

## ACTING OUT NAZI GERMANY: A ROLE-PLAY SIMULATION FOR THE HISTORY CLASSROOM

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The scene I confronted when I arrived in the classroom on that third day of the simulation unnerved me. Festooned all over the walls, the blackboard, the backs of chairs, and the door through which I had entered were photocopied political posters, some in full color, most in black and white, all sporting an array of frightening images from Germany in 1932: swastikas, hammers and sickles, pictures of Adolf Hitler and Karl Marx, a Socialist Party poster with a worker crucified upon a devilish swastika, invocations to vote for this candidate or that one, threats of dire consequences should one or the other side prevail. I quickly closed the windowed door and blocked it, fearful that a colleague or a student might happen by, glance in, and wonder what I was teaching these students. Students moved me out of the way and papered the door window with even more posters, and I confronted the unforeseen consequence of an improvisation. On a whim, at the end of the first day of a three-day simulation of the German Reichstag election of 1932, I had promised an extra 300 votes to whichever party put up the most posters on the third day, and my students had responded with ferocious energy! Well, I thought, that idea was obviously going to require a little bit of tweaking.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Students can really get involved in simulations. Properly structured, they represent the ultimate in active learning techniques, allowing participants not only to discuss historical events and their sources, but to try to reenact them, to get into the shoes of historical people and move around in them. A simulation comes closer than any other tool to helping students understand the past from the perspective of those who lived it.<sup>2</sup> When I ask students about the simulation in class evaluations at the end

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<sup>1</sup>To avoid rampant photocopying of posters, I created a rule for next time: no more than two copies of any one poster. It prompted more quality than quantity and also made it easier to dispose of them—which I was very careful to do in black bags—once the simulation had ended.

<sup>2</sup>Many articles on student role-playing and simulations have appeared in the pages of this and other journals. On simulations in general, see Linda K. Menton, "The Use of Simulation as a Teaching Strategy for Civic Understanding and Participation," *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods* 19 (Spring 1994): 3–18; Robert S. Feldman, "Historical Role Playing: An Alternative Teaching Strategy," *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods* 5 (Spring 1980): 6–74; and Kathryn N. McDaniel, "Four Elements of Successful Historical Role-Playing in the Classroom," *The History Teacher* 33 (May 2000): 289–416. For another specific example, see Noel C. Eggleston, "Role Playing: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II," *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods* 3 (Fall 1978): 52–58.

of the term, the reaction is nearly always enthusiastic. "I loved the simulation!" wrote one. "It was a great experience which helped me understand the actual election and how each group of people in German society was affected." Another wrote simply, "highlight of the course!" Students love simulations so much that they are always quick to offer specific suggestions for how they can be improved, made more challenging, or best of all, more realistic. That reaction demonstrates not only that students enjoy the experience, but that they make a real connection between the experience of the simulation and the history it is supposed to illuminate.<sup>3</sup>

Because simulations require a solid commitment of class time (a minimum of three days in my classes) as well as careful planning, the event or topic to be simulated must illustrate an important course theme. In various classes, I have structured simulations around medieval feudalism, the Terror in the French Revolution, the fall of the Soviet Union, the independence movement in nineteenth-century Latin America, and conflicts among the Italian Renaissance states in the fifteenth century. All of these, including the German election of 1932, are sufficiently detailed and involved to merit a substantial investment of class time and student effort.

### Setting up the Simulation

Once a topic is chosen, the simulation itself must be designed. I start with the rule that all roles must be gender-neutral. That is, both men and women must be able to play any role. In the important fifteen- to twenty-minute debriefing that ends every simulation, students can discuss how realistic or unrealistic this is (and thereby learn more about gender roles in different periods), but it is important that students of either gender be able to play every role. It is also practical, since the balance in the average classroom is usually too unpredictable to plan gender-specific roles in any but a single-gender institution.

Along with gender-neutrality goes the assumption that students will read substantially in the literature of the period before the simulation begins. Without a thorough grounding in the sources, simulations are nothing more than uninformed pretend-games. The German election simulation is part of an upper-division course in modern German history that I teach at Eastern Oregon University. Students have already read the Treaty of Versailles and the Weimar Constitution, taken notes in lectures on the period, seen slides, and watched the famous Nazi propaganda film

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<sup>3</sup>Many student suggestions have found their way into revised versions of this and other simulations. In the case of this one, students suggested that roles be assigned specific amounts of campaign money and that posters be required to be larger than standard 8 x 11-inch sheets to preclude rampant photocopying. Both suggestions were incorporated into revised versions.

