

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY – CONCISE AND CLEAR

HISTORY OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

*Freedom, justice and solidarity
since 1863*



AKADEMIE
FÜR SOZIALE
DEMOKRATIE

FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG

Social Democracy – Concise and Clear

HISTORY OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

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Social Democracy – Concise and Clear

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KEY FIGURES

This book will introduce you to certain key figures. They have done a lot for Social Democracy. Below is a list of these figures and the pages where you can read more about them.

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PREFACE

“Workers of the world, unite!”

“We want to dare more democracy!”

Do you know these important phrases?

Do you want to learn more about them?

And do you want to know why they are still important today?

Then let's take a look at the history of Social Democracy together.

In the beginning, proletarians faced misery and poverty.

Proletarians – that's what workers used to be called. In the 19th century, their work changed. Instead of working as farmers or craftsmen, more people worked in factories. There, they often slaved away for 14 hours a day, six days a week. Their wages were tight. Only a few remained healthy while doing this work.

This gave rise to the desire to change something together. Workers and their comrades-in-arms joined forces. Through political parties, trade unions and as a social movement, workers have stood up together for over 150 years – for a better wage, for co-determination, for equal rights, and for free and equal elections. They always defended democracy. 150 years of Social Democracy represents 150 years of freedom, solidarity and justice!

We still need Social Democracy, even today. Workers working reduced hours during the financial market crisis in 2008; children without the laptops required for online learning during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020: Social Democracy supports people who need support.

It enables opportunities and advancement. This way, all people can participate to the same extent. Social Democracy thereby ensures more justice.

If we look at the history of Social Democracy, we can learn from history. This helps us to recognise how we can work together to make life better for people in the future.

Are you with us?

Do you also want to make the world a better place?

Are you interested in politics?

Do you volunteer?

Or do you work in politics?

The Academy for Social Democracy provides you with answers to your questions and ideas for further thinking.

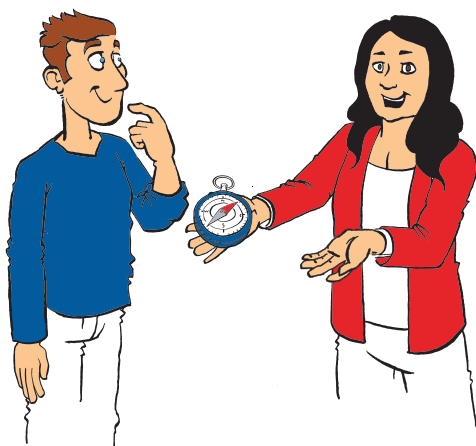
Here are Jan and Anna.

Jan is doing an apprenticeship.

He has a lot of questions about politics and society.

Anna is committed to greater Social Democracy.

She is happy to explain what Social Democracy is.



Deciding your own path

We use a compass as our symbol. The compass is a maritime instrument. It helps us to find the right direction.

The Academy wants to help people decide their own political path.

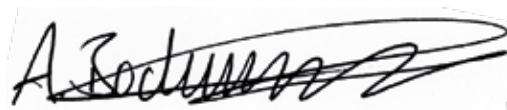
We'd be delighted if this book series helps to achieve that.

After all, politics is a force for good if many people think about it and participate.



Lukas Meyer-Schwickerath

Academy for Social Democracy



Alexander Bodenstab

Academy for Social Democracy



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INTRODUCTION: ABOUT THIS BOOK

The past makes us ready for the future

In this book from the *Concise and Clear* series, we're looking back on 150 years of history of Social Democracy.

Why do we believe it's so important to look back at the past?

Every person believes in guiding principles and goals.

Sometimes these goals change slightly.

Because circumstances change and the goals are adapted to suit them.

To check your own goals, it helps to look back:

What have I already achieved?

What went well, what didn't go so well?

That way you can look ahead better:

What do I still want to achieve? And how will I do that?

To summarise, we can say:

**We need to know where we come from
in order to know where we want to go.**

And this is the same for Social Democracy.

It has also developed guiding principles and goals.

Looking back at history, it becomes clear that many guiding principles and goals are still relevant today, even if conditions have changed over time.

An example:

**In the past, only children from rich families could go to school.
Social Democracy fought for compulsory education and free schooling.**

Nevertheless, children from poorer families still have fewer opportunities than children from other families. Social Democracy therefore advocates for all-day care to be expanded, for example. This way, children whose parents are less able to support them can still learn a lot. The goal remains the same – equal opportunities for education for all. The route to achieving the goal is always adapted to the progress being made.

And this is the same for all goals set by Social Democracy. Even though they are always being adapted to modern times, in essence, they are the same goals as at the beginning.

And all individual goals can be aligned with the **fundamental values** of Social Democracy. These fundamental values have never changed.

They are:



The path to one goal may be longer than to another. With some goals, we may have gone in the wrong direction. All this is best seen by looking at history.

We want to look at the history of Social Democracy.
In doing so, we will also look at the history of Germany.
We'll look back over a period spanning 150 years – to the time
before the first Social Democratic Party was founded.

We will see what happened in Germany during this time.
We'll look at how Social Democracy responded to these events.

At the end of the book, we will better understand the goals
of Social Democracy today and in the future.

Want to know more? Why not watch this film?

History of Social Democracy

<https://www.fes.de/akademie-fuer-soziale-demokratie/uebersicht-videos/erklaervideos>

Want to head straight to the film on your mobile?

Scan this QR code using a suitable app,
such as *QR Barcode Scanner* or *Scanlife*.



THE SOCIAL DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT

When it comes to Social Democracy, we are talking about a big idea and a big movement. This movement includes all people who stand up for social and democratic values and goals. They do this in different ways that complement each other.

In the beginning, there was the workers' plight

The values and goals of Social Democracy developed at the time of industrialisation. The impetus was the ever-increasing inequality between rich and poor. In doing so, Social Democracy assumed the goals championed during the French Revolution: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.

Workers supported each other in case of illness or death, for example. They therefore experienced support among themselves, but were also oppressed by factory owners. Thus, the awareness of forming a separate class in society – the working class – emerged. Workers developed ideas on how to make their lives better and more just. The **labour movement** came into being.

Pioneers of Social Democracy set out values and goals. They incorporated the ideas from the labour movement in their writings.

Political parties

The workers recognised the need to organise themselves. The first Social Democratic parties emerged. The parties gave the Social Democracy movement its political voice and represented the goals

in parliaments. They turned the fundamental values into very specific goals. These included material security for all, equal rights, equal opportunities in education and a functioning democracy.

A big movement

The parties are just one part of the Social Democracy movement. Workers formed **trade unions** in which they still organise themselves to this day. Trade unions are committed to a good working environment, co-determination and fair pay.

In addition, there are organisations that provide solidarity-based support. These include the **Workers Welfare Institution (Arbeiter-Wohlfahrt, AWO)** for example. The AWO was founded as a self-help organisation in the Weimar Republic. Nowadays, it provides many jobs in the social sector.

The **workers' cultural movement** also made an important contribution. By reducing working hours, workers were able to join educational clubs, sports clubs, choral societies, nature groups and youth groups. This strengthened and continues to strengthen a feeling of togetherness.

Social Democracy is international

The fundamental values of Social Democracy are international. None of these values apply to one group of people in particular. None of these values lose their validity when crossing a national border. Social Democracy therefore works together in the European Union. And it has united under the **Socialist International** and the **Progressive Alliance** organisations.

HOW IS THIS BOOK STRUCTURED?

This book explains the history of Social Democracy.

In the **Introduction**, we consider why it is important to look at and understand history. Let's take a brief look at the individual chapters.

A **timeline** shows an overview of how Social Democracy has developed and highlights key events in the respective period. Each particular event is explained in more detail in the book.

In **Chapter 1**, we will look at the early days of the labour movement up to the World War I. What were workers' living conditions like? When were the first Social Democratic parties founded? And how did the government respond to the new labour movement?

In a small extra chapter, we'll look at the **role of women** in Social Democracy and introduce a few female politicians.

Chapter 2 focuses on the time after the World War I and the first republic in Germany: the Weimar Republic. We explore the question of why this republic failed.

Chapter 3 will look at the time of National Socialism. This was a time of dictatorship and oppression. Social Democrats could only work underground or in exile. This period led to the catastrophic World War II.

In **Chapter 4**, we will examine Germany's reconstruction after World War II. What role did Social Democracy play in this? What important stimuli can Social Democracy provide? We'll also look at the time when two important Social Democrats were in government.

In **Chapter 5**, we will look at the time from Reunification to today. We look at Social Democratic politics up to the present day. This period marks a major anniversary – in 2013, it was exactly 150 years since the first Social Democratic Party was founded in Germany.

In **Chapter 6**, we'll look at how Social Democracy can look towards the future. We ask what challenges the future will bring. And what answers Social Democracy can provide. We'll see that the values and goals of Social Democracy have remained valid over a period spanning more than 150 years. And that they are also applicable for the future.

At the end, you will find a list. This list contains an **explanation of key terms**. That's where you can go if you want to look something up in more detail. You can recognise these terms in the text because they are underlined.

A few more general remarks about this book:

This book is part of the **Social Democracy – Concise and Clear series**.

Volumes on the following topics have also been published as part of the series:

- An Introduction to Social Democracy
- Social Economy
- The Welfare State
- Europe
- Integration and Immigration

Other volumes will follow.



Why use everyday language?

We want everyone to understand what Social Democracy is all about.

This is why the *Concise and Clear* series has been written in language that is easy to understand.

For this reason, the original German text has been written using only the masculine form of a word. In doing so, we don't want to hurt or belittle anyone. We've done it because it makes the text easier to read.

Whenever we mention 'citizens' or 'workers',
we always mean both, women and men!



TIMELINE: WHAT HAPPENED WHEN?

1815: The beginning of industrialisation. Society is changing. The working class emerges.

1848: Revolution and Citizens' Parliament in St Paul's Church

1871: The German Reich is founded.

1878: Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Laws come into force and apply until 1890.

1883-1889: Social laws are adopted (social insurances).

July 1914: The World War I begins.

Nov. 1918: The Armistice of Compiègne ends the World War I.

Feb. 1848: Marx and Engels publish the Communist Manifesto.

May 1863: The ADAV is founded in Leipzig. The SPD is born.

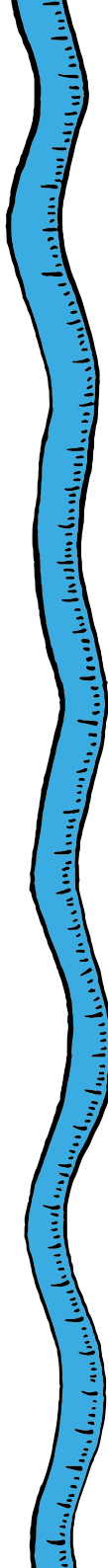
August 1869: August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht found the SDAP in Eisenach.

May 1875: ADAV and SDAP unite to form the SAPD (from 1890: SPD).

Oct. 1891: Erfurt Programme is ratified.

April 1917: The SPD splits into the MSPD and USPD.

Nov. 1918: Philipp Scheidemann proclaims the Republic.



Jan. 1919: National Constituent Assembly elections. Women can vote for the first time.

Feb. 1919: Friedrich Ebert is elected President of the German Reich.

July 1919: The Weimar Constitution comes into force.

March 1920: The 'Kapp Putsch' coup fails due to a general strike.

March 1933: Power is transferred to Hitler; Otto Wels speaks out against this during a speech to the Reichstag.

1 Sept. 1939: World War II begins with the German invasion of Poland.

20 July 1944:
The assassination attempt on Hitler fails.

Jan. 1919: The KPD is founded.

Jan. 1919: Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht are murdered by right-wing forces.

Sept. 1921: The Görlitz Programme is adopted.

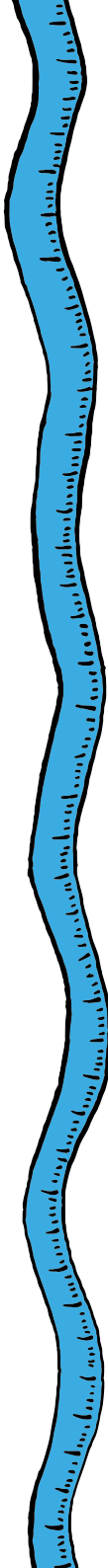
Sept. 1922: The USPD disbands. Members turn to the KPD and MSPD (now known as the SPD again).

Sept. 1925: The Heidelberg Programme is adopted.

2 May 1933: Trade unions are dismantled.

22 June 1933: SPD is banned.

Jan. 1934: The Sopade publishes its Prague manifesto.



8 May 1945: World War II ends.

June 1945: Occupation zones are established.

23 May 1949: The German Constitution is adopted.
The Federal Republic of Germany is founded.

14 Aug. 1949: First German Bundestag parliamentary elections.

7 Oct. 1949: The GDR is founded.

25 March 1957: The EEC, forerunner of the EU, is founded.

1973: First oil crisis.

1977: 'German Autumn', terrorist attack by the Red Army Faction (RAF).

6 May 1945: The Schumacher Office begins its work.

April 1946: Forced unification of KPD and SPD to form the SED in the Soviet zone.

12 Oct. 1949: The German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) is founded.


Nov. 1959: Godesberg Programme is ratified.

Dec. 1966: Grand coalition, SPD participates in government.

March 1969: Gustav Heinemann becomes the first Social Democratic Federal President.

Oct. 1969: Willy Brandt becomes Chancellor of Germany.

May 1974: Helmut Schmidt becomes Chancellor of Germany.



Oct. 1982: Vote of no confidence, Helmut Kohl becomes Chancellor of Germany.

9 Nov. 1989: After peaceful protests in the GDR, the Berlin Wall falls.

3 Oct. 1990: The GDR joins the Federal Republic of Germany.

1 Jan. 2002: The Euro is adopted as a common currency.

Sept. 2005: Grand coalition, with Angela Merkel as Chancellor of Germany.

From 2008 onwards: Global banking crisis and economic crisis.

Sept. 2013: Second grand coalition with Angela Merkel.

Sept. 2017 - March 2018: Long negotiations after the election, grand coalition again.

Sept. 1988: Gender quota is adopted by the SPD.

Dec. 1989: The Berlin Programme is ratified.

Feb. 1990: The Leipzig Programme is ratified by the SPD in the GDR.

Sept. 1998: Gerhard Schröder becomes Chancellor of Germany.

From 2003 onwards: Agenda 2010 is implemented.

Oct. 2007: The Hamburg Programme is ratified.

April 2018: Andrea Nahles becomes the first female Chair of the SPD.

Nov. 2019: Esken and Walter-Borjans are jointly elected as party Chairs.

BEGINNING AND STRUCTURE

From industrialisation to 1918

How did workers live at the time when the Social Democracy movement began? How was society structured?

What made the workers unite?

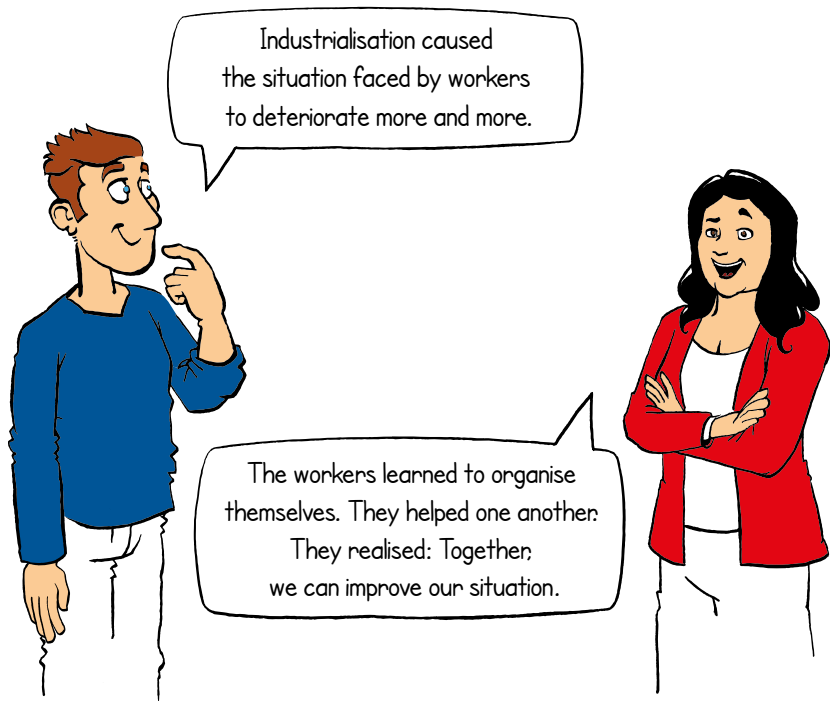
Who put the ideas into words and formulated values and goals?

Everything will be explained in this chapter.

We'll also learn how the labour movement became a mass movement.

And we will learn which organisations form part of the Social

Democracy movement together with the Social Democratic Party.



