Party. The DDP decried extremes from both the political left and right. It attracted support from middle-class professionals, including Germany’s small Jewish population, and advocates of democracy. Equality before the law and civil justice were common themes of the DDP’s political message. Above all, the DDP affirmed the legitimacy of the Weimar Constitution, asserting equal justice and authority as a part of Germany’s national culture. Additionally, the DDP supported female suffrage and advocated for the protection of national minorities. Presented at the founding of the Weimar Republic in 1919, the “Program of the German Democratic Party” pledged support for all German nationals abroad and for the goal of unifying all Germans into a national state. In stark contrast to conservative German parties, the DDP supported a permanent union of all free nations in the League of Nations. Domestically, the DDP defined itself as a party of labor committed to social rights and freedom.

## Source

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Leipzig, December 13-15, 1919

[...]

I. State.

1. *Domestic policy.* The foundation of the German Democratic Party is the Weimar Constitution, which it is committed to defending and implementing. A precondition for success is the cultivation of a civic ethos among the people. The relationship between the individual and the collective is determined by the concept of civic duty. It confers substance on the rights of German citizens while also limiting these rights. The German Republic must be a democratic state [*Volksstaat*] as well as, unwaveringly, a state ruled by law.

We aspire to the unity of the nation but a unity that takes into account and maintains the particularity of all German tribes.

[...]

Law is a part of the culture of the people and must therefore be framed in a way that is appropriate for the people.

The mercenary army imposed upon us must be quickly replaced with a militia system that is based on compulsory military service and is capable of defending our national independence.

2. *Foreign policy.* For the near future, the starting point and content of Germany’s foreign policy will be determined by the peace treaties of Versailles und St. Germain. Relations between nations must be governed not by power and repression but by justice and liberty. We will never accept the dictates of violence as an enduring legal order. We will never recognize the separation of some members of the German people from the Fatherland. We will never surrender a nation’s right to self-determination and, based on this principle, we are committed to unifying all Germans.

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Germany's share in the intellectual elevation of humanity warrants its claim to establishing colonies. We also contest being robbed of our colonies.

A central goal of German policy is the establishment of close ties with Germans in other countries and ensuring their protection. It is a national duty to help fellow Germans living under foreign rule to maintain their ethnic identity [*Volkstum*]; however, we also regard it as a political imperative to respect the national minorities living within Germany.

The ultimate realization of our ideas can only be achieved on an enduring basis through an alliance between all free states. We therefore support a league of nations whose primary goal is cooperation between nations and which at the same time represents an international working community.

However, we reject an alliance of powers that deprives the German people of equality, for such an alliance only promotes hatred and hate-mongering between peoples.

## II. Culture.

[...]

3. *Worldview, religion and church.* But the crowning achievement of the civilized state is the establishment of individual freedom with regard to questions of worldview and religion. [...]

As a matter of principle, the separation of church and state must gradually be implemented, although historical, intellectual, and practical relations between the church and state will continue to exist. [...]

## III. National Economy.

The German Democratic Party is a party of labor. Its goal in the economic sphere is a state based on social justice.

The socialization of the means of production in the sense of a general nationalization will only lead to a fatal bureaucratization of the economy and a disastrous reduction in productivity. We reject it and support private enterprise as the ordinary form of economic activity. [...]

We therefore make the following demands: First, quasi-monopolistic power in the hands of a few small groups should not be tolerated. It follows that, with respect to land as the most precious monopolistic good belonging to the people, speculation should be prohibited and a determined effort should be made to partition large land holdings to create self-sufficient family farming enterprises and to provide settlements for rural laborers. [...]

Second, we demand that social injustice be eliminated in the area of property and income distribution. The state cannot allot the same incomes to everyone; each individual should receive a wage commensurate with their output. But each individual must also lay the foundations upon which, in the absence of extraneous hindrances, they can earn a fair income. [...]

Third, we demand that measures be taken to counter the trend toward transforming people into machines in the workplace. The division of labor threatens to rob work of its soul. For this reason, the skilled trades and the retail sector must be protected and promoted. [...]

Source of original German text: "Programm der Deutschen Demokratischen Partei" (1919), in *Deutsche Parteiprogramme 1861-1954*, ed. Dr. Wolfgang Treue, vol. 3 of *Quellensammlung zur*

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*Kulturgeschichte* (Göttingen, Frankfurt, Berlin: Musterschmidt Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1955), 122-26.

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