

1932 German Elections Ephemera Collection:

An Inventory of the Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	1932 German Elections Ephemera
Title:	1932 German Elections Ephemera Collection
Dates:	1932-1939
Extent:	1 oversize box (osb)
Abstract:	The 1932 German Elections Ephemera Collection comprises printed publications including leaflets, broadsides, periodical issues and periodical issue reprints issued on behalf of or in opposition to several political parties seeking representation in the German political system. The majority of this material was created in response to the presidential election and the two Reichstag elections held during the year 1932.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-5372
Language:	English and German
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchase, 1939
Processed by:	Bob Taylor, 2015
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Sources:

"Election in Prussia Makes Nazi Party Largest in State Parliament," *Today in History: 24 April 1932*, 29 June 2015

[<http://skepticism.org/timeline/april-history/5132-election-in-prussia-make-nazi-party-largest-in-state-parliament>]

"German Federal Election, July 1932," *Wikipedia*, 29 June 2015

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_federal_election_July_1932]

"German Federal Election, November 1932," *Wikipedia*, 29 June 2015

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_federal_election_November_1932]

"German Presidential Election, 1932," *Wikipedia*, 29 June 2015

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_presidential_election_1932]

Gottschalk, Paul. *Memoirs of an Antiquarian Bookseller*. Gainesville, Fla.: University of Florida, 1967

"Paul von Hindenburg," *Wikipedia*, 29 June 2015 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_von_Hindenburg]

Scope and Contents

The 1932 German Elections Ephemera Collection comprises one box containing 171 printed publications, including leaflets, broadsides, periodical issues, and periodical issue reprints issued on behalf of several political parties seeking representation in the German political system, or by groups named or unnamed in opposition to specific political interests. Most of these publications address specific points of political action and are not generalized statements of policy or political theory. The materials are in German and the physical condition is on the whole very good, particularly remarkable considering that nearly all of the items present were printed on newsprint.

This material is related to four elections held in Germany in the year 1932. These were the presidential election (13 March and 10 April 1932), the election to the Prussian state Landtag or Parliament (24 April 1932), and the two elections to the German Reichstag (31 July and 6 November 1932).

These four elections are significant in German history as they were held in the final year of representative government under the Weimar constitution. The role of the Nazi party in German political life grew tremendously during 1932 as the political reaction to economic dislocation and political instability increasingly showed the inability of German representative government to resist the demands by the Nazis for effective control of Germany's political and economic life.

The German presidential election, 13 March and 10 April 1932. This was the third presidential election under the Weimar constitution, and pitted the incumbent Paul von Hindenburg against Adolf Hitler (Nazi) and Ernst Thälmann (Communist) in the first round and Hindenburg and Hitler in the April runoff. Hindenburg, who at age 84 had wanted to stand down as the president at the end of his term which began in 1925, permitted his name to be placed in nomination in a successful endeavor to keep Hitler from the office.

The Weimar constitution granted, via its Article 48, emergency executive powers of great magnitude to the president, including the power to dismiss and appoint chancellors. Hindenburg had increasingly made use of his executive powers in the face of the inability to govern that the Reichstag demonstrated as the depression deepened and opposition to political moderation and traditional parliamentary government grew. This collection includes fifteen items relating to the 1932 presidential election, six of them pro-Hindenburg, eight pro-Hitler, and one Thälmann-related.

Election to the Prussian state Landtag (24 April 1932). In the election for seats in the Prussian Landtag the Nazis increased their representation from nine seats to 162, making them the largest party in the body, despite which plurality they fell short of a voting majority. As Prussia represented nearly 62% of the land area of Weimar Germany this legislative success was perceived as a bellwether by the victorious Nazis.

The collection contains twenty eight items relating to the Prussian election. Of these, eight were issued on behalf of the Social Democratic Party, with most of the rest from several small parties. None of this material is of Nazi origin, although two were issued on behalf of the Communist party.

The German Reichstag election, 31 July 1932. In Germany's continuing parliamentary crisis President Hindenburg dissolved the seated Reichstag in June 1932 after appointing Franz von Papen as chancellor. Von Papen now headed a conservative (and essentially anti-democratic) coalition which, as a "presidential government" was to govern via Article 48 and President Hindenburg's continuing sufferance. Von Papen initially counted on Hitler throwing his support behind the von Papen government, but the strength of the Nazi party in the vote of 31 July 1932 was such (230 seats won, largest in the Reichstag at 37% of the total) that Hitler, on 13 August 1932 refused to join any coalition government. Hitler further demanded the chancellorship for himself.