THE SITUATION OF WORKERS

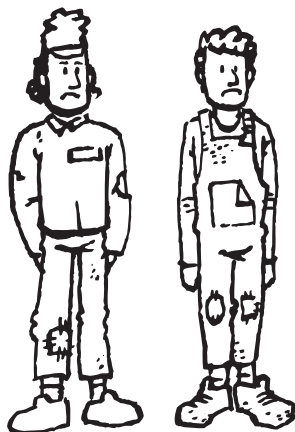
The beginning of industrialisation in the 19th century was accompanied by major social changes. The rapidly growing industry needed workers.

Many people moved from rural areas into cities. These were mainly craftsmen and agricultural workers who didn't have their own farm. Workers' **living conditions** were poor in the cities. Wages were low, and so children often had to work as well. Housing was dark, cramped and dirty. Generally speaking, a working day was 14 hours long.

Workers didn't have **any social security**. This meant that if someone became unwell, they didn't get any wages. If someone was unwell for a longer period of time, they lost their job. There was no protection against times of unemployment or old age.

Workers also had **no opportunity for co-determination** and were therefore unable to improve their situation. Instead, many things were banned. People were not allowed to form political groups.

There was no freedom of expression. This meant that anyone who openly spoke out against the government could be arrested. Newspapers were censored. Critical newspaper texts were not allowed to be published.



SOCIAL DEMOCRACY'S FORWARD THINKERS


Significant changes came about during the industrialisation period. And they kept accelerating. More and more working-class families lived in **poverty and misery**. And workers formed an ever larger proportion of the population.

At this time, workers **didn't have any political rights**. They didn't have the right to vote, for example. They therefore couldn't advocate for improving their living conditions.

Nevertheless, there were people who did not want to accept this development. They believed there had to be different ways to pursue industrialisation. Ways where workers were not without rights and they could live well from their work.

These '**forward thinkers**' were already demanding many things that Social Democracy also formulated as part of its aims.

Working conditions weren't the sole focus. It was also about establishing a different, fairer society.



Not everyone thought it was right that the workers themselves got the least profit from their work.

Karl Marx was one of the most important sources of ideas.

Karl Marx (1818–1883) studied history and philosophy. He also worked for a newspaper at the same time. He wrote about the misery faced by workers in his texts. His publications were banned. Karl Marx therefore went abroad. This is where he met Friedrich Engels. Together with him, Karl Marx published *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848. In the document, they describe an equal society in which everything belongs to everyone.

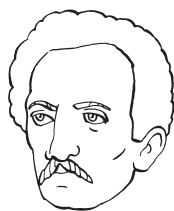


KARL MARX

Karl Marx's ideas didn't initially spread very quickly in Germany. Workers had very few opportunities to gather and talk about these ideas. Nevertheless, the *The Communist Manifesto* significantly influenced how the labour movement developed.

For example, **Ferdinand Lassalle** exchanged many letters with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. He shared the ideas in his publications.

Ferdinand Lassalle (1825–1864) learned about socialist ideas while studying. He advocated for workers in his speeches and writings. Ferdinand Lassalle wrote many books on the labour movement and on political questions. In 1863, he became the first president of the General German Workers' Association (Allgemeinen Deutschen Arbeitervereins, ADAV).



FERDINAND LASSALLE

1848: REVOLUTION!

In 1848, there was also a great rumbling in other circles of society: libertarian and democratically minded citizens wanted to fight for a **nation state** with an **elected government**. At the time, Germany consisted of many small states ruled by kings or princes. A **revolution** took place.

The key demands:

- Creation of a united German state
- A constitution drawn up by the people
- Equality in the eyes of the law
- Freedom of the press
- Freedom of assembly



As a result, an assembly was called at **St Paul's Church in Frankfurt**. This National Assembly was to draw up a **constitution** for a united German nation state.

Very different political forces were represented in the National Assembly. It was therefore not possible to agree on many shared points of view. The assembly continued, yet produced few results. In the end, the old ruling forces regained power.

The revolution failed. Many revolutionaries were arrested. Others fled the country. The rights demanded by citizens were still a long time coming.

THE FIRST WORKERS' PARTY

In the assembly at St Paul's Church, workers were represented by only a few delegates. As such, the workers' wishes for better working conditions and living conditions received little attention.

When the revolution failed, the **labour movement** took up its legacy. It was now the workers who stood up for democracy.

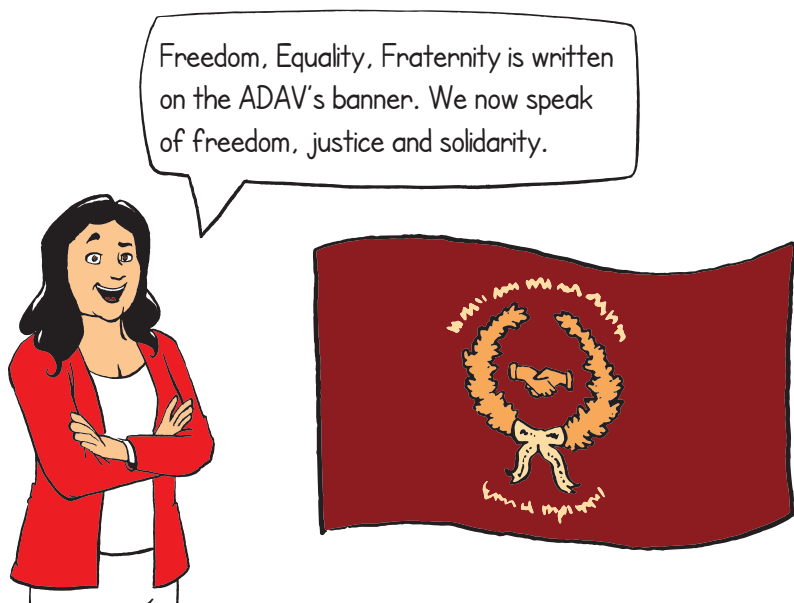
In the following period, the first workers' unions were formed. The guiding principle was **solidarity**, i.e. helping each other and standing up for each other. Such solidarity communities had existed before. Now they were joined by the workers' educational clubs, which pursued common political goals.

On 23 May 1863, representatives from several workers' educational clubs founded the **General German Workers' Association (ADAV)**. Ferdinand Lassalle was elected President.



The ADAV was the first overarching political association for the labour movement and thus the **first Social Democratic party in Germany**.

The **Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD)** can trace its roots directly back to the ADAV. As a result, the founding date of the ADAV can also be seen as the founding date of the SPD. The ADAV's flag is still the SPD's traditional flag. It is stored in the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's Archive of Social Democracy.



Second Party of the Labour Movement: The SDAP

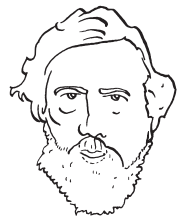
The **Social Democratic Workers' Party (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei, SDAP)** was founded in 1869. The party was founded and jointly run by **August Bebel** and **Wilhelm Liebknecht**. Liebknecht and Bebel are also among the great pioneers of Social Democracy.

August Bebel was born in 1840. His family was poor, he couldn't go to secondary school. Bebel became a craftsman and learned about the principles of Social Democracy through journeymen's associations. Through his wife, he became a proponent of equal rights. As a delegate in the Reichstag, he was a political opponent of Bismarck. Bebel was arrested several times because of his views and spent many months in prison. August Bebel died in 1913, a year before the World War I. Despite being an opponent of war, Bebel had predicted it.



AUGUST BEBEL

Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826–1900) took part in the revolution of 1848 and then fled abroad. He met Friedrich Engels and was inspired by the socialist idea. In 1869, he founded the SDAP with August Bebel. Liebknecht was very committed to Social Democracy cooperating on an international scale.



WILHELM LIEBKNECHT

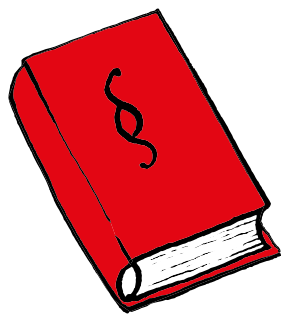
The SDAP and the ADAV did not agree on everything. But the fundamental values and key aims were the same. Both parties advocated for universal, equal, secret and free **suffrage**. They demanded legally regulated **working hours**, fairer **taxes** and **compulsory education**.

FOUNDING OF THE GERMAN REICH AND THE ANTI-SOCIALIST LAWS

In 1871, the small German states united to form the German Reich. Prussian Prime Minister **Otto von Bismarck** was appointed Chancellor of the Reich. **Kaiser Wilhelm I** was appointed as the Prussian King. The **Reichstag** became the parliament for all of Germany.

In 1875, the two parties ADAV and SDAP united to form the **Socialist Workers' Party of Germany (Sozialistischen Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands, SAPD)**. The ADAV and SDAP wrote the **Gotha Programme** as joint principle guidelines. When writing these guidelines, the parties overcame differences and clarified common positions.

Bismarck feared the growing influence of Social Democracy. He therefore eventually passed the '**Anti-Socialist Laws**' in 1878. The laws banned Social Democratic parties and organisations. Social Democrats were not allowed to assemble or publish texts. Many Social Democrats were arrested or fled the country. The Anti-Socialist Laws were in force until 1890.



The Anti-Socialist Laws turned many workers against the state. To regain workers' confidence, Bismarck created the first statutory social security policies: **health insurance** in 1883, **accident insurance** in 1884 and a **pension scheme** in 1889.

THE RISE OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

Bismarck's suppression could not stop the Social Democracy movement. Social Democrats could still be elected to the Reichstag. The Reichstag elections were personality-based elections. This meant that people didn't vote for parties but for individuals. The Social Democrats actually received more votes overall than before they were banned.

In 1890, the SAPD changed its name. Since then, they've been known as the **Social Democratic Party of Germany, SPD**.



One year later, in 1891, the SPD adopted the **Erfurt Programme**: key demands included a fairer electoral process, equal rights for women, compulsory education with free tuition and eight-hour working days.

The labour movement grew into a mass movement. **Trade unions** and the organisers of the **workers' cultural movement** worked hand in hand with the **party**. The workers developed a strong sense of belonging.



WORLD WAR I

At the turn of the new century, the danger of war grew. Social Democracy was an **international movement**. At the Socialist International meetings in 1907 and 1912, Social Democrats spoke out against war. If war broke out, they wanted to work to achieve peace quickly. They even called to prepare international strikes against the war.

But **nationalism** was on the rise in society. The internationally oriented Social Democrats were attacked as 'unpatriotic fellows'. The emperor spoke of a **Burgfrieden** (truce), in which all parties were to act together for the homeland. The Social Democrats gave in. They hoped that they could then achieve more of their other goals in return.

As a result, the SPD also finally moved onto a war footing. The party agreed to the loans that paid for the World War I. But there was already a group within the SPD that did not think the policy of a Burgfrieden was right at the beginning of the war. This group grew larger throughout the war.

This eventually led to the **SPD splitting** into the MSPD (Majority SPD) and the USPD (Independent SPD) in 1917. Opponents of the war gathered in the USPD.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS TIME?

The increasing hardship faced by workers during the period of industrialisation led to the emergence of the labour movement.

The Social Democracy's forward thinkers put the movement's ideas into words. The key text was The Communist Manifesto published by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in 1848.

During the 1848 revolution, workers' interests were insufficiently represented. Subsequently, the workers began to organise themselves. In 1863, the first Social Democratic party was founded, the General German Workers' Association (ADAV). It was the direct precursor of the SPD.

Prohibition and persecution under Otto von Bismarck could not deter Social Democracy. On the contrary, the party and the labour movement emerged even stronger from this period. The external persecution strengthened the feeling of togetherness.

The issue of making the right political decisions during the World War I resulted in the SPD splitting.



WOMEN IN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

Very early on, the Social Democracy movement was also a movement championing women's rights. There are two reasons for this:

- Social Democracy stands for fundamental values and fundamental rights that expressly apply to all people.
- In the working classes, it went without saying that women were involved

in working life. They had the same responsibilities towards their family and livelihood as the men. This wasn't the case among the middle classes. Instead, women often lived in a sheltered setting. As part of the labour movement, women fought early on for universal rights and for equality. The middle class women's movement also fought for equal rights and for women's right to vote. They learned about the ideas of Social Democracy through the women involved in the labour movement.

Social Democracy has achieved a great deal **for women**. Women's right to vote, professional equality and, last but not least, the inclusion of equal rights in the constitution are some of the successes of Social Democracy. Many of Social Democracy's goals were also only achieved thanks to the participation **of women**.

To represent many of these women, we will introduce you to some key female Social Democrats below. You will get to know others elsewhere in the book.

Clara Zetkin (1857–1933) learned about the ideas of the women's movement during her teacher training. She joined the Socialist

Workers' Party in 1878. In 1892, Clara Zetkin founded and edited the socialist women's magazine 'Die Gleichheit' (Equality). She was the founder and leader of the International Socialist Women's Conference. She joined the USPD in 1917 since she didn't support the Burgfrieden truce policy (see page 34). In 1919, Clara Zetkin switched to the KPD, for which she entered the Reichstag.

Marie Juchacz (1879–1956) joined the SPD in 1908. Among other things, she campaigned for women's suffrage. On 19 February 1919, she was the first woman to give a speech in the Reichstag. On women's right to vote, she said: *"What this government did was a matter of course; it gave women what they had been unjustly deprived of until then."*

Marie Juchacz was a member of the SPD party executive for many years. She co-founded the Workers' Welfare Association (AWO). She was a delegate in the Reichstag until 1933, when she had to flee from the National Socialists. She returned to Germany in 1949.

Louise Schroeder (1887–1957) grew up in poverty. She continued her education by completing evening courses alongside her work. She joined the SPD in 1910. Louise Schroeder was one of the few women in the Weimar National Assembly (see page 45). As a delegate in the Weimar Reichstag, she campaigned for equal rights. After the transfer of power in 1933, she lost all her offices. Following World War II, she helped reconstruct the SPD. She was Lord Mayor of Berlin in 1947/48. She was a delegate in the Bundestag from 1949 to 1957.

Annemarie Renger (1919–2008) joined the SPD in 1945 and worked at the Schumacher Office (see page 68). She later headed the party executive's office in Bonn. Annemarie Renger was a member of the Bundestag from 1953 to 1990. From 1972 to 1976, she was President of the Bundestag.

THE SPD DURING THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

1918 to 1933

After four years of war and suffering defeat, the people of Germany were not only weary of war. Workers also no longer wanted to know anything about their emperor or his government. Thus, an uprising in 1918 caused the German Reich to fall.

But how do you reshape an entire state? Can you start from scratch? Or is it right to come to an agreement with the old rulers?

In this chapter, we will focus on the tricky path taken towards establishing the Republic. We will learn that not all political forces were convinced by a Republic, and also that the young republic was threatened by both left-wing and right-wing forces. We will discover that the Majority SPD campaigned vigorously for a Parliamentary Republic.

At the end of Chapter 2, we will examine why the Weimar Republic failed.

STOP THE WAR!

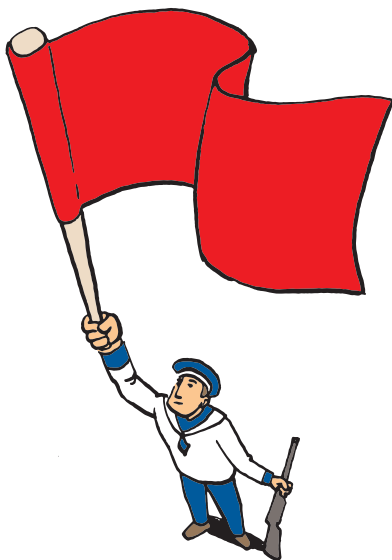
In autumn 1918, it had long been clear that the war was lost for the German Empire. Ordinary workers and even the soldiers were doing badly economically. Industry, on the other hand, made great profits from the war.

In **Russia**, a revolution **overthrew the Tsar** in 1917.

Russia then immediately conducted successful peace negotiations. The developments in Russia also strengthened the workers in Germany in their resolve to change the conditions they faced.

On 3 November 1918, sailors in the German navy refused an order. They refused to enter into another hopeless fight against Britain. Workers in Kiel supported the sailors by going on **strike**. There had been plans for a strike for some time. The workers wanted to force the German government to negotiate peace quickly.

Starting in Kiel, the **uprising** spread throughout the country. In a short time, **councils of workers and soldiers** formed in all the larger cities, calling for the end of the Empire.

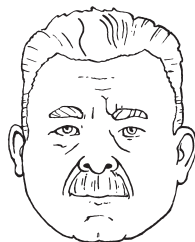


THE REPUBLIC IS DECLARED

Reich Chancellor Max von Baden announced the **abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II** on 9 November 1918. Max von Baden had only taken office as Chancellor of the Reich in October. By this time, it was already clear the war would end in defeat. After the November Uprising, Max von Baden transferred his office as Chancellor of the Reich to **Friedrich Ebert** of the MSPD.

On the same day, Philipp Scheidemann (MSPD) proclaimed the **Republic**. Shortly afterwards, Karl Liebknecht of the USPD also proclaimed a Republic. This was the first clear sign of the tensions building within the Social Democracy camp at that time.

Friedrich Ebert (1871–1925) grew up in humble conditions. He became active in politics and with trade unions from an early age. He became a member of the SPD in 1889. He was Chair of the SPD from 1913 to 1925. In 1919, Friedrich Ebert became the first democratically elected President of the German Reich. He advocated political and social balance between workers and the middle classes.



FRIEDRICH EBERT

The **Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung** was based on a suggestion made by Ebert himself. The Foundation continues to campaign against the educational disadvantages faced by working class young people today. It promotes international cooperation and political education. The Foundation also maintains the Archive of Social Democracy.



The **Council of the People's Deputies** formed the new government. Representatives of the MSPD and USPD sat on this council. The council was led by Friedrich Ebert (MSPD) and Hugo Haase (USPD).

The Council of the People's Deputies not only had the political task of forming a Republic from the Empire that came before it. They initially **had to overcome the consequences of war.**

On 11 November 1918, the Armistice treaty was signed. Only a few hours later, the opponents stopped fighting. Bells rang out across Europe to mark the start of peace.

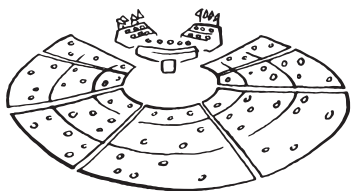


Afterwards, there was the big challenge of bringing the soldiers back home. The population needed food and fuel. The economy had to be restructured again; the production of weapons and war equipment ceased. Instead, goods for daily use were produced again.

To accomplish these tasks, the new government had to work with people in the administration, with industrialists and with the army's commanders. These posts were still occupied by the Emperor's supporters. The new government had no choice but to work together with supporters of the old order.

Friedrich Ebert strove to achieve a **balance** between the different camps. He was convinced that political reforms could best be initiated in a working order. Ebert therefore concluded various agreements on cooperation, such as with military leaders.

In December 1918, a large council – the **Reichs-Rätekongress** – met in Berlin. Each individual workers' council elected their delegates to this congress. This council was to decide what future form the state would take.



The majority of the delegates in the Reichs-Rätekongress voted for a **Parliamentary Republic**. However, the **USPD** and the **Spartacus League** voted against it. The Spartacus League was a radical group within the USPD led by **Karl Liebknecht** and **Rosa**

Luxemburg. The Spartacus League called for a **Councillors' Republic** modelled on the one established in Russia.

Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht (both born in 1871) were members of the SPD, and subsequently the USPD following the split. Within the USPD, they belonged to the Spartacus League, which was modelled



KARL LIEBKNECHT



ROSA LUXEMBURG

on the Russian revolution. After the decision was made in favour of a Parliamentary Republic, Liebknecht and Luxemburg founded the Communist Party of Germany (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, KPD). With an uprising in January 1919, they wanted to enforce the Councillors' Republic. On 15 January 1919, both were murdered in Berlin by radical right-wing military members.

The Reichs-Rätekongress set a date for the **National Assembly** elections. The National Assembly was to draw up a constitution for the new Parliamentary Republic.

For the more radical left-wing forces such as the Spartacus League, none of this went far enough. Disagreements arose in the USPD. On 30 December 1918, the radical leftists around Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht founded the **Communist Party of Germany, or KPD**.

On page 44, you can see an overview of when the parties were founded and their associations.

The USPD subsequently split up and some of its members switched to the KPD. Others rejoined the MSPD, which then renamed itself as the **SPD**.

Open fighting broke out in January 1919. The SPD-led government had the radical left-wing **uprising** quashed by the military. It feared that the uprising would jeopardise the democratic reforms already achieved and the path to parliamentary democracy.



Right-wing military members took control of the leaders of the KPD – Liebknecht and Luxemburg – and murdered them on 15 January. In the spring of 1919 there were still isolated uprisings. Eventually, the workers' and soldiers' councils in the cities dissolved. The uprising's violent suppression laid the foundation for bitter hostility between the KPD and the SPD. The labour movement was deeply divided.

How parties developed between 1863 and 1922

1863: The General German Workers' Association (ADAV) was founded.

1869: The Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP) was founded.

1875: The ADAV and SDAP united to form the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany (SAPD).

1878-1890: The Anti-Socialist Laws banned parties and trade unions that advocate for socialism.

1890: The SAPD renamed itself as the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD).

1917: Decision on war loans. The SPD split up:

Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD)

Majority Social Democratic Party (MSPD)

1918: Spartacus League

1918/19: Communist Party of Germany (KPD)

1922: Reunification of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD)

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Elections to the **National Assembly** were held on 19 January 1919. In these elections, one of the demands championed by the labour movement became reality: for the first time, women were also allowed to vote!

The National Assembly was to draft the **constitution for the Republic**. The Assembly met in **Weimar**. This also gave the first German Republic its name. On 11 February, delegates elected **Friedrich Ebert** as the first **President of the Reich** of the Weimar Republic. Two days later, the first popularly elected government was formed.

On 31 July 1919, National Assembly delegates voted by a large majority in favour of the newly drafted **constitution**. It was the **first democratic constitution** on German soil.

A few points from the Weimar Constitution:

Equality in the eyes of the law, equal rights and duties for men and women

Freedom of expression

Inviolability of the home

Freedom of assembly

Right to work

Electoral secrecy and freedom of choice

Protection of marriage

Tax liability based on ability to pay

Independence of the courts

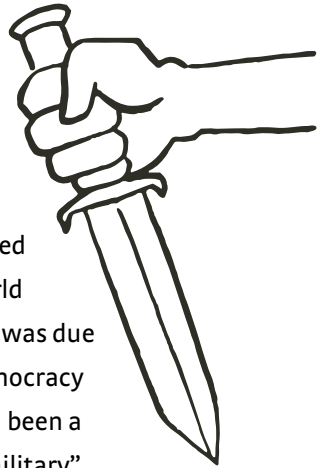
Anchoring social security

THE REPUBLIC AT RISK

The stab-in-the-back myth

Before voting on the constitution, the National Assembly had to decide on the Treaty of Versailles. In this peace treaty, Germany conceded defeat. The victorious powers set out the conditions for peace. Germany was obliged to pay high levels of compensation. The country also lost all its colonies.

The National Assembly had no choice but to accept the treaty. However, large parts of the population saw the treaty as a disgrace. National forces fuelled this view. They spread the 'stab-in-the-back myth', which suggested the military was undefeated in the World War I. It was claimed Germany's defeat was due to a lack of support at home. Social Democracy and the November Uprising of 1918 had been a "stab in the back of the unconquered military". This lie contributed to the fact that middle-class forces were rather hostile towards the Republic.



The Kapp Putsch coup

In March 1920, members of the military tried to overthrow the democratic government and block the way to forming the Republic. Social Democracy stood up against this threat. Trade unions, the SPD and KPD organised a general strike. The attempted coup failed after five days.

The labour movement is divided

Despite working together to counteract the Kapp Putsch coup, there was discord within the labour movement. The KPD would rather form a Councillors' Republic modelled on the one established in Russia. They didn't believe the SPD's route to a Parliamentary Republic went far enough. Moreover, the KPD was disappointed that the SPD cooperated with the old rulers. The KPD tended to work against the SPD in the years that followed. The division of the labour movement into a Social-Democratic camp and a communist camp weakened support for the Republic.

Elections to the first Reichstag on 6 June 1920

It was under these circumstances that the SPD-led government organised the first Reichstag elections in the Weimar Republic. They were held on 6 June 1920. In this election and subsequent elections, the SPD was the strongest party in each case.



Uneasy times

The first few years of the Weimar Republic were not easy. Time and again, there were riots organised by radical right-wing or left-wing forces. Due to the terms of the peace treaty, the German Reich had to make large payments to the victorious powers. This meant that money was constantly losing value.

Inflation reached dizzying heights in 1923. Money was practically worthless. Adolf Hitler used this situation to launch an attempted coup. He failed and was imprisoned for nine months.

Stable phase

From the mid-1920s, political and economic conditions entered a calmer phase. New agreements mitigated the consequences of the war for Germany.

A currency reform stopped inflation.

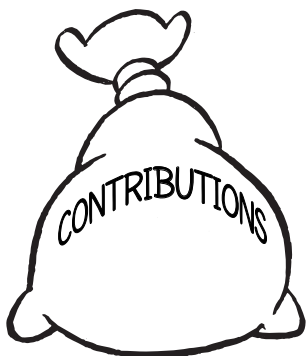
On 28 February 1925, President of the Reich Friedrich Ebert died at the age of only 54. He was succeeded by the 77-year-old Paul von Hindenburg. Hindenburg was a supporter of the Empire. The hope that having Hindenburg as President could reconcile the Kaiser's supporters with the Republic failed.

During these years, the SPD alternated between being in government and being the opposition. The governing parties did not always have their own voting majority to make decisions and pass laws. Even when in opposition, the SPD also voted for government proposals that would help to strengthen the Parliamentary Republic. It was the party that constantly stood up for the Republic and for democracy.

THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC FALLS

The **global economic crisis** of 1929 marked the beginning of a difficult period of parliamentary democracy. Within a short period of time, the number of unemployed people in Germany rose to six million.

The **grand coalition** with the SPD **failed** in 1930 over the question of how unemployment insurance would cope with mass unemployment. The middle-class parties were in favour of lowering benefits for the unemployed. The SPD wanted to increase employers' contributions to ensure social security for the unemployed.



The population faced economic insecurity and hardship. People began to become radicalised. Some factions within the labour movement switched from the SPD to the KPD. Many previously middle-class-minded people oriented themselves further to the right. The NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party) led by Adolf Hitler gained popularity.

Radicalisation was felt in all areas of life. Right-wing and left-wing groups fought fierce street battles. The Republic came under pressure from both sides.

This radicalisation was also reflected in the results of the September 1930 elections. Moderate parties lost votes. The KPD and the NSDAP in particular saw gains.

As President of the Reich, Hindenburg exercised his power to issue emergency decrees. He could therefore appoint governments on his own authority without involving parliament. Several **presidential minority governments** followed. These were governments that were not elected by a majority in parliament. President of the Reich Hindenburg appointed them directly.

The SPD tried to save the Republic. As such, the SPD's delegates put up with these minority governments. They saw this as the lesser evil. In this way, the SPD's delegates hoped to prevent Adolf Hitler from being appointed.

However, they had not reckoned with the fact that conservative powers had long had their own plan. Adolf Hitler had enticed conservative politicians as well as many industrialists to his side. They wanted to abolish the Republic again by appointing Adolf Hitler. Some still dreamed of returning to the Empire. Others accepted that they had to enable a 'Führer state' under Hitler to achieve their political goals. They believed they could exert enough influence over Hitler to make him rule in their interests.

On 30 January 1933, President of the Reich von Hindenburg appointed Adolf Hitler as Chancellor.

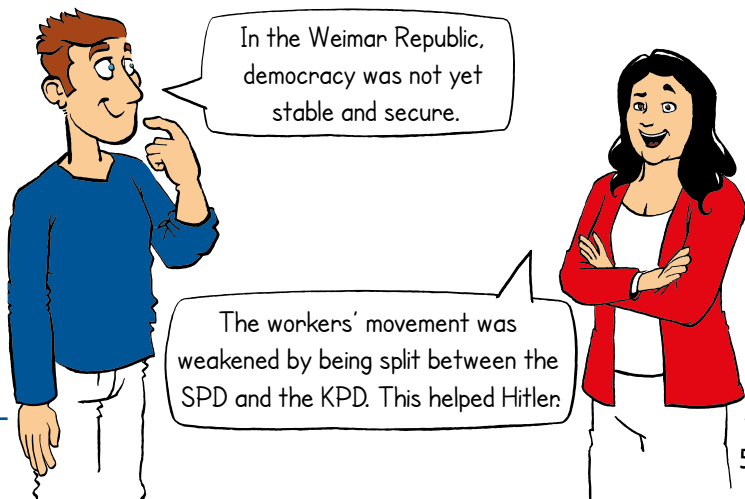
WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS TIME?

The Weimar Republic was a very vulnerable form of government. Parliament could be bypassed through emergency decrees.

Large swathes of the population and politicians had no experience of democracy. They were also not yet convinced of the Republic. There was often a lack of political education. As such, deliberate lies such as the stab-in-the-back myth were able to influence large parts of the population and unite them against the Republic.

The SPD was the party that fought with all its might for democracy and for the Republic. The party put its trust in the elected parliament. On occasion, the SPD also made decisions against its own convictions. The party did that to try and save the Republic.

The labour movement was weakened when it split into a Social Democratic and a communist camp. Since the KPD and the SPD were unable to find a way to work together, they had a hard time opposing Hitler and the NSDAP.



DICTATORSHIP AND WORLD WAR II

1933 to 1945

Shortly after Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of the Reich, the **National Socialist dictatorship** began. The National Socialists (aka: Nazis) reshaped society into a 'people's community'. Parties and trade unions were banned or dissolved. Those who thought differently politically were persecuted and arrested, or were forced to flee abroad. This period led to the catastrophic World War II and Holocaust. The National Socialists marginalised the Jews and declared them enemies of the German people. This disenfranchisement and persecution ended in an unprecedented crime – the planned genocide of six million European Jews in extermination camps.

What happened to the Social Democrats during this period? How did they continue to work while in exile? How did they organise the resistance in Germany? And where did those who were persecuted find protection?

We'll look back at a dark chapter in German history. We will see what paths Social Democracy and the labour movement took after the SPD and trade unions were banned.

FROM THE REPUBLIC TO A DICTATORSHIP

Adolf Hitler's **appointment** as Chancellor of the Reich was prepared by the conservative parties. His opponents were divided. To the KPD, not only was Hitler an enemy, but so too was the SPD. The KPD alone called for a general strike. Since so many people were unemployed, the SPD and trade unions didn't believe in the strike. And they feared civil war would break out and that Hitler and the NSDAP would win.

Just one day after being appointed Chancellor of the Reich, Adolf Hitler moved to dissolve the Reichstag and trigger new elections.

During the election campaign, the government massively restricted freedom of assembly and freedom of the press. The National Socialist SA task force disrupted election rallies held by left-wing parties. There were fierce street battles. Numerous Social Democrats and communists were arrested.

The Reichstag burned on the night of 27 February 1933. A lone perpetrator later confessed to carrying out the arson attack. However, Hitler blamed the fire on the communists. President of the Reich Paul von Hindenburg suspended all fundamental rights. The



'Ordinance for the Protection of the People and the State', also known as the **Reichstag Fire Ordinance**, served as the basis.

As a result, there were countless arrests for political reasons and violent attacks.

On election day itself, the SA also prevented left-wing party supporters from exercising their right to vote. For example, the SA stood at the entrances to polling stations. The NSDAP became the strongest party by far. Any votes cast for the KPD were declared invalid following the election.



On 23 March 1933, Adolf Hitler submitted the '**Enabling Act**' to a vote. This allowed the government to pass laws without parliamentary approval. The new laws could also deviate from the constitution. By approving the Enabling Act, the Reichstag practically took away its own power.

On the day of the vote, some SPD delegates and all KPD delegates could not attend the session. They had been arrested or were in hospital after being attacked by the SA. The SA and SS stood in front of the entrance to the meeting hall and intimidated the delegates. Given this pressure, almost all parties represented in the Reichstag voted in favour of the law. Only the SPD delegates all voted against the Enabling Act. Party leader **Otto Wels** made a courageous speech speaking out against the law.

The Enabling Act marked the end of the Weimar Republic and the start of the National Socialist Dictatorship.

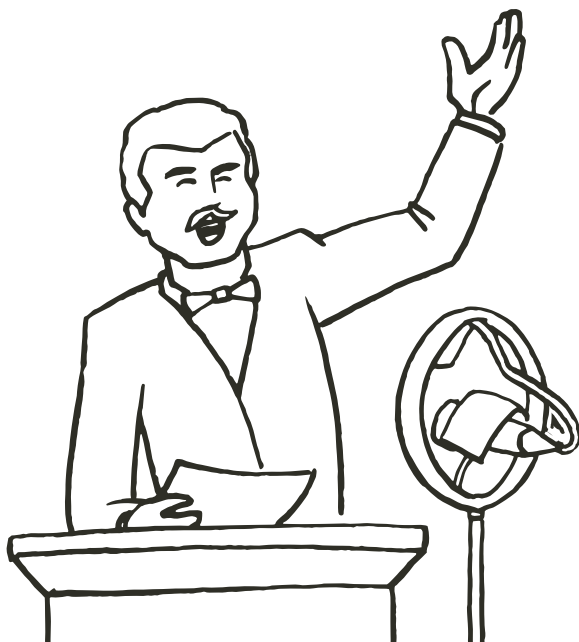
**Excerpt from Otto Wels' speech ahead the vote on the
Enabling Act on 23 March 1933:**

“Freedom and life can be taken from us, but not our honour. [...]

In this historic hour, we German Social Democrats solemnly pledge ourselves to the principles of humanity and justice, of freedom and socialism. No Enabling Act gives you the power to destroy ideas that are eternal and indestructible. [...] The Socialist Law has not destroyed Social Democracy. German Social Democracy will draw new strength also from the latest persecutions.

We greet the persecuted and the oppressed. We greet our friends in the Reich. Your steadfastness and loyalty deserve admiration.

The courage of your convictions and your unbroken optimism guarantee a brighter future.”



PROHIBITION, EXILE AND RESISTANCE

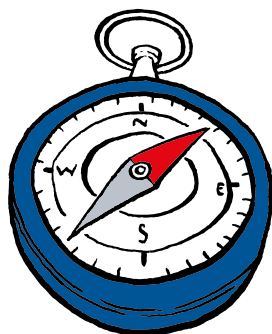
At first, Social Democrats and trade unionists still hoped that they would be able to continue working. The SPD believed that it would be able to put an end to the 'brown nightmare' at the next elections. Trade union leaders hoped to continue their tasks as an organisation of workers. But the National Socialists crushed all other political associations and parties in quick succession. Only after the end of World War II were there free elections in Germany again.

As early as 2 May 1933, the SA and SS occupied trade union offices. Many trade unionists were subsequently arrested, tortured and murdered.

The SPD also faced a ban. In May, the National Socialists confiscated the party's money. Shortly afterwards, on 22 June 1933, **the SPD was banned.**

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung banned

Like many other Social Democratic organisations and institutions, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung was banned in 1933. When the Nazi dictatorship was over, the Socialist German Student League (Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund, SDS) called for the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung to be founded again. In 1947, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung e. V. was re-established. It is now headquartered in Bonn and Berlin.



It ultimately became clear that it was impossible to resist in Germany through **political work**. Those who did not want to conform to the National Socialists had to go into exile or into the political underground.

The leadership of the SPD was preparing to go into exile and run their party from there. However, many Social Democrats stayed in Germany and went underground. Resisters lived in constant fear of being discovered, arrested or even murdered.

But how did such large swathes of the population come to accept the dictatorship so quickly? How did it become natural so quickly to consider those who think differently as the 'enemy' and hand them over to state power? To answer these questions, we need to look at the changes in society.

Society under National Socialism

Transferring power to the National Socialists and establishing their 'Third Reich' brought about great social changes. From the very beginning, political opponents were persecuted, arrested and deported to the first concentration camps (KZ), which were set up extremely quickly. Critical newspapers were banned. The National Socialists, on the other hand, used every opportunity to advertise themselves.

As a result, people were only being presented with very one-sided information. They no longer had the opportunity to hear or read

other opinions. This also created a loophole meaning people could close their eyes to the abuses of the NSDAP. It was easier not to acknowledge actions against political enemies and later against Jews and other persecuted groups. After all, there were no critical reports about it.

The National Socialists vigorously pursued the goal of creating a **'people's community'**. **Job creation** measures ended the hardships faced by the many unemployed. This generated a lot of support for Hitler.



Through their associations and organisations, the Nazis reached people in all areas of life. Thus membership of the **youth organisations** the Hitler Youth and League of German Girls was almost inevitable. **Party membership** also brought professional advantages. The party even controlled people's leisure time. For example, there was an organisation called **Strength Through Joy** that made it possible for many Germans to go on holiday for the first time.

Many people's living conditions improved in the first years of National Socialist rule. This is why poorer people in particular turned to the National Socialists. It became ever more dangerous to be against the National Socialists. Those who did not adapt quickly suffered greater and greater disadvantages. For example, they lost their jobs and could not find new employment.



Many people were happy to fit into the community promoted by the National Socialists. There was a deep desire to belong to a functioning community. The benefits were also tempting. Those who didn't belong had a hard time.

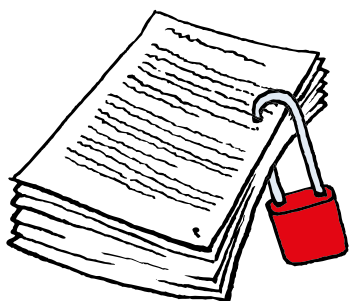
The longer the dictatorship lasted, the more influence the NSDAP had in all areas. And the National Socialists persecuted their opponents all the more ruthlessly. Many people became supporters – either out of fear or because they expected advantages. They did not resist the paternalism. They looked the other way when it came to persecution and violence against others. When the war began, fear of persecution intensified. The Nazis created a system of surveillance using spies.

After the collapse of National Socialist rule and the end of World War II, many Germans claimed not to have known about the violent acts committed by the National Socialists. Or they explained that they had been afraid of persecution. Their fear was absolutely justified. But it was certainly only possible to remain oblivious to Nazi crimes by consciously looking the other way.

How did the Social Democrats organise themselves in exile?

Many of the SPD's leaders were able to flee into exile. From there, they organised party work and resisted against the Nazis. Under the name **Sopade** (Social Democratic Party of Germany in Exile), the exile leadership was first located in Prague in 1933, then Paris, and subsequently in London from 1940.

The Sopade published the **Deutschlandberichte** newspaper from exile. To do so, activists collected information in Germany and smuggled it to the Sopade. The Sopade wrote their reports based on the information provided. These reports were copied, smuggled back into Germany and distributed.



It was one of the few opportunities to learn something about the real situation in Germany. For example, the former SPD Reichstag delegate Gerhart Seger wrote one of the initial reports on Nazi concentration camps. Seger himself had escaped from a concentration camp.

While in exile in Prague, the Sopade also wrote the **Prague Manifesto**. It was then secretly distributed in Germany. The manifesto called for Nazi rule to be overthrown.

The leaders in exile remained in contact with the Social Democrats still in Germany, as well as those who had fled to other countries.

As such, the party established a **network** which would reliably allow the **party to be reconstructed** after World War II. International cooperation with other Social Democratic and socialist groups was also promoted.

What form did the resistance take in Germany?

In Germany, and subsequently in the occupied and conquered territories, resistance to the NSDAP was perilous. Nevertheless, Social Democrats and trade unionists were prepared to take this risk. For example, they helped people who were persecuted to **flee**. Or they hid the persecuted in secret hideouts. The resistance also took a great risk in distributing reports on Germany that were written in exile.

Over the years, these activities became few and far between. More and more resistance groups were discovered and dismantled by the Nazis. Their members were arrested, tortured and murdered. We are introducing you to Paul Löbe and Otto Brenner here as they were representative of many other resistance fighters.

Paul Löbe (1875–1967) was a trained typesetter. He joined the SPD in 1895. From 1903 to 1919, he was editor-in-chief of the Social Democratic Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland) journal *Volkswacht*. Due to articles published there, he was sentenced several times for treason. In 1920, Paul Löbe became the first President of the Reichstag. He was arrested several times during the Nazi dictatorship, and subsequently detained in prisons and concentration camps.



PAUL LÖBE

Otto Brenner (1907–1972) was a company electrician. He became a member of the Socialist Workers' Youth in 1920 and the SPD in 1926. He was a member of the Socialist Workers' Party (SAP) for a few years. Together with his brother Kurt, Otto Brenner led a resistance group in Hanover. He was arrested and sentenced to two years in prison.



OTTO BRENNER

After the war, Otto Brenner helped to rebuild the trade unions. He was Chair of IG Metall from 1956 to 1972.

Many Social Democrats then met in secret in small groups. They arranged to go hiking or for a trip to the bathing lake. This is how they exchanged information and kept in touch with each other.

The **party card** was the SPD's membership card and was an outward sign of the attitude shared by many Social Democrats. Many local party groups hid their members' party cards and kept them safe, but this was also forbidden and very dangerous.



WORLD WAR II

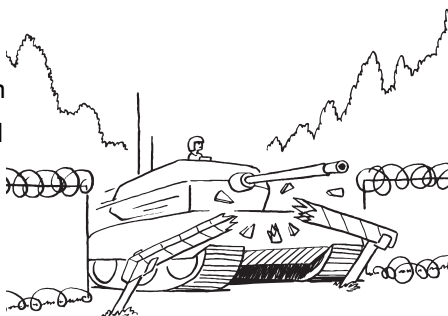
In the early years, Adolf Hitler achieved astonishing successes in **foreign policy**. He skilfully concealed his real goals. At first, it seemed as though Hitler wanted to continue the foreign policy adopted by the Weimar Republic. He therefore lobbied for other terms set out in the Treaty of Versailles to be changed.

But then Hitler's demands became more and more aggressive. Foreign countries reacted cautiously. France and Great Britain wanted to prevent another war by **making concessions** to Hitler. They didn't realise that Hitler had long been preparing for war.

Hitler reintroduced **conscription** in 1935. In 1936, German troops marched into the **Rhineland**. The German military had been banned there following the World War I.

In March 1938, **Austria was annexed** to the German Reich. A few months later, Hitler laid claim to further territories in Eastern Europe. France and Great Britain initially accepted this approach without resistance.

World War II began with the German **invasion of Poland** on 1 September 1939. This marked the start of a catastrophe of unbelievable proportions and with immeasurable suffering.



Impact on exile and resistance

The beginning of World War II changed the conditions for the people in exile once again. The Sopade leaders first fled from Prague to Paris and later to London. It quickly became clear that resistance alone could no longer defeat Nazi rule. It was clear to the Social Democrats in exile that Germany had to be defeated militarily.

For those in the resistance, the situation became increasingly dangerous. However, resistance also arose in middle-class circles as the war progressed. These people had not previously been hostile towards National Socialist rule.

The assassination attempt of 20 July 1944

It became apparent that Hitler was leading Germany and the whole world straight to disaster. A group then came together consisting of middle-class forces and military personnel, but also Social Democrats and trade unionists. This alliance set itself the goal of stopping Hitler and ending the war. They believed the only possibility was to eliminate Hitler.

On 20 July 1944, a bomb exploded as Hitler was holding a briefing. But Hitler survived the assassination attempt. The first assassins were captured and executed the following night.

The assassination failed. Germany had to wait for French, British, US and Soviet forces to declare victory before Hitler's dictatorship and the NSDAP came to an end.

POLITICAL LESSONS

Political resistance could not defeat Adolf Hitler. The political camps of the SPD and KPD were at odds. Persecution and oppression rendered political action almost impossible.

However, the Sopade leaders were already drawing lessons from this time in exile. They published written pieces and programmes to promote reconstruction after the National Socialist era.

Three future considerations were particularly important:

1. Democratic socialism

For the SPD, socialism is inconceivable without democracy. Democracy forms the basis of all the SPD's political goals.

2. Social Democracy as a people's party

The SPD will no longer be a party just for workers. It will be a people's party in future. The wishes and goals of people from other walks of life are also taken into account. The aim is to achieve broader support in society.

3. Trade union confederation

The labour movement was organised across many individual trade unions. That was problematic. The trade unionists couldn't present themselves as a strong, united group against the National Socialists. In future, a single trade union (or trade union confederation) should unite the forces within the labour movement.

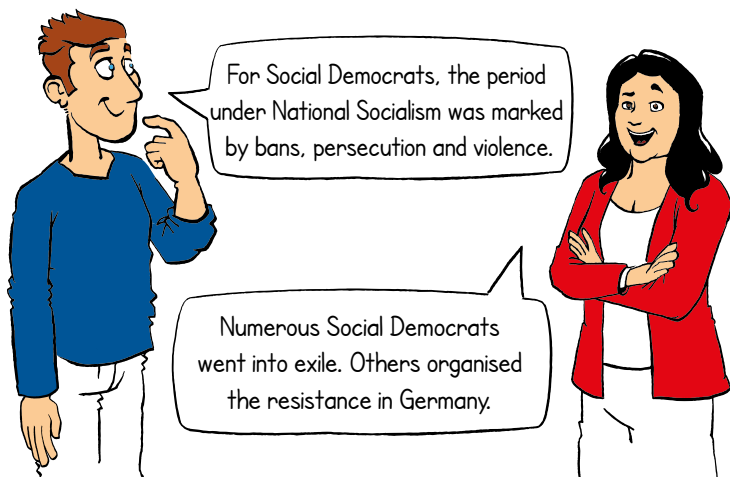
WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS TIME?

The vote on the Enabling Act showed that Social Democrats staunchly opposed National Socialism. Otto Wels's speech against the Enabling Act clearly set out this attitude.

Social Democrats defended the Weimar Republic. They therefore wanted to shape their resistance within the framework of the constitution. This was to prevent the party from being banned. However, it didn't succeed.

Older Social Democrats were initially reminded of the time of Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Laws. Back then, the SPD even emerged stronger once the ban was no longer enforced. Some Social Democrats hoped for a similar outcome. They underestimated the threat of suppression and dismantling.

The resistance could not defeat Nazi rule. This was only achieved through defeat in World War II. But even during the period of exile and resistance, Social Democracy had laid the foundations for a new democratic order.



RECONSTRUCTION AND NEW PATHS

1945 to 1989

The **end of World War II** is often called the 'Zero hour'. Germany was divided into four **occupation zones**, which were administered by the victorious powers. There was no longer a functioning state. After the victorious powers divided the country into four zones, this ultimately led to it being separated into two states.

In this chapter, we will therefore only take a brief look at the Soviet **occupation zone**, later known as the GDR. This is where the **SPD and the KPD were unified as the SED** under duress.

A democratic state was to be established in the three western **occupation zones**. The **Parliamentary Council**, which included many Social Democrats, drafted the **Grundgesetz (Basic Law)**.

Social Democracy was able to find itself again in the West. The SPD opened up, thereby gaining new members. By writing the **Godesberg Programme**, the party adopted new principle guidelines. The trade unions established a strong common organisation with the **German Trade Union Confederation**.

In this chapter, we will follow the Federal Republic of Germany from its founding to the time of the 'economic miracle' and through the social-liberal period of government to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

ZERO HOUR

World War II ended in Europe on 8 May 1945. The German Reich no longer existed. It was divided into four **occupation zones** and was controlled by France, Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union.



A picture of despair prevailed in German cities. Houses had been bombed. There was neither enough food nor clothing nor fuel. Refugees, liberated concentration camp prisoners and forced labourers were looking for a place to live.

But two days before the surrender, **Kurt Schumacher** gave an impassioned speech to Social Democrats in Hanover. Under the heading 'We do not despair', he outlined future Social Democratic politics.

Some key Social Democrats gathered around Schumacher. They established the '**Schumacher Office**' and steered the SPD's reconstruction in the first period after the war.

Kurt Schumacher (1895–1952) studied law and economics. He joined the SPD in 1918. Schumacher was a delegate in the Reichstag from 1930.

During the National Socialist dictatorship, he was arrested and imprisoned. After World War II, he was instrumental in rebuilding the SPD. He was against joining forces with the KPD. On 10 May 1946, he was elected Chair of the SPD in the western occupation zones. Schumacher became Chancellor Adenauer's opponent in the German Bundestag. He opposed the rearmament of Germany and its connection to the West since he didn't want to endanger the possibility of a unified Germany.



KURT SCHUMACHER

With Kurt Schumacher's leadership, the SPD re-established itself even before there was a new state. Despite the difficult times, the SPD quickly gained new members; by the end of 1947, it had 700,000 members already.

Parts of the SPD considered uniting with the KPD. When left-wing forces in the KPD and SPD split, this made it possible for the National Socialists to sweep into power. This kind of thing should be avoided at all costs in the future.

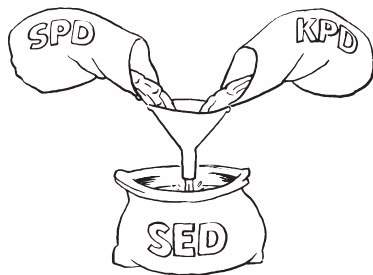
However, in western occupation zones, those who opposed this unification prevailed – including Kurt Schumacher.

LOOKING EASTWARDS

The SPD quickly became the largest party in the Soviet occupation zone as well. However, the occupying power there supported the KPD.

The KPD and the Soviet occupation forces launched a publicity campaign in the Soviet occupation zone calling for the **unification of the KPD and the SPD**. Many Social Democrats also hoped that this would help to resolve the split in the labour movement. But here, too, a number of Social Democrats opposed unification with the KPD. The KPD and the occupying power both exerted more and more pressure. Some who opposed the unification were taken into custody. Of all people, those who fought against National Socialism were now once again being persecuted and threatened.

A party congress was held on 21 and 22 April 1946. At this party congress, the KPD and the SPD in the Soviet occupation zone united to form the **SED**, the **Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistischen Einheits-Partei Deutschlands)**.



Communists soon ousted Social Democrats from office. Social Democracy no longer existed in the Soviet occupation zone, later known as the GDR.

It was not until October 1989 that the SDP – later the SPD – was re-established in East Germany.

NEW PATHS

Developments in Germany were initially determined by the **Control Council**. The three western occupying powers – Great Britain, France and the United States – were represented in this council alongside the Soviet occupying power.

The Control Council met regularly to decide on issues that affected the whole of Germany. The respective occupying power made decisions that affected the individual zones.

The occupying powers appointed mayors and filled the administrative posts. They mainly tried to choose people who had not collaborated with the National Socialists. This allowed a functioning supply chain and administration to be established once again.

Re-establishing the parties

Parties were officially allowed to form again from August 1945.

The SPD and KPD were joined by the newly founded Christian parties CDU and CSU. The CSU is the equivalent Bavarian party of the CDU. Together, they are known as **Union**.

The SPD wanted to play a decisive role in shaping how parties were re-established. After all, the SPD was the party that had continuously fought for democracy and against Hitler. The stated goals were:

- A democratic state
- A new economic order key industries nationalised and more co-determination
- German unity.

Trade unions and German Trade Union Confederation

The trade unions also re-established themselves immediately after the war ended. In doing so, they declared similar goals to the SPD: a new economic order and more co-determination for workers. There was little change in terms of the economic order. However, trade unions achieved successes in co-determination.

In 1949, the German Trade Union Confederation (Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund, DGB) was founded as an umbrella organisation to bring together all the individual trade unions. Hans Böckler was the first Chair.

Hans Böckler (1875–1951) joined the SPD and the trade union for the German Metalworkers' Federation in 1894. During the National Socialism era, he was in contact with the resistance group that planned the 20 July assassination. As Chair of the DGB, he advocated equal rights for capital and labour: workers should have the same say as investors.



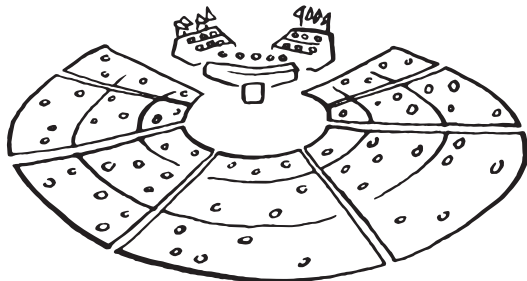
HANS BÖCKLER

FOUNDING THE STATE

The Western occupying powers – France, Great Britain and the United States – wanted to shape Germany into a **parliamentary democracy**. However, there were increasing political tensions with the fourth occupying power, the Soviet Union. These tensions led to the **Cold War**. For a long time, the Cold War divided the world into two hostile camps – ‘West’ and ‘East’.

Since 1947, the Western occupying powers had been pursuing the establishment of a new German state in the three Western occupation zones. This state was to be firmly allied to the Western camp. To achieve this, the occupying powers drafted the **Marshall Plan**, which supported West Germany economically. A currency reform, i.e. the introduction of the D-Mark, was also supposed to bring stability.

On 1 September 1948, the **Parliamentary Council** met for the first time in Bonn. It consisted of 65 delegates from the eleven German State parliaments. The Parliamentary Council was tasked with drafting the **Grundgesetz (Basic Law)** for the newly created **Federal Republic of Germany** (Bundesrepublik Deutschland, BRD).



The SPD was represented in the Parliamentary Council by 27 delegates. Women and men from the SPD shaped key elements of the Grundgesetz. For example, delegates Elisabeth Selbert and Herta Gotthelf fought for the inclusion of **equal rights** for men and women as a fundamental right.

The Grundgesetz for the Federal Republic of Germany was announced on 23 May 1949. It came into force the following day.

The founding of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Grundgesetz were initially intended to be an interim solution. The aim was still to achieve an all-German state. This should also include the Soviet occupation zone.

Elisabeth Selbert (1896–1986) came from a poor family. She worked in the telegraph office. She studied for her A-levels at home and then went on to study law and political science. Together with Herta Gotthelf, she fought for equality as a fundamental right in the Grundgesetz.



ELISABETH SELBERT

Herta Gotthelf (1902–1963) was a member of the SPD party executive since 1947. She was responsible for the SPD magazine '*Equality. Publication of the Working Woman*'.



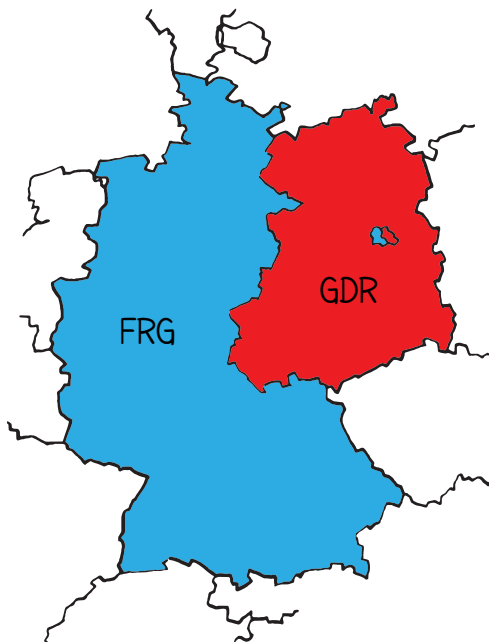
HERTA GOTTHELF

A brief look eastwards:

Founding the state in the GDR

The SED tried to put the brakes on the Western occupying powers' plans. It convened a **People's Congress**. This People's Congress was supposed to represent the entire German people, although the delegates mainly came from the Soviet zone. The People's Congress advocated for the creation of an all-German state. Members of the first **People's Council** were chosen from among the delegates at the People's Congress. The People's Council presented a draft for a new constitution.

In October 1949, the second People's Council declared itself the provisional **People's Chamber** (parliament). The People's Chamber enacted the constitution for the German Democratic Republic (GDR), which had originally been planned for the whole of Germany.



First German Bundestag parliamentary elections

On 14 August 1949, citizens of the Federal Republic elected delegates for the Bundestag for the first time. Turnout among voters was very high. The SPD became the second strongest party behind the Union.



The Union formed the government with smaller parties. **Konrad Adenauer** was chosen as the first Chancellor of Germany. The SPD was in **opposition**. Nevertheless, it voted in favour of many of the government's plans when they seemed right.

There were, however, two major issues on which the SPD and the government did not see eye to eye: Adenauer wanted to quickly integrate the Federal Republic in Western Europe. And he was also in favour of rearming the Federal Republic. He wanted the Federal Republic to stand firm with its new allies in a military capacity.

The SPD feared that it wouldn't be possible to achieve reunification as a consequence. It therefore voted against projects that tied the Federal Republic too strongly to Western Europe. The SPD thus assumed the role of nay-sayer.

In the **second federal election** in 1953, this role proved to be a bad one. The Union was able to significantly increase its proportion of the vote and received just over 45 percent of the electoral votes. The SPD lost votes and got just below 30 percent.

THE SPD IS MODERNISED

The SPD took a close look: why did fewer voters opt to support the party? The Social Democrats saw three main reasons for this:

1. The SPD was seen as the party of the **working class**.
But there was no longer a working class as before. Society was more open. Belonging to a certain social class was no longer so fixed.
2. The SPD seemed unfashionable to some voters. Many voters did not understand why the link to Western Europe was being rejected. The SPD didn't want to jeopardise a possible reunification. But large parts of the population did not realise this.
3. The SPD called for a different economic order with more state control and more say for workers. But the Federal Republic was in the midst of the '**economic miracle**'. The economy was doing very well, there was hardly any unemployment. More and more Germans could afford their own home, a holiday or even a car. Few saw the need for change.

It was therefore time to stop and start again. In the following years, younger members assumed leadership of the party.

The party modernised its organisation. It redistributed tasks. It established other forms of cooperation. The party was able to work faster and in a more modern manner, thus taking decisions more quickly.

Godesberg Programme

After much preparation, the SPD adopted the Godesberg Programme in 1959. It replaced the Heidelberg Programme of 1925 as the **principle guidelines**.

What was new about the Godesberg Programme? In the Heidelberg Programme, the SPD had referred heavily to Marx. The SPD's ideas were now justified in more diverse ways. The party became more open to very different people. More people – even from other social classes – agreed with the goals. They found their own ideas and wishes reflected within the literature. And the SPD set out its basic values in very concrete terms: freedom, justice and solidarity.

In this context, **freedom** represents a self-determined life that is also free from hardship and fear.



Justice is based on the equal dignity of every person. It is a synonym for equal freedom and equal opportunities, independent of background and gender. Justice therefore means equal participation in education, work, social security, culture and democracy as well as equal access to all public goods.

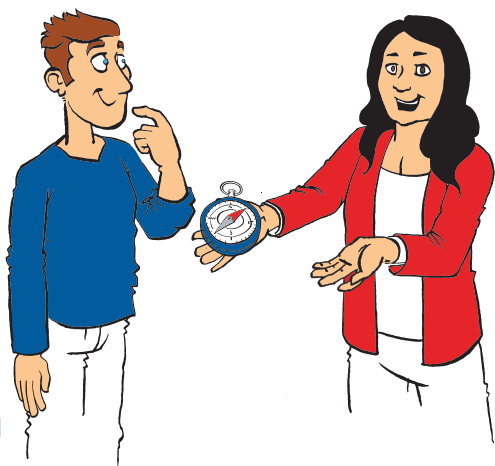


Solidarity means that people feel responsible for one another. Social security is a kind of solidarity. Solidarity also means standing up for each other, working together against injustice and poverty. Solidarity is a fundamental experience in the labour movement.



Want to know more?

Our first book, *Concise and Clear – An Introduction to Social Democracy*, includes a lot of information about the fundamental values and fundamental rights of Social Democracy.



GRAND COALITION: THE SPD IS PART OF GOVERNMENT

After adopting the Godesberg Programme and modernising the party, the SPD regained more support. It formed the government in many federal states. The SPD also received more votes in federal elections.

The 'economic miracle' ended in the 1960s. Growth declined.

Unemployment rose sharply as a result. The Union and FDP government faced a serious crisis. In 1966, all FDP ministers resigned. Chancellor of Germany Ludwig Erhard of the CDU had to resign from office. The government was reshuffled.

The first **grand coalition** between the Union and SPD was formed. Georg Kiesinger of the CDU became Chancellor of Germany. The SPD held important offices, for example Willy Brandt was appointed Foreign Minister and Herbert Wehner was named Minister for All-German Affairs.

The SPD could now prove itself at federal level. It helped shape politics and set new standards.

Economic policy:

Economics Minister Karl Schiller of the SPD brought together politicians, employers' representatives, trade unionists and banking representatives for talks. Together, they devised a plan to overcome the economic crisis.

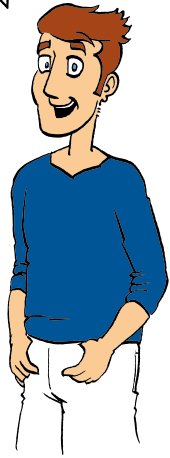


Willy Brandt is introduced
in more detail on page 82.

Foreign policy:

As Foreign Minister, Willy Brandt broke new ground. Until this point, West German foreign policy had been very singly oriented towards the Western countries. Brandt initiated talks with countries in the Eastern Bloc and prepared negotiations with the GDR and the Soviet Union. His policy was known as 'active peacekeeping'. As Chancellor, he continued this policy. It was acknowledged under the name

New Eastern Policy.



Domestic policy:

In domestic politics, approving the **emergency laws** was a test of strength for the SPD. The Grundgesetz was amended for the emergency laws. They gave the government the right to restrict fundamental rights when facing crises such as war or natural disasters. In the Weimar Republic, similar regulations made it possible to override parliament and transfer power to Hitler. Something like this should never be able to happen again. The laws were therefore drafted to prevent abuse.

The grand coalition was not established as a long-term solution. Apart from the SPD and the Union, only the FDP was represented in the Bundestag at that time. The party could 'tip the scales'. This meant that each of the major parties could govern with the FDP as a smaller partner.

The FDP was ready to support Social Democracy policies. This was clearly indicated when SPD politician **Gustav Heinemann** was elected as Federal President in 1969. In this instance, the FDP voted with the SPD for Heinemann.

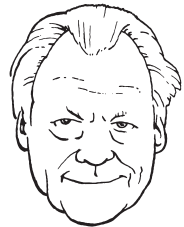
SOCIAL-LIBERAL GOVERNMENTS

In the 1969 federal election, the SPD recorded an increased number of votes. Although the Union received the most votes, the SPD and FDP together had a governing majority. They formed the first social-liberal coalition.

On 21 October 1969, the Bundestag delegates elected **Willy Brandt** as the first Social Democratic Chancellor of Germany. When declaring his government, Willy Brandt summarised the coalition's guiding principle with the following important words:

“We want to dare more democracy!”

Willy Brandt was born out of wedlock in 1913 as a working-class child. His politically interested grandfather enabled him to attend grammar school. Willy Brandt was a member of the Socialist Workers' Youth and joined the SPD in 1930. In 1933, he fled from the National Socialists to Norway and later to Sweden. He worked as a journalist and was actively involved in the resistance movement. Willy Brandt returned to Germany in 1945. He was a Bundestag delegate for the SPD from 1949. He was Governing Mayor of Berlin from 1955. In 1966, he joined the Federal Government as Foreign Minister. He was Chancellor of Germany from 1969 to 1974. From 1964 to 1987, Willy Brandt was also the SPD party leader. Willy Brandt received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1971 for his new Eastern Policy of understanding and rapprochement. Willy Brandt died in 1992.



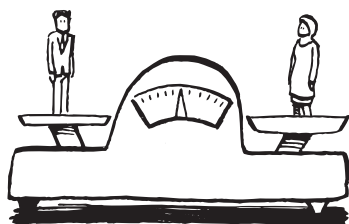
WILLY BRANDT

Daring more democracy – how was this implemented? The social-liberal coalition expanded citizens' freedom. As early as 1969, the SPD extended the **right to demonstrate**. It removed homosexuality and adultery from the penal code.

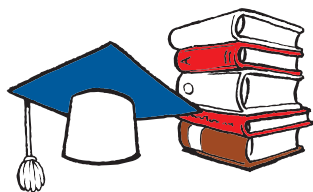
Citizens' freedom also expanded thanks to better social security. As a result, **wages continued to be paid** in the event of illness. People were given greater flexibility as to when they could **start taking their pension**.

In the following years, even more civil liberties were added. The **voting age** was lowered from 21 to 18.

There was also a big step forward for **equality** between men and women. Women no longer needed their husbands' permission to work. And the man's surname was no longer automatically used as the family surname.



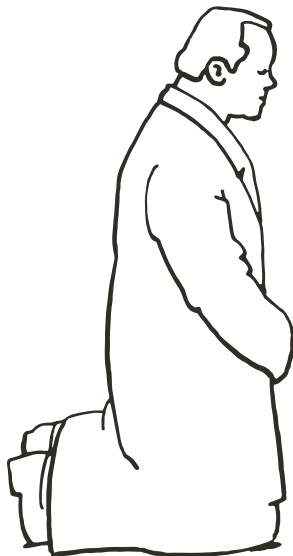
Bafög (Germany's Federal Training Assistance Act) was introduced to ensure equal opportunities for education. The SPD further expanded universities to create more study places.



Revising the Works Constitution Act made for improvements in terms of **co-determination** in companies. From 1976 onwards, the right of co-determination regulated how employees must be represented on company supervisory boards.

In **foreign policy**, Willy Brandt continued his **New Eastern Policy**. The goal was to achieve a European peace order. Brandt did not rely on the Cold War and military strength. He sought understanding and rapprochement. Direct talks were held between the leaders of the two German states again for the first time.

This **policy of détente** led to securing peace and greater understanding between East and West. As Chancellor, Brandt also assumed responsibility for the crimes committed by National Socialist Germany. He asked for forgiveness from the countries and peoples who had suffered under Hitler. The **Warschauer Kniefall** became a symbol for this attitude: Willy Brandt knelt in front of the memorial commemorating the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.



The Eastern Policy meant the Federal Republic was highly regarded on the international stage and granted the country more influence in world politics. In 1971, Willy Brandt was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize** for his policies.

In the Federal Republic itself, the Eastern Policy was seen as controversial. Gradually, some delegates left the government's camp and switched to the Union. By 1972, the government no longer had a majority in the Bundestag. The Union initiated a **vote of no confidence** to replace Willy Brandt and the SPD in government.

It failed. But the government no longer had a majority in the Bundestag. Willy Brandt therefore paved the way for new elections.

In the early federal election of 1972, 91 percent of eligible voters cast their ballots. The SPD became the strongest party for the first time. Willy Brandt was re-elected as Chancellor of Germany.

From Willy Brandt to Helmut Schmidt

During his second period in office, Willy Brandt had to tackle crises. In 1973, the first **oil crisis** caused the oil price to rise significantly. As a result, industry's turnover was lower. Unemployment rose. In 1974, public sector workers went on strike and pushed through a big pay rise. This had a significant impact on the state budget.

Then it came to light that a close associate of Brandt was spying for the GDR. As a consequence, Willy Brandt resigned and made his office as Chancellor available. In the **government reshuffle**, delegates elected Helmut Schmidt to succeed him as Chancellor. However, Willy Brandt remained the SPD's party leader.

Helmut Schmidt was born in 1918. He was an officer in World War II and became a British prisoner of war. He joined the SPD in 1945. In 1962, as Interior Senator, he organised rescue measures during the storm tide in Hamburg. Under Chancellor Willy Brandt, first he was Defence Minister, then Finance Minister. In 1974, he replaced Brandt as Chancellor. Helmut Schmidt died in 2015, age 96.



HELMUT SCHMIDT

Helmut Schmidt's time in office

In his first years as Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt faced high levels of **unemployment**. The economy recovered only slowly and in small steps. Helmut Schmidt governed like a no-nonsense crisis manager. This earned him trust and recognition. Helmut Schmidt was therefore elected for a second term in office at the 1976 Bundestag elections.

During his second term as Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt had to deal with the terror of the **Red Army Faction (RAF)**. The hijacking of a Lufthansa plane and the kidnapping and murder of the President of the German Employers' Association Hanns Martin Schleyer were attacks on the constitutional state. Helmut Schmidt followed a clear line here – the state could not be blackmailed. Not everyone in the SPD agreed with this course of action.

In foreign policy, Helmut Schmidt achieved successes in his **relations with France**. The difficult relationship following several wars gave way to good cooperation and friendship. Together, Germany and France achieved some successes in international politics.

The East-West relationship was more difficult though. The power struggle between East and West led to armament on both sides. When the Soviet Union modernised its nuclear missiles, the United States wanted to station new nuclear missiles in Europe. At the same time, negotiations on limiting nuclear armament were conducted. The **NATO Double-Track Decision** was not only controversial within the SPD. In fact, Willy Brandt and Herbert Wehner were among its opponents.

This decision was also rejected by the people. The **peace movement** received massive support.



The peace movement was joined by the **anti-nuclear movement**. It opposed the government's drive to build nuclear power plants.

Despite these problems, the coalition between the SPD and FDP was able to maintain its position in the **1980 Bundestag elections**. Helmut Schmidt was elected Chancellor for another term.

Internal change

During this time shaped by difficult tasks and problems, the organisation within the SPD changed. In the meantime, the SPD had gained over one million party members.

Party work was now more divided into **working groups**. These each focused on one particular area. The Jusos – the Young Socialists in the SPD – were joined by the Working Group of Social Democratic Women (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Sozialdemokratischer Frauen, ASF) in 1972. The Working Group for Employee Questions (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Arbeitnehmerfragen, AfA) followed in 1973. Gradually, other working groups were formed for individual occupational groups and on specific issues.

The SPD became more diverse. There were now so-called branches, each of which came up with its own ideas for implementing Social Democratic goals. As party leader, Willy Brandt played an important

role here. He succeeded in steering the diversity within the SPD in a shared direction. To do so, he didn't rely on top-down leadership. The SPD found its direction through democratic majority decisions. Disputes within the party on certain issues were good and necessary to consolidate positions.

This was also the time of the famous trio. Party leader Willy Brandt, parliamentary group leader Herbert Wehner and Chancellor Helmut Schmidt always coordinated closely with each other. However, there were increasing disagreements. Schmidt and Wehner did not agree with Brandt's style as party leader. They did not always see the discussions within the party in a positive light and wanted more leadership from Willy Brandt.

Vote of no confidence

The SPD's governmental policy aimed at securing a just society. To this end, the party worked with trade unions and employers' organisations. Politics intervened to distribute wealth fairly in society. For example, the SPD strengthened workers' co-determination rights.

The FDP no longer agreed with this policy. It became a proxy for employers and donors. It put the brakes on the SPD's plans more and more often. In 1982, FDP ministers resigned from their posts. A vote of no confidence followed. Helmut Kohl (CDU) won the vote in the Bundestag, despite not being supported by the FDP. He became the new Chancellor of Germany.

CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT

In the 1983 Bundestag elections, voters confirmed Helmut Kohl as Chancellor of Germany. He remained in office until 1998.

As a result of this election, **the Greens** also entered the Bundestag for the first time. The party was founded out of the peace movement and the anti-nuclear movement. It attracted many left-wing voters who had turned away from the SPD. Approving the NATO Double-Track Decision, the energy policy and adhering to industrial growth made SPD voters switch to the Greens.

Since the 1960s, the SPD had also increasingly devoted itself to ecological issues. As early as 1961, Willy Brandt demanded that “the sky over the Ruhr must become blue again!”

Following the first report published by the **Club of Rome** in 1972 on the consequences of unrestrained economic growth, a process of rethinking began. It became clear that the current problems could not be solved through growth. In particular, Erhard Eppler drove these considerations forward. He called for industrial society to be transformed ecologically.

Erhard Eppler (1926–2019) joined the SPD in 1956. He was a delegate in the Bundestag and the State parliament of Baden-Württemberg and the Federal Minister for International Development Cooperation. He was heavily involved in the peace movement. Eppler called for a change in ecological thinking. He advocated distinctly for global justice.



ERHARD EPPLER

There were also touch points between the SPD and the Greens. Strengthening democracy, a just society, equality for women – in this regard, the parties were similar. The first **red-green coalition** at state level finally emerged in Hesse in 1985.

In North Rhine-Westphalia, **Johannes Rau** won an absolute majority for the SPD in 1985. He could govern without needing a coalition partner. Rau attempted to repeat this success at the federal level by standing as a **candidate for Chancellor** in the 1987 federal election. However, the Union won the election again.

Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt withdrew from the SPD leadership during these years. Alongside the new party leader Hans-Jochen Vogel, the '**grandchild generation**' started to take their place. These included Björn Engholm, Gerhard Schröder, Rudolf Scharping, Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul and Oskar Lafontaine.

In 1989, the **Berlin Programme** replaced the Godesberg Programme as the principle guidelines. It introduced the SPD to the new era. The Berlin Programme upheld democratic socialism and the fundamental values of freedom, justice and solidarity.

However, it also took a more diverse society into account. On international issues, the Berlin Programme committed to strengthening the European community, to global democratisation, to overcoming the conflict between North and South, and to disarmament. The Berlin Programme also formulated ideas for an ecological transformation.



WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS TIME?

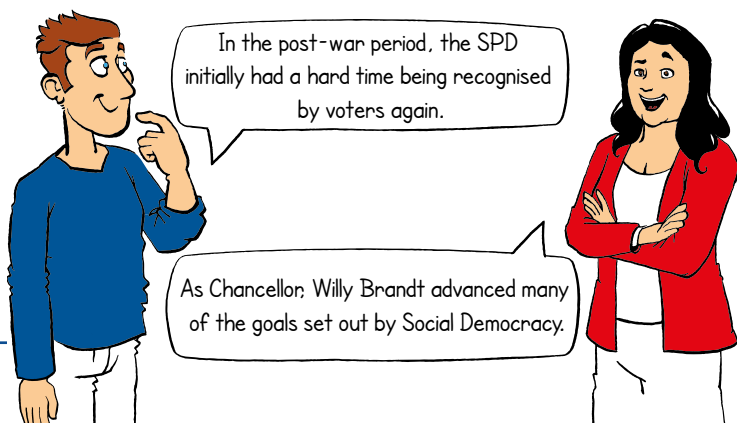
As a party, the Social Democrats always stood up for democracy, even during the National Socialist era. Nevertheless, in the early years of the Federal Republic, voters didn't give them any governmental responsibility.

The Godesberg Programme modernised the SPD without moving away from the fundamental values of freedom, justice and solidarity.

The labour movement and Social Democracy were strengthened by creating single trade unions under the umbrella of the German Trade Union Confederation.

During the period of the social-liberal government, Social Democracy was able to achieve much for freedom and social justice. In foreign policy, Willy Brandt's New Eastern Policy paved the way for understanding, détente and peace.

By exploring questions relating to understanding democracy, the environment, peace and the role of women, the SPD also developed further. These changes were reflected in the Berlin Programme.



SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN A UNITED COUNTRY

1989 to 2020

Following the fall of the Wall on 9 November 1989, rapid political development began. The GDR tried to rebuild itself as a democratic state. But it soon merged with the Federal Republic instead.

On 2 December 1990, East Germans and West Germans cast their votes for the Bundestag together for the first time.

The conflict between East and West eased. This also accelerated globalisation. This challenged politics in Germany and other countries.

It took another eight years for the SPD to return to government. The first red-green coalition at federal level replaced the Kohl government in 1998.

In this chapter, we will look at the conditions under which the red-green government took office. We'll present selected reforms introduced by the Schröder government.

What considerations led to Agenda 2010 and the drastic changes to the welfare state? We will also explore this issue.

We will follow the SPD's path to the grand coalitions under Chancellor Angela Merkel.

We'll finally look at where the SPD stands today.

REUNIFICATION AND THE KOHL ERA

On 9 November 1989, the **Berlin Wall** fell. It was the first step towards the reunification of divided German states. However, this step should not be considered as a one-off event. Prior to this, GDR citizens had spent months peacefully demonstrating for more freedoms. Others had taken refuge in the embassies of the Federal Republic in countries such as Hungary and the Czech Republic. They then set out for the West.

All this was only possible in the context of **Mikhail Gorbachev's** politics. Since taking office in 1985, the Soviet Union's head of state had pursued a political path of détente and cooperation. Many states in the East experienced new freedoms. They also opened up to the West. The relationship between East and West relaxed.



But everyone was surprised initially when the Berlin Wall opened. This was an event that no one had expected.

It was not immediately clear that the GDR and Federal Republic would become a single state again. A new, independent Social Democratic party was therefore founded in the GDR even before the fall of the Wall. It briefly bore the name '**Social Democratic Party in the GDR (SDP)**' and renamed itself the SPD in 1990. In 1990, the party wrote its own principle guidelines, the **Leipzig Programme**. One of the 'founding fathers' of the SPD in the GDR was Wolfgang Thierse.

Wolfgang Thierse was born in 1943. Until the Peaceful Revolution of 1989/90, Thierse was not a party member. He became Chair of the SPD in the GDR. When the SPD unified, he joined the party executive. He was a member of the first freely elected People's Chamber in the GDR in 1990 and later the Bundestag. Wolfgang Thierse was President of the Bundestag from 1998 to 2005.



WOLFGANG THIERSE

In March 1990, the citizens of the GDR elected a new People's Chamber. That was the name of the parliament in the GDR. In this election, an electoral alliance comprising parties advocating the rapid unification of the GDR with the Federal Republic prevailed.

Helmut Kohl had previously presented a **ten-point plan** for reunification. The SPD in East and West now also advocated a gradual and socially just reunification. The party helped shape this process from the opposition.

In August 1990, the two German states concluded the **Unification Treaty**. The treaty regulated the accession of the GDR to the Federal Republic. When the Two Plus Four Agreement was signed on **3 October 1990**, reunification was complete.

First all-German Bundestag election

On 2 December 1990, the German people elected the Bundestag together for the first time. The SPD's candidate for Chancellor was Oskar Lafontaine (see page 98). For the first time, the SPD faced stiff competition from the left in this election: the PDS received eleven percent of the electoral votes cast in the eastern federal states, i.e. the former GDR. The PDS was the successor party to the East German SED. It is now known as 'Die Linke' (The Left). Overall, the CDU remained the strongest party.



As the 'Chancellor of Reunification', Helmut Kohl also won the next election in 1994. It is true that Helmut Kohl was unable to keep some of his promises in the years following reunification. But the SPD was unable to communicate this clearly enough to voters during the election campaign. Helmut Kohl therefore remained Chancellor for another four years – despite rising unemployment and unanswered questions about how reunification was financed.

However, in the time that followed, the SPD achieved considerable electoral successes in State parliament elections. A change in the party's leadership also contributed to this. Oskar Lafontaine (see page 98) had been party leader since 1995. He again highlighted the differences between the SPD and the Union more clearly.

Successes in the State parliament elections gave the SPD a **majority in the Federal Council**. The SPD therefore regained political influence.

In Schleswig-Holstein, Heide Simonis became the first female Minister President of a federal state in 1998.

Heide Simonis was born in Bonn in 1943. She joined the SPD in 1969. She was elected to the Bundestag in 1976. She went to Schleswig-Holstein as Minister of Finance in 1988. In 1992, she was elected to Schleswig-Holstein's State parliament. She succeeded Björn Engholm as Minister President in 1998. Heide Simonis held this office until 2005.



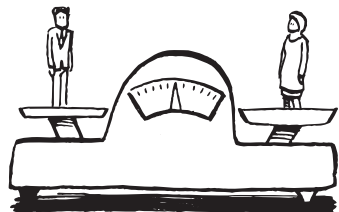
Referencing the state of equality, Heide Simonis said:

“You only ever become something as a woman when men have made a mess of things.”

Heide Simonis did not want to draw on the **gender quota** adopted by the SPD in 1988. The gender quota stipulated that all party offices had to be filled by 40 percent women and 40 percent men. This is also how places are allocated on electoral lists. Simonis initially considered the quota to be superfluous.

But she later said:

“Reality has clearly shown that such a quota is absolutely necessary.”



RED/GREEN GOVERNMENT

On 27 September 1998, the SPD won the Bundestag elections. The SPD was the strongest party, winning over 40 percent of the vote. Together with the Greens, this was enough for form a majority in the Bundestag.

Gerhard Schröder was elected Chancellor of Germany. Joschka Fischer of the Green Party became Foreign Minister and Vice-Chancellor. Oskar Lafontaine took over as Finance Minister. He was Schröder's leadership partner during the election campaign. At the same time, Lafontaine continued to be the SPD's party leader.

Gerhard Schröder was born in 1944 as the son of a labourer. His father died in the war, his mother supported the family by undertaking simple work.

Gerhard Schröder joined the SPD in 1963.

After completing his apprenticeship, he caught up on his school-leaving certificate and studies, and then became a lawyer. In 1978, Gerhard Schröder

became the Federal Chair of the Jusos. He was Minister President of Lower Saxony from 1990 to 1998. In September 1998, he replaced Helmut Kohl as Chancellor of Germany after 16 years.



GERHARD SCHRÖDER

A few months later, Oskar Lafontaine resigned from his ministerial post and as Party Chair. There had previously been a dispute with Gerhard Schröder. Lafontaine didn't agree with some of Schröder's political decisions.

Following Oskar Lafontaine's resignation, Gerhard Schröder also took over as Party Chair. Hans Eichel replaced Lafontaine as Finance Minister.

Oskar Lafontaine was born in Saarlouis in 1943. He joined the SPD in 1966. In 1988, he became the first Social Democratic Minister President in Saarland. Lafontaine was the SPD's candidate for Chancellor in 1990. However, he lost the vote to Helmut Kohl. Following a disagreement with Gerhard Schröder, he resigned as Finance Minister and Party Chair. Oskar Lafontaine left the SPD in 2005.



OSKAR LAFONTAINE

Red/green government work

The new government set about implementing its political goals. However, it soon had to make decisions as a result of the international situation. And these decisions were not easy.

The red-green government therefore agreed to deploy the Bundeswehr abroad for the first time. The violation of human rights during the Kosovo war made this necessary. The Bundestag also authorised a mission in Afghanistan. The federal government never made decisions on these missions lightly. In 2002, it rejected the Bundeswehr participating in a war against Iraq.



In **domestic policy**, the Schröder government introduced a number of new policies:

Taxes: In the case of income tax, the tax rate for low incomes fell, as did that for very high incomes.

Energy and the environment: The eco-tax was introduced. The government decided to phase out nuclear energy and passed the Renewable Energy Sources Act (EEG).



Equal opportunities: The government created a framework for registered same-sex civil partnerships.

Education: BAföG was expanded. An initiative to expand all-day schools was launched.

Integration: The citizenship law was redesigned. It was now easier to become a German citizen.

This policy was rewarded in the 2002 Bundestag elections with another victory for the red-green coalition.

Agenda 2010

In the years 2003 to 2005, Gerhard Schröder's government then launched a whole package of measures. This was known as Agenda 2010. It was designed to counteract high unemployment rates and economic decline. And it was also to ensure that social security remains affordable. Agenda 2010 resulted in major cuts to the welfare state. The economy was given greater freedom to act. The state no longer intervened to such an extent. At the time, there was a prevailing opinion in many countries that a strong economy was more important than a strong, caring state.

Gerhard Schröder announced the plans in a famous speech:

“We will have to cut state benefits, promote personal responsibility and demand more personal contributions from each individual.”

Many different measures were included in the package.

The most important were the following:

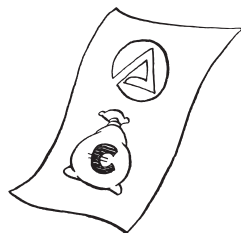
Pensions: All employers and employees pay contributions into the pension fund. Private pension provision was introduced to prevent contributions from rising ever higher. Every employee was supposed to save something extra to have a good pension later on. The statutory pension was lowered. For many, it was no longer enough to live a good life.



Work and unemployment: There were several major measures here. They are grouped under the umbrella term ‘the Hartz Laws’, named after the advisor Peter Hartz. The Hartz laws were intended to create jobs. ‘Mini jobs’ were introduced for this purpose. They were designed to make it easier to get back into employment. Many employers now offered mini jobs. But they cut other jobs in return.

Unemployed people no longer received unemployment benefits for as long as they used to. Unemployment benefit II (ALG II) was introduced for this purpose. ALG II is a mixture of unemployment benefit and the former social welfare support. There are rights

and obligations associated with ALG II. Those who receive ALG II are entitled to help to find work and to further training access. Recipients must accept these offers. Otherwise, they receive less money. Those who saved money in the past must declare it and they subsequently receive less support.



Agenda 2010 listed even more measures, including those targeting the expansion of all-day schools and the energy transition. But these measures were not noticed as much by citizens as the changes made to pensions, work and unemployment.

What did Agenda 2010 bring?

Once the Agenda was implemented, unemployment in Germany fell. However, it is still debated to this day what part the Agenda played in the economic recovery.

The SPD lost supporters because of Agenda 2010. The party was divided. Many members left the party and subsequently joined what is now The Left. The party's relationship with trade unions had deteriorated significantly. The SPD lost votes in the State parliament elections. By implementing Agenda 2010, many people felt that the SPD had moved too far away from Social Democratic goals.

This resulted in Gerhard Schröder putting his policies to the vote. He triggered early elections in 2005.

NEW ELECTIONS AND THE MERKEL ERA

The new Bundestag elections were scheduled for 18 September 2005. The election campaign revolved around tax policy and the possible restructuring of health insurance. The country's nuclear policy was also a topic – the SPD had earlier decided to phase out nuclear power. The Union sought to 'phase out the phase-out'.

The SPD was able to win back voters. Nevertheless, the SPD and the Greens lost votes. This didn't only help the Union. Many votes went to the 'Linkspartei.PDS', today's The Left.

As a result, neither the red-green coalition nor the Union had a majority with the FDP. Only another grand coalition secured sufficient votes to form a stable government. The SPD formed a government with the Union with the first female Chancellor in history: Angela Merkel.

Franz Müntefering became Vice-Chancellor. He also took over the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Frank-Walter Steinmeier (see page 108) became Foreign Minister. Steinmeier has been the Federal President since 2017.

Franz Müntefering (born 1940) is a trained industrial clerk. He joined the SPD in 1966 and the IG Metall trade union in 1967. He has been a member of the Bundestag for many years. Under Gerhard Schröder, he became Minister of Transport. From 2005 to 2007, he was Vice-Chancellor and Minister



FRANZ MÜNTEFERING

of Labour and Social Affairs. In 2007, he resigned from his posts for personal reasons. However, Müntefering took over as Party Chair for the second time in 2008.

Government policy of the second grand coalition

The grand coalition under Angela Merkel implemented certain domestic policy changes. The SPD initiated several of these:

In **education policy**, new rules set out the responsibilities of the federal government and the federal states.

The **parental allowance** was introduced.

In **health policy**, the SPD wanted to abolish the division between statutory and private health insurance. This resulted in a compromise being reached between the Union and the SPD.

Other changes were reluctantly agreed to by the SPD as a coalition partner:

Value added tax was increased. This affects all consumers. But the less money someone has at their disposal, the more this tax increase impacts them. This is because value added tax is levied on the prices of goods and services. Those who have to spend a lot of their money on living expenses feel the increase more significantly.

The **debt brake** was enshrined in the Grundgesetz. It specifies how much debt the state is allowed to incur. The debt brake is intended to prevent the state from getting into too much debt and stopping it from acting. On the other hand, this means that the state's social services would have to be cut if it were only possible to finance them through new debts.

The coalition introduced '**pension at 67**'. The age at which workers retire increased gradually. Once again, this decision deepened the division between the SPD and trade unions.

The Hamburg Programme

In October 2007, the SPD adopted new principle guidelines: the Hamburg Programme. With this programme, the SPD clearly moved away from the policy set out by Agenda 2010. The SPD coined the term '**preventive welfare state**' when explaining the role of the state. This meant that the state would also take measures on its own initiative to strengthen social justice. In the Hamburg Programme, the SPD described how it intended to deal with the challenges posed by globalisation. The programme called for greater European cooperation. And it described ways to achieve a more environmentally friendly economy.



2008: Financial market crisis

In 2008, the international financial world collapsed. As a result of globalisation, banks had long been significantly interconnected worldwide. When *Lehman Brothers Bank* had to file for bankruptcy in the United States, other banks also got into trouble. Banks around the world were over-indebted. The entire financial world went into turmoil. To prevent the global economy from collapsing completely, states had to intervene.



The federal government did this by implementing a combination of three measures:

The '**bank rescue umbrella**' provided money to ailing banks. This was necessary to prevent worse consequences if a bank went bankrupt.

The government strengthened the economy with an **economic stimulus package**. To this end, public contracts were awarded, such as in the transport sector. A scrappage scheme boosted the sale of new cars and supported the car industry.

Extending the reduced hours compensation scheme helped companies to save jobs during the crisis.

These measures were mainly introduced by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Both ministries were led by the SPD.

Thanks to these measures, Germany came through the financial market crisis relatively well. However, the crisis continued to widen in subsequent years. Europe faced a euro crisis. To this day, we are still yet to overcome the effects of the financial market crisis.

Want to know more?

As part of the **Concise and Clear** series, there is a volume that examines how economic policy and financial policy tie together:

Concise and Clear 2 – Social Economy.



2009 elections: No recognition for the work of the SPD

In the 2009 election year, the SPD suffered bitter defeats.

The disappointment many voters felt regarding Agenda 2010 ran deep. On the other hand, voters did not attribute the smart action taken during the financial market crisis to the SPD. This success was attributed to Angela Merkel instead.

Throughout in the election campaign, the SPD focused on social justice issues such as the introduction of a **minimum wage** and **citizens' insurance**. The intention was to merge private and statutory health insurance. The SPD also demanded that the banks share the costs of the financial market crisis.



The SPD failed to win back voters' trust during this election campaign. The SPD lost over eleven percent and received only 23 percent of the overall vote.

The Union also suffered slight losses in this election. The smaller parties were the winners of this election. The FDP, the Greens and The Left made strong gains.

Together with the FDP, the Union had a clear majority.

The grand coalition was replaced by a black-yellow government. Angela Merkel stayed on as Chancellor.

After that, the SPD once again advocated its social justice goals more clearly. This initially resulted in success in the State parliament elections.

GRAND COALITIONS

2013 was a significant year for the SPD. It marked an anniversary year. Exactly 150 years ago, in 1863, the ADAV – the first Social Democratic party in Germany – was founded (see pages 29/30). The SPD of today is also rooted in this party. The fundamental values of that time have accompanied Social Democracy through history until today and will do so into the future.



The grand coalition: 2013 to 2017

In the 2013 election campaign, the SPD focused more on its core values. In the federal election, it achieved a better result than four years earlier. The FDP failed to clear the five-percent hurdle. The Union and SPD once again found themselves negotiating a grand coalition. The SPD included many of its own goals in the **coalition agreement**. These included:

- Introducing a **minimum wage**
- **Pension reforms** (maternity pension, improvements for the pension at 63)
- Introducing a **gender quota in supervisory boards**
- Improving **parental allowance**
- Improving **long-term care insurance**
- Greater **climate protection**

Around 75 percent of SPD members voted in favour of a renewed grand coalition. Many of the points set out in the coalition agreement were also implemented. In particular, the SPD-led ministries mastered successful policies within the grand coalition.

However, the SPD was unable to communicate its successes in government to the electorate. The results achieved through governmental policy were primarily attributed to Angela Merkel and the Union.

Since 2015, interest has also shifted strongly to the **refugee crisis**. Merkel's initially poorly organised refugee policy tore rifts through society.

A highlight for the SPD during this time was the election of Frank-Walter Steinmeier as **Federal President**.

Frank-Walter Steinmeier (born 1956) was active in the Jusos while studying. He led the Federal Chancellery from 1999 to 2005. From 2005 to 2009, he was Foreign Minister under Chancellor Angela Merkel. He led the SPD parliamentary group in the Bundestag from 2009 to 2013 and was reappointed Foreign Minister in 2013. He was elected Federal President in February 2017.



FRANK-WALTER
STEINMEIER

The 2017 federal election

The SPD approached the election campaign for the 2017 Bundestag elections with a clear goal: no more grand coalition! The SPD wanted to make its own policies clearer to voters again.

Martin Schulz became the SPD's **candidate for Chancellor**.

Schulz had previously undertaken plenty of very successful Social Democratic work as President of the **European Parliament**.

As a result, he had a significant reputation. In 2017, Martin Schulz moved into federal politics. He was unanimously elected as candidate for Chancellor by all party members.

Martin Schulz (born 1955) joined the SPD at the age of 19 and was initially active in the Jusos. He was a Member of the European Parliament from 1994 to 2017. He was President of the European Parliament from 2012 to 2017. In 2017, he switched to federal politics, became party leader and led the SPD into the federal election. Martin Schulz has been Chair of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung since December 2020.



After Schulz was appointed in post, the SPD's poll ratings rose sharply. The party was flying high. But enthusiasm waned just as quickly. In 2017, the SPD failed to make gains in three State parliament elections. In the federal election on 24 September, the SPD ultimately only gained 20.5 percent of the vote. This was the weakest result in a federal election thus far.

The SPD declared that it would be the **opposition**. The Union negotiated with the FDP and the Greens to agree the Jamaica coalition. After many weeks, the negotiations failed.

The situation had reached deadlock. Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier invited the Union, the SPD, the Greens and the FDP to attend talks. He wanted to prevent having to call new elections.

Decision on the grand coalition

The SPD then went back into negotiations with the Union to form another grand coalition. It wasn't an easy decision to make.

On the one hand, there was the responsibility of being a ruling party. On the other hand, there was a desire to counter conservative forces as the party of Social Democracy.

Both approaches are justified. It is important that people can choose between different political models. But it is equally important to take responsibility for the state as a community. This sometimes means you have to make painful compromises as a result.

The SPD successfully concluded the negotiations on the coalition agreement. It was able to set out many of its goals in the coalition agreement. Party members voted in favour of the coalition agreement by a narrow majority as part of a member referendum.

The SPD's key points in the coalition agreement were:

- Introducing a **basic wage**
- Increasing **child benefit**
- Equal contributions by employees and employers to the statutory **health insurance scheme**

The new government could not be sworn in until almost six months after the Bundestag elections.

WHERE DOES THE SPD STAND?

Change in party leadership

During the grand coalition negotiations in February 2018, Martin Schulz declared that he would not take up a ministerial post. A few days later, he also resigned as party leader.

At the end of April 2018, the party congress elected Andrea Nahles as the **first female Chair** of the SPD.

Andrea Nahles (born 1970) joined the SPD in 1988 and helped to establish a local association in her home town. From 1995 to 1999, Nahles led the Jusos as Federal Chair. Andrea Nahles was Minister of Labour and Social Affairs from 2013 to 2017. She became party leader in April 2018. After much criticism and following several poor election results for the SPD, Andrea Nahles retired from politics in June 2019.

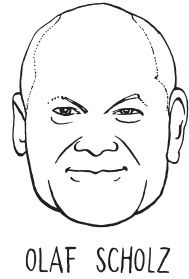


After Andrea Nahles resigned as party leader, the SPD broke new ground. Members voted on who would be Party Chair for the first time. The candidates each competed as a duo. Members opted for the **dual leadership** of Saskia Esken and Norbert Walter-Borjans. Esken and Walter-Borjans wanted to raise the SPD's profile as a Social Democratic party again.

In August 2020, the SPD presented its candidate for Chancellor in the 2021 federal election: Finance Minister and Vice-Chancellor Olaf Scholz. Scholz initially continued the 'black zero budget rule',

i.e. budgets couldn't be financed with new borrowing. But during the coronavirus crisis in 2020, he changed course to support the economy and workers.

Olaf Scholz (born 1958) was Minister of Labour and Social Affairs from 2007 to 2009. He was First Mayor of Hamburg from 2011 to 2018. Olaf Scholz was Vice-Chancellor and Minister of Finance from March 2018. Scholz ran for the party executive in 2019 together with Klara Geywitz. They were defeated by Saskia Esken and Norbert Walter-Borjans in the run-off election.



Successes in government work

In the grand coalition since 2018, the SPD has been far more successful than before in representing its own point of view and pushing through its own political goals. The coalition partners took stock halfway through: they have worked on over half of the projects set out in the coalition agreement. One of the SPD's great successes during this time has been the Good Day Care Act. It ensures high-quality childcare and relieves parents of the burden of fees. During the coronavirus crisis, the reduced hours compensation scheme proved its worth.

Political scientist Albrecht von Lucke states:

“The grand coalition has achieved a lot, especially in terms of **social issues**, minimum wage and many other areas.”

The SPD can take particular credit for this.

Overall, the SPD's efforts are now better perceived.


WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS TIME?

After the peaceful revolution in the GDR, the SPD re-established itself in East Germany. With the reunification of Germany, the SPD of the West and East also united.

Through The Left – which was formed from the successor party to the SED (the PDS) and Western left-wing groups – there was a second left-wing force represented at federal level.

With the red-green alliance under Gerhard Schröder, the SPD tried the govern in different ways. Agenda 2010 was the result. Nowadays, the SPD is rather critical of many aspects of Agenda 2010. Some effects were reversed by introducing a new concept for the welfare state in 2019.

As demanded by the SPD, the state must be able to intervene in the market in a guiding way. This has been clearly demonstrated since 2008 by the financial market crisis. These experiences have also proved their worth during the coronavirus crisis.



Reunification ushered in a new era. In the following decades, major political challenges had to be overcome.

The SPD experienced some turbulence among its members and also suffered bitter electoral defeats.

In addressing these problems, the party raised its profile. It now has a firm stance to face the challenges of the present and the future.

LOOKING AHEAD

In the preceding chapters, we have followed Social Democracy from its beginnings to the present day.

We asked many questions along the way:

How and why did the labour movement emerge?

When were the first Social Democratic parties founded?

How did trade unions evolve?

Why were there divisions within Social Democracy?

And how did the parties and trade unions deal with suppression, bans and persecution?

We have examined the work the SPD has undertaken in government. Some goals were achieved. Other goals were set in motion.

In this final chapter, we will ask:

Where does Social Democracy stand today?

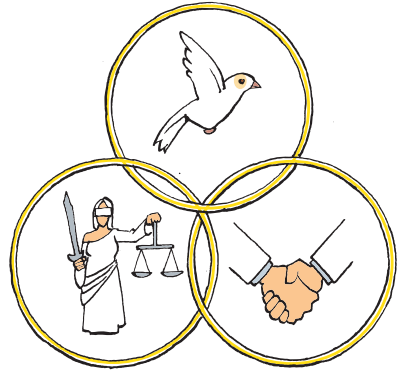
What issues is Social Democracy working on?

What goals are to be pursued in future?

We will ask what challenges the future will bring. And what solutions Social Democracy can offer for these challenges. We will look at the party's activities, trade union work and social movements.

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY'S VALUES AND GOALS TODAY

As it has done for over 150 years, Social Democracy stands for a society based on solidarity. The fundamental values of freedom, justice and solidarity are used as a basis when working on values and goals.

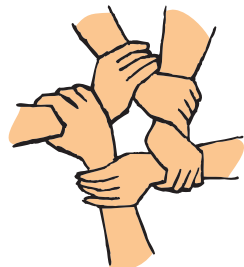


Several forces work jointly to progress this. Each contributes to success in their own way. A major task is therefore to strengthen and build cooperation between these progressive forces.

These forces include:

- Social Democratic parties in Germany, Europe and around the world
- Trade unions
- Organisations from workers' cultural movements, such as the Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund aid agency or the Friends of Nature movement
- Society groups such as Fridays for Future or refugee support networks

These forces pursue goals together. Depending on the areas of responsibility, stakeholders support each other. They work hand in hand to achieve goals.



It is important to make it clear to people what a society based on solidarity means:

- Everyone who needs help should be helped by the community.
- Everyone who is doing well should ask themselves what they can contribute to the community.
- By acting in solidarity, everyone is better off.

The basic premise of solidarity must be rooted more broadly in society. In recent times, there have been crises such as the financial crisis. We are currently facing challenges caused by the coronavirus crisis and its consequences. To overcome such crises and future challenges, we must return to the fundamental values of Social Democracy. It is precisely events such as the coronavirus crisis that clearly demonstrate the strengths of these fundamental values. Examples include:



Freedom: Politics is tasked with responsibly balancing an individual's freedom and protecting everyone's health.



Justice: A programme for digitising schools distributes educational opportunities more equitably, including for distance learning.



Solidarity: Emergency aid is used to avert individuals from hardship and distribute it to the community. By working together, we can all shoulder the costs of the coronavirus crisis better than by working alone. No one should lose their livelihood.

ANSWERS FOR THE FUTURE

Our society is facing great changes and tasks. And not only on a small scale here in Germany alone. The major crises of our time require us to think beyond national borders. Climate change, reshaping our working world and other challenges can only be overcome when considering them from an entire-world view.

Social Democracy finds answers to the questions of the future. These apply to the most diverse areas of society. Small communities in your home village can find valid answers just as much as the worldwide community.

In its responses, Social Democracy is guided by its **fundamental values** of freedom, justice and solidarity. These fundamental values have accompanied Social Democracy for over 150 years. Those who take fundamental values seriously want everyone to have equal rights – **fundamental rights**.

By committing to these fundamental rights, Social Democracy has achieved many improvements in society. These include the fundamental rights to vote and to go to school. But how can these fundamental rights be implemented? This requires political **instruments** that determine what money is spent on, for example.

To achieve this, the **SPD** as a party assumes the task of turning the demands of Social Democracy into concrete policies. This means that the SPD champions these demands in the Bundestag, the State parliaments and local councils. It advocates for the goals of Social

Democracy so that they are taken into account when making political decisions. The SPD represents citizens in the parliaments.

The **trade unions** represent the workers. They campaign for fair wages and good working conditions. They fight so that everyone can afford to live well from their work. The trade unions and the SPD always work closely together on this.

Self-help organisations offer help when facing various life situations. As an example, the AWO is the place to go if you need support in everyday life.

Free associations such as refugee **networks** or **citizens' initiatives** also champion the goals of Social Democracy. They are active where every individual can make a difference.

Taken together, all these forces can advance the goals of Social Democracy. The better they work together, the more progress is made.

Which tasks need to be solved in future?

There are various **areas of activity** in which Social Democracy must find solutions for the future. How should society develop? What role should the state play in this?

Below, we will take a look at these areas of activity. We ask ourselves what answers Social Democracy can offer to the most pressing questions. Separate topics often extend into several areas of activity.

Democracy and society:

Social Democracy stands for parliamentary democracy. All citizens should decide together. Policies should not be influenced by industries with a lot of money, but rather by communities of citizens. New models for participation allow citizens to have even more of a say. Political education programmes strengthen our understanding of democracy. Education arms us against right-wing currents and divisive movements. The guiding principle of solidarity must be reinforced.



Welfare state:

A strong welfare state should enable all people to live a good life. This includes creating equal opportunities for all. Education must be accessible to everyone. No one should be excluded from social life due to illness or unemployment. Social Democracy has developed many approaches to reform the welfare state and overcome divisions in society.



Economy and the world of work:

The world of work is changing. Digitalisation and sustainable climate policy have resulted in many jobs disappearing. But new, different jobs are being created in their place. Social Democracy must follow and guide the transformation we are seeing in the world of work.



The work itself, or the profits accumulated through this work, must not lie with fewer and fewer people. Work and the profit from it must be distributed fairly.

Climate policy:

The climate crisis presents us with major tasks. We need to find international solutions to limit climate change. Industrialised countries must bear responsibility for the consequences of industrialisation. We can no longer focus on limitless growth. We must manufacture less and consume less. This will allow the quality of goods to increase. Climate policy must be good for everyone: raw materials and goods must be distributed fairly. All people need access to drinking water. We must consider the needs of all people.



Integration and immigration:

Germany is a country of immigration. We need the influx of skilled workers in nursing and technical professions, for example. For this, we need an immigration law that provides clear guidelines and – by extension – security. We must combat the causes of why people flee worldwide, such as war and poverty. In this way, fewer people are forced to leave their homes. We need good, clear rules in asylum policy. Those who are persecuted and displaced should always feel safe and protected in Germany.



Europe:

Social Democracy is an internationally oriented movement. A united Europe with common rules and organisations is therefore its goal. The European Union should become a union of citizens.



Solidarity and justice must play a bigger role. One such example would be to implement common rules across the labour market to protect workers from exploitation.

Globalisation and global politics:

We are facing challenges that can only be solved if the whole world works together. These include the climate crisis, health care for all, fighting hunger and responsibly using raw materials. We therefore need to reach international agreements. Other building blocks include fair world trade and new forms of development aid – without creating new dependencies.



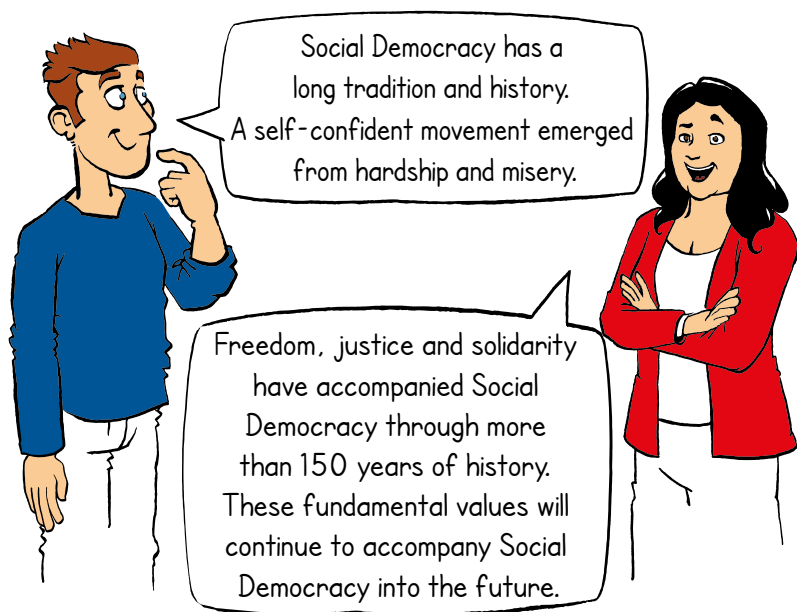
Peace and security:

Peace and security have always been a fundamental concern of Social Democracy. We need guidelines on how to deal with enemies of democracy. We want a peaceful, safe world for all. We therefore need guidelines for dealing with right-wing and authoritarian governments. We need international regulations and alliances to intervene in human rights violations and wars.



We need a strong UN in which states no longer set out a foreign policy alone, but agree policies for the world together.

Social Democracy can look back on its history with pride. And looking back gives us courage to look forward to the future. Social Democracy has achieved a lot. Persecution and oppression could never stop Social Democracy. Social Democracy still faces great challenges. Let's tackle these challenges head on!



EXPLANATION OF KEY TERMS

Workers' Educational Association

The Workers' Educational Associations were founded around the time of the 1848 revolution as an association of workers and craftsmen. Workers learned about politics together.

Working class

The term working class refers to the social class of dependent employees. At the time of industrialisation, these were mainly factory workers.

BAföG

Abbreviation for **B**undes-**A**usbildungs**f**örderungs-**G**esetz (Federal Training Assistance Act). This law regulates the entitlement to cash benefits from the state when undertaking degree studies or training. In most cases, 'BAföG' refers to the cash benefit itself.

Occupation zones

After World War II, Germany was divided into administrative zones until the Federal Republic and the GDR were formed.

Federal Council

Members from all the State parliaments are represented in the Federal Council. The Federal Council participates in federal legislation and has important control rights in exceptional situations.

Club of Rome

Experts from over 30 countries who are committed to protecting the environment and using the earth's raw materials responsibly.

In 1970, the Club of Rome published 'The Limits to Growth' report as a warning against the exploitation of the earth.

German Reich

The name for Germany from 1871 to 1945. In 1871, the German nation state was founded when the Prussian King Wilhelm I was crowned Emperor. The name 'German Reich' not only applied to the Empire, but was also used during the Weimar Republic and the dictatorship until 1945.

Dictatorship

A form of government in which the government has almost unlimited power. The government (a person or group) is not confirmed by elections and is not controlled by an independent parliament.

Renewable Energy Act (Erneuerbare-Energien-Gesetz, EEG)

The EEG regulates feeding energy from renewable sources (wind, water, sun) into the electricity grid. The aim is to increase the share of renewable energy in the electricity mix.

World War I

World War I, from 1914 to 1918, was the first war fought with modern war technology. Around 17 million people lost their lives. The World War I ended when the German Reich surrendered. The German Reich was obliged to make large payments to the victorious powers and lost its colonies.

Exile

Involuntary period spent abroad. People go into exile because they are persecuted or threatened in their home country for political reasons.

Gender quota

The stipulation that a certain proportion of the members of a body must be women or men. Gender quotas are necessary as long as women are not yet represented equally and in proportion to their share of the population in certain areas.

General strike

Strike in all areas of labour. A general strike is a means of political pressure, for example to prevent a dictator from taking over a government.

Globalisation

Globalisation means linking the world. This is done primarily through global cooperation and trade. Globalisation can lead to better living conditions for all if it is managed in a socially acceptable and equitable way. But it can also lead to countries becoming impoverished because other countries enrich themselves without regulation.

Grundgesetz (Basic Law)

The constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany. The fundamental rights are set out in the first 19 articles. They apply to all people in Germany. Government, parliaments and courts are bound by these fundamental rights.

Holocaust

The systematic persecution and murder of six million Jews as a result of the Nazi sphere of control. It was a genocide of unimaginable proportions.

Industrialisation

Developing from an agricultural and artisanal society to an industrial society. Industrialisation began in Germany after 1815.

Inflation

When prices increase, the purchasing power of money decreases. Deflation is the opposite and prices fall.

Bankruptcy

Inability to pay. If a company can no longer pay its debts, it must file for bankruptcy.

Jamaica coalition

Coalition between the Union, the FDP and the Greens. The party colours of black, yellow and green match the colours of the Jamaican flag.

Cold War

The period after World War II until the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc. Western powers and the Eastern bloc were hostile towards one other. The end of the Cold War was heralded by Mikhail Gorbachev's policies.

Surrender

Admitting to having lost a war. A surrender is usually followed by an armistice and a peace treaty.

Colonies

Lands appropriated in other parts of the world that are assigned to one's own national territory and economically exploited. The German

Reich mainly had colonies in Africa from 1880. After World War I, the German Reich had to cede all its colonies.

Communist Manifesto

The Communist Manifesto was published by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in London in 1848. It was a political programme set out by the communists. The Communist Manifesto explains the positions of Marxism and emphasises the necessity of class struggle to overcome capitalism.

Economic stimulus package

Government measures to overcome an economic crisis. This may be state aid for certain sectors of the economy or an increase in state orders.

Concentration camp

Labour camps and subsequent extermination camps run by the Nazis. Millions of people were imprisoned there under the worst conditions. Later, mainly Jews – but also Sinti, Roma and others – were systematically murdered there.

Kosovo war

One of the armed conflicts during the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia. There were human rights violations and massacres of the population. For this reason, NATO intervened in the conflict.

Reduced hours compensation

If work is temporarily lost in a company due to particular circumstances, the company can register for the reduced hours compensation scheme. Workers then do not work or work less than usual. Missing wages are partly compensated by the scheme.

Marshall Plan

US reconstruction programme for Europe following World War II. The United States supplied goods and provided economic aid.

Co-determination

Legally regulated participation of company employees in decisions

National Socialism

Political school of thought advocated by Adolf Hitler and his NSDAP party. National Socialism is anti-democratic and racist. It thrives on the idea that some people are better than others. National Socialists established the dictatorship of the Third Reich in Germany from 1933 to 1945. They were responsible for World War II and for murdering six million European Jews.

Nation state

State that essentially comprises a cohesive people. A multinational state is the opposite.

Emergency decree

Emergency decrees can be enacted by the government. This circumvents parliament's decision. Emergency decrees are intended for crisis situations. At the end of the Weimar Republic, other political decisions were also made by emergency decree.

Opposition

The parties represented in parliament that are not involved in government. The opposition has an important control function.

Parliamentary Republic

Form of government in which parliament appoints the government.

In Germany, the people elect the members of parliament (MPs).

The MPs then elect the government.

Coup

By launching a coup, a small group from the military or politics tries to overthrow the existing government. A military coup is often followed by a military dictatorship.

In contrast to a coup, a revolution is initiated by large parts of the population.

Councils (workers' and soldiers' councils)

In the November Revolution of 1918, workers' and soldiers' councils were formed in cities. They led politics and administration.

Councillors' Republic

In a Councillors' Republic, councillors are elected by groups of the population. The councils each send delegates to the next higher council. Councillors are bound by the will of their constituents when making decisions.

Revolution

Rapid, fundamental change in a political system. Revolutions are usually initiated by large parts of the population. They are often violent, but there are also peaceful revolutions.

SA/SS

Abbreviation for Sturmabteilung (SA) and Schutzstaffel (SS). Two organisations established under the National Socialists that were

responsible for suppressing and intimidating political opponents. They were extremely brutal when street fighting. The SS was subsequently in charge of the concentration camps.

Solidarity

An attitude of connection and mutual support. Acting in solidarity not only means looking at your own advantage, but achieving good conditions for as many people as possible. The aim is a just and supportive community.

Social security/social insurance

Before the introduction of statutory social insurance, people were not covered if they fell ill or had an accident. In fact, workers often lost their jobs in case of illness. Workers established solidarity funds into which everyone paid and from which those in need were supported. Bismarck introduced statutory social insurance from 1883.

Socialist International (SI) and Progressive Alliance

The SI is a worldwide federation of socialist and Social Democratic parties. In recent years, the SI has been criticised for being undemocratic. For this reason, the SPD withdrew from the SI in 2013. Together with others, the party founded the Progressive Alliance, to which more than 100 parties now belong.

Underground (political)

In dictatorships, parties that think differently are often banned and their supporters persecuted. The government's opponents therefore often carry out their political work in secret.

Constitution

The constitution is the most important document for a state or an alliance. The constitution defines the structure, tasks and duties of the individual state organs.

Treaty of Versailles

Peace treaty signed after the World War I between the German Reich and the Allies. It attributed sole blame to the German Reich.

The German Reich had to pay high reparations, cede territories and give up all colonies. The Treaty of Versailles placed a heavy burden on the Weimar Republic.

Armistice

The end of hostilities. The conditions for peace are negotiated afterwards.

Currency reform

Reorganisation of the financial system, mostly after major financial crises. The currency is revalued or replaced by a new currency. In the Weimar Republic, the currency reform was supposed to stop the rapid devaluation of money after the Great Depression. There were further currency reforms after World War II, in 1990 in the former GDR and in 2002 when the Euro was introduced.

Global economic crisis

The world economic crisis from 1929 onwards plunged the United States and Germany in particular into mass unemployment.

In Germany, this led to the strengthening of the National Socialists.

The banking crisis of 2008 can also be described as a global economic crisis. We have still not overcome its consequences.

Reunification

Common term for the accession of the former GDR to the Federal Republic of Germany after the Peaceful Revolution of 1989.

Two Plus Four Agreement

The name of the treaty between the two parts of Germany and the four victorious powers following World War II. Until then, the victorious powers still had rights of control over German states. By signing the Two Plus Four Agreement, Germany gained unrestricted state independence.

World War II

World War II began on 1 September 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. At the beginning of the war, Hitler was able to overwhelm large areas of Europe using Blitzkrieg tactics. By attacking the Soviet Union, Hitler started a war on a second front. War crimes of immense proportions took place in the territories occupied by Germany. From 1942, the Germans also systematically murdered the Jews in Europe. The turning point came when the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union fought together against Germany. The German army was pushed back and the occupied territories liberated. Hitler committed suicide on 30 April 1945. The leaders of the German armed forces surrendered on 8 May 1945.

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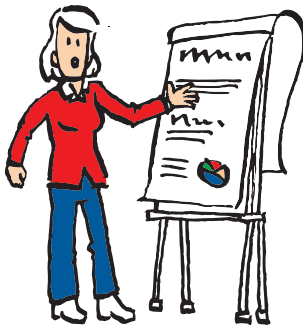
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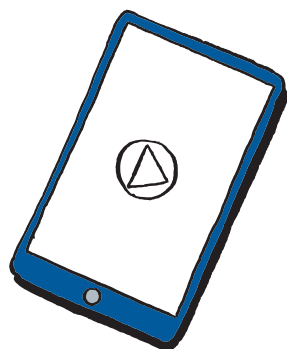
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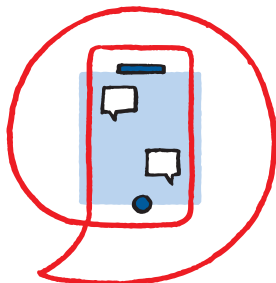
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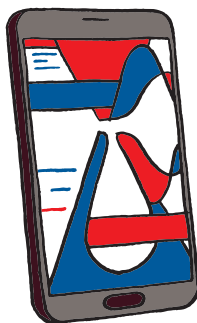
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