*Triumph of the Will*.<sup>4</sup> For this particular simulation, they must read and write brief abstracts on a variety of reading selections, including Rosa Luxemburg's "Theses in the Tasks of International Social Democracy," and a selection on the KPD (German Communist Party) under the Republic. On Hitler and the Nazis, they read selections of *Mein Kampf*, an interesting piece on Nazi election methods, and a short selection from William Sheridan Allen's brilliant book, *The Nazi Seizure of Power*, which first inspired this particular simulation of a crucial election in a semi-fictional German town.<sup>5</sup>

The importance of a thorough grounding in the sources cannot be exaggerated. The purpose of any history class is to turn students into good historians, and that means helping them see how historians interpret the past through the documentary record. In a sense, a simulation is only a really grand strategy for helping students to understand, internalize, and analyze the readings. Requiring abstracts from each student on each reading allows the instructor to make sure they have read the material and processed it. After all, if something is worth reading, it is worth writing about. In addition, these short writing assignments provide another opportunity for students to practice writing. That said, these abstracts should be limited to no more than one typed page per selection so that they can be scanned fairly quickly by instructors already overloaded with work.

Despite the variety in topics, most of the simulations that I use in my classes are similarly structured. All have two kinds of roles: characters who seek action and those who carry that action through. In the German election simulation, the first group is made up of party leaders, strategists, and activists assigned specific amounts of campaign money they can use to "buy" votes and fictional numbers of paramilitary forces they can use to pressure others. The second group is made up of faction leaders, also assigned money amounts and numbers of men they can lend to make party gangs bigger. Unlike the first group, however, the second also possesses specific numbers of votes that can be pledged to one party or another. The dynamic of the simulation is fairly simple. The first group acts upon the second group to get what it wants. In this case, party leaders attempt to persuade or pressure faction leaders to commit

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<sup>4</sup>*Triumph of the Will* [videorecording] (Mamaroneck, NY: Images Film Archive, Inc., 1974).

<sup>5</sup>Rosa Luxemburg, "Theses in the Tasks of International Social Democracy" in her own *The Mass Strike: The Political Party and the Trade Unions* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 218–22; and on the KPD, Ossip K. Flechtheim, "The Role of the Communist Party" in *The Path to Dictatorship: Ten Essays by German Scholars* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 89–112. The selection of *Mein Kampf* is taken from George H. Stein, ed., *Hitler* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 21–44, and students read a collection of documents on Nazi electioneering: Merry Wiesner, Julius R. Ruff, William B. Wheeler, "Selling a Totalitarian System" in *Discovering the Western Past: A Look at the Evidence* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin), 358–74. Finally, they read selections from William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1984).

sufficient votes to carry the fictional city of Rastenheim during the German Reichstag election of 1932. The role descriptions for the various faction leaders are fairly detailed, and some are intentionally slanted to favor one party over another. Thus, the farm faction leader is an anti-Semite who fears communism and once fought in the right-wing paramilitary Freikorps. The Nazis did, in fact, draw a great deal of support from rural farmers fearful of communism and of the threats posed to them by the economic depression. By contrast, the coal union leader is designed to be more attracted to the Communist Party, since that too was the case in the actual event. Others, such as a Jewish retail trade association leader, find themselves stuck, as many Germans were in 1932, between two unhappy extremes. Small shop owners were ardently anti-Communist, but Jewish shop owners were just as ardently anti-Nazi. This character usually tries to support the SPD (German Socialist Party). I assign a fair amount of detail to the roles in order to focus students more clearly and get the simulation off and running more quickly, and I distribute the simulation packet several days before the unit itself begins so that students can start to think about characters in advance. Other instructors might wish to design less detailed roles to give students more time to research and "create" those roles for themselves. Such an approach would allow instructors to build research tools and skills into the exercise, but would also require more time.

Anti-Semitism is, of course, a dangerous force to play with, and some might object to the idea of turning students into Nazis, however temporarily. I have struggled with this issue over the years. I always follow this particular simulation with a week specifically focused on the Holocaust. Students watch the riveting film *The Wannsee Conference*, read Elie Wiesel's *Night*, and get a detailed—and grim—slide lecture on the camps, many of which (including Auschwitz) I have visited.<sup>6</sup> In a very real sense, this simulation is part of that unit, since I find that our discussions of the Holocaust are far more compelling and deeply felt after students have themselves experienced at least a shadow of what Germans endured in this tumultuous period. Including the theme of anti-Semitism in the simulation enriches the learning experience by making the horrors that followed all the more real.

### Simulation of the German Reichstag Election of 1932

As the unit begins, it is important to make sure that students understand what they are supposed to do each day of the simulation. That is, the overall goal (winning the election) needs to be broken down into smaller goals. Thus, on the first day, each party meets and prepares its positions. Faction leaders begin to form coalitions, to meet

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<sup>6</sup>*The Wannsee Conference*, co-production of Infafilm GMBH Munich, Austrian Television-O.R.F. and Bavarian Broadcasting Corp. [videorecording] (Chicago, IL: Home Vision, 1987); Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982).

and find out about the others, to decide where they stand on certain issues and whom they might support. Each gives a brief speech outlining his/her goals and positions. Each party must then select a candidate from among the faction leaders by the end of that first day. On the second day, they bargain, politick, and cajole. I usually give the SS officer inside knowledge of a past crime committed by one of the faction leaders, since the Nazis were more likely than any other party to use such ill-gotten knowledge to their advantage. One year, the student playing this role ingeniously prepared two posters for the second day. One showed him shaking the hand of the blackmailed faction leader and welcoming his support for the party. The other showed the same faction leader on a wanted poster, his past crime plastered all over it. The student playing the SS officer asked the faction leader at the beginning of the period which poster he wanted published. The faction leader supported the Nazis. The election of 1932 was often ugly, and this particular bit of improvisation showed the extent to which the students involved understood that unhappy fact. On the third day come the various party meetings, one of which is invariably broken up by simulated violence, the less brutal party losing votes thereby.<sup>7</sup> That too happened a great deal in 1932. Once the meetings are over, we count votes and figure out who won and why.

Once the simulation ends, I always have students write a brief one-page summary of what happened to them and what they learned. Then we take some additional time to discuss the experience. This discussion offers the opportunity to point to actions that were or were not realistic, and to talk about the event itself. It also offers a crucial opportunity for personal perspective, so that students who have blackmailed others, who have employed racism as a tool of politics, or who have simulated violence against others can talk about what they did and what they learned from their actions. The discussion is usually spirited because students have invested so much of themselves in this experience, and the opportunity to show them how their own frustrations, fears, and triumphs mirror those of Germans in 1932 offers one of the most satisfying experiences a teacher of history can have.

The instructor must be alert and active in the classroom throughout the simulation, making sure the rules are followed, answering questions as they come up, taking notes on what kinds of changes to make so it can be revised to work better next time. This particular simulation is structured for a class of twenty-two, but it could be expanded or contracted depending on how many students are actually present. I have run it with a class of sixteen by dropping some roles (the Junker, one of the retail representatives, one of the steel union leaders, and the university student) and reducing

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<sup>7</sup>Teachers will have to decide for themselves whether to include simulated violence in the simulation. Most of the students taking part in this exercise are upper-division history majors who can handle this experience with some measure of maturity. Younger students, especially in high school, might not do so well, and I would not include it if I believed it might disrupt the class so as to undermine the entire learning experience.

and/or combining party roles. Attendance is required as part of a separate discussion grade for the class, and students who begin the simulation but do not show up (without a really good excuse) for either or both of the other two days are doubly penalized. The absence of a participant can cause real problems in a simulation, and it is crucial that students understand the importance of constant attendance.

To give a better understanding of the simulation, the following "simulation packet" sets up the activity:

### **Simulation Packet**

For three days in this class, we will try to simulate, as realistically as possible, the desperate German Reichstag elections of 1932. A great deal was at stake in these elections, and all sides knew it. For the Nazis, these elections represented their best—perhaps last—chance at power. For the Communists, this worst year of the Depression also represented their best chance at last to achieve the long-promised dictatorship of the Proletariat. Both sides knew that if their enemies won, their own physical survival would be doubtful. The country was increasingly polarized, the republican/moderate Socialist center crumbling between the increasing power of the extreme left and right. People who might not otherwise have wished to choose between the KPD and NSDAP were increasingly forced to do so. That choice was agonizingly complex, built upon all kinds of ideas, attitudes, and prejudices built up over the years. Germans in 1932 were intimately involved in their own history, thinking constantly about the glories and humiliations of the past, of the Great War, the Empire, the Republic, the Treaty of Versailles, of rights and privileges gained and lost, of their economic position, their social status, and their cultural heritage. Neither the Nazis nor the Communists could permit any voter to forget the past, but each had a very different view of it.

There will be two kinds of roles in this exercise. On the one side will be representatives of the parties. Some of you will be Communists, others Nazis, and a few will be Socialists and Monarchists. On the other side, some of you will represent voting blocks that all parties will try "by any means" to hold, to win, to ruin. Politics in this era was neither clean nor decent, and often gruesomely violent. We will build violence into our simulation, but we will ONLY simulate it! The danger is relatively small, but do not get TOO carried away with your role! Enjoy it, take it seriously, but keep a small part of yourself outside of it, so we can