After Hindenburg absolutely turned down Hitler's demands the stage was set for a very brief life for the Reichstag elected on 31 July. When the Reichstag convened in September 1932 its sole act was to pass a vote of no confidence in the von Papen government. Von Papen in turn asked Hindenburg to dissolve the newly seated Reichstag. The president complied with the request and set elections for November 1932.

Eighty-two pieces of printed matter concerned with the 31 July 1932 Reichstag election are found in the collection. Forty-six of these were issued by or on behalf of the Nazi party, and nine each are of Social Democratic or Communist origin.

The German Reichstag election, 6 November 1932. While Nazi representation in the Reichstag dropped from 37% to 32% in the election of November 1932 the deadlock between President Hindenburg and Adolf Hitler continued. During discussions with Hindenburg and von Papen Hitler could obtain no concession beyond that of a potential vice chancellorship in a government with von Papen. For his part, Hitler continued his demand for the chancellorship.

In December 1932 von Papen committed a tactical political error which compelled his resignation as chancellor, his protection by President Hindenburg notwithstanding. After an interval Von Papen convinced himself and, at length President Hindenburg, that he could control Hitler in a multi-party cabinet in which, while Hitler was chancellor, the overall composition of the cabinet would be largely non-Nazi. Hindenburg, who trusted von Papen more than any of his potential alternatives, reluctantly endorsed this plan and swore Hitler in as the chancellor of Germany on 30 January 1933.

Within a short period of time Hitler had outflanked von Papen and the non-Nazi members of the "Government of National Concentration," as well as succeeding in having Hindenburg approve a series of Article 48 measures intended to suspend civil liberty in Germany. On 23 March 1933, President Hindenburg signed the Enabling Act of 1933 into law, thereby giving decrees of Chancellor Hitler the force of law.

At this point the Nazi *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power) was essentially complete, and henceforward Hitler's main concern was to maintain civil relations with the increasingly frail Hindenburg while awaiting his death, which occurred on 2 August 1934. Upon Hindenburg's passing the offices of president and chancellor were merged and Hitler, now the head of state as well as the head of government, took the titles leader and chancellor (Führer und Reichskanzler).

The Reichstag election of 6 November 1932 is represented in this collection by forty-six pieces of printed matter. Twenty-two of these were of Nazi origin and six were published by the Social Democratic party; the remaining eighteen pieces represent five different political parties.

Note on periodicals. There are several serial issues present in the collection that warrant specific mention: three publications of the Nazi party: *Der Angriff* (16 issues present), *Deutschland erwache!* (6 issues), and *Die Volksfront* (3 issues). *Vorwärts* (6 issues) published by the Social Democratic Party, The Communist Party's *Die Rote Fahne* (2 issues), and *Germania* (5 issues) of the German Center Party are also present.

Provenance and History

The 1932 German Elections Ephemera Collection was acquired by the University of Texas from the book dealer Paul Gottschalk. A pencil notation on the verso of Gottschalk's prospectus directed that the material be ordered and was signed and dated "DC / 3 Ja 38" (for, probably, Donald Coney, the university library director at that time; the actual date was 3 January 1939). No record exists of the material's disposition or use in following decades until it became a part of the Ransom Center holdings in the 1970s.

Berlin-born Paul Gottschalk (1880-1970) entered the book business in 1899 and by 1906 was in a position to pursue the rare book trade with regular visits to the United States, selling from his small stock and soliciting orders. After World War One military service he added scholarly serials to his rare books as the growth and increasing book budgets of American college and university libraries suggested that path to him.

In 1936, after Hitler's rise to power in Germany, Gottschalk as a Jew was obliged to liquidate his Berlin-based business. By means of a mock sale of his Berlin stock to the firms of Bernard Quaritch in Britain and Martinus Nijhoff in the Netherlands Gottschalk was able to remove a half million rare books and scholarly publications from Germany. From 1937 until the German invasion of Western Europe in 1940, he operated his business from The Hague in the Netherlands. Gottschalk was in the United States at the time of the German invasion, and it became his place of residence and principal place of work for the remainder of his active years. He became an American citizen in 1947.

Index Terms

People

Gottschalk, Paul, 1880- .

Subjects

Germany--History--1918-1933--Sources.

Germany--Politics and government--1918-1933--Sources.

Titles

Angriff (Berlin, Germany)

Deutschland erwache! (Berlin, Germany)

Vorwärts (Berlin, Germany)

Document Types

Broadsides.

Editorial cartoons.

Newspapers.

Pamphlets.

Political cartoons.

Container osb 1, osf 1 Political ephemera (including leaflets, broadsides, periodicals, and original collection prospectus), 1932-1939