

Principles of the German People's Party (1919)

Abstract

The German People's Party (DVP) emerged in the early days of the Weimar Republic as the successor to the National Liberal Party of the *Kaiserreich*. Led by Gustav Stresemann, the DVP was not an early supporter of the Republic, voting against the Weimar Constitution in 1919. Despite his open support for the restoration of the monarchy, Stresemann recognized that such a return would only be possible through a bloody coup, which he was unwilling to support. Represented in nearly all of the Weimar governments from 1920-1931, the DVP's cooperation with the supporters of the Republic increased as the threat from more radical parties on the Right grew. Principally, the DVP represented the interests of the established Right, especially powerful German industrialists and large corporations, and also many smaller property holders. As such, it constantly hedged its political commitments, placing a higher priority on its low tax, pro-business stances than the success of the republic. The DVP advocated for greater political and economic cooperation between nations, while simultaneously demanding a revision of the Treaty of Versailles. In addition, the DVP championed causes that defended the "national particularities" of Germans, including cultural, spiritual, and moral values. In this manner, the DVP often supported antisemitic policies during the 1920s, though never as openly or forcefully as more extremist political movements.

Source

Leipzig, October 19, 1919

I. About the state.

1. *State power.* A strong, firmly established state power – based on the careful cultivation of a sense of civic duty, but ultimately also on the indispensable means of power – is the first prerequisite for the prosperous development of German national strength both internally and externally. The smaller the means of power of the Reich, the more necessary it is to keep alive in the German people the sense of duty to the state until death, manly discipline and comradeship, the cornerstones on which our German national army was built. The German People's Party will always stand up for this.

It demands full political equality for all citizens; however, it sees the voluntary, trusting allegiance that the people give to their self-elected leaders as an essential precondition for Germany's freedom and advancement. It will cultivate this attitude in particular.

2. *Foreign policy.* As for the individual in the national community, the German People's Party demands for the German people in the circle of nations the respect and freedom of national and economic development it deserves.

It strives for a political and economic reconciliation of nations but considers this impossible as long as the honor of the German people is trampled on by our enemies, a unification of all Germans who are torn from us or who profess allegiance to the Reich, including the Austrian Germans, is prevented and the forced peace imposed on us is maintained.

Our foreign policy requires prudent, purposeful and knowledgeable leadership [...].

The German people are also entitled to contribute to the spiritual and moral upliftment of peoples at a

lower cultural level.

3. *Form of government.* The German People's Party will promote the reconstruction of the Reich by all means. It will therefore cooperate within the framework of its political principles within the current form of government.

The German People's Party calls for a unified German state with extensive self-administration and the safeguarding of the individual historical, cultural and economic characteristics of the individual regions. However, as long as all German states are not equally integrated into the unified German state, the German People's Party will oppose any attempt to break up Prussia.

We demand the restoration of the glorious black-white-red imperial colors.

The German People's Party considers the imperial system, the symbol of German unity, to be the most suitable form of government for our people in terms of history and character.

[...]

6. *Nation and family.* The hardship of the times, the oppression by our enemies, the hatred and slander that the German people encounter everywhere make it particularly necessary for them to become aware of their national character and to develop all the spiritual and moral values that lie within them. The German People's Party wants to contribute to this to the best of its ability. [...]

The deepest source of our national strength lies in the German family. The more the school comes under influences that are alien to the German character, the stronger the support for the cultivation of German history and German patriotism must find in the family. Everything that can be done to protect and strengthen the family, especially through land, housing and tax policy, will receive the most energetic support from the German People's Party.

7. *Population policy.* The German People's Party has a serious duty to nurture and promote the physical and moral health of the people. It wants to keep the German people German and therefore fights in particular against the flooding of Germany with people of foreign origin that has occurred since the revolution.

[...]

9. *The question of women's rights.* The German People's Party advocates political, economic and legal equality of the sexes [...].

11. *Youth welfare.* The German People's Party advocates an energetic expansion of youth care from the point of view of preserving and strengthening the German national strength. Everything that serves the physical, mental and moral development of youth must be strongly promoted. Public welfare measures and private charity for young people must be expanded and combined, in particular through the statutory introduction of youth welfare offices.

12. *Religion and church.*

[...]

The German People's Party advocates full freedom and self-administration for all religious communities. The churches should retain their existing status as public corporations, including the right to tax their members, free from state paternalism. Other religious communities should be given the opportunity to acquire the same rights through state recognition.

[...]

II. On the national economy.

[...]

15. *The community of working people.* The German People's Party sees the solution to the social question not in external forms of economic life, which only reduce its efficiency through increased coercion, but in the internal equality of all members of the people and the moral overcoming of all differences between the various sections of the population, between town and country, entrepreneurs and employees. It rejects the socialization of the German economy; the balance between the economic demands of the individual occupational groups is to be achieved by amicable or arbitral agreement.

[...]

21. *Trade and shipping; colonies.* Recognizing the great importance of banking and insurance, trade and shipping for our entire national economy, the German People's Party will do everything in its power to help them regain their former global standing. Hindering shackles must be kept away from them.

[...]

The German People's Party will do everything in its power to regain a colonial territory for Germany that meets its economic needs.

[...]

Source of original German text: Grundsätze der Deutschen Volkspartei (1919), in *Deutsche Parteiprogramme 1861-1954*, ed. Dr. Wolfgang Treue, *Quellensammlung zur Kulturgeschichte*, vol. 3, Göttingen, Frankfurt, Berlin: Musterschmidt Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1955, pp. 113-22.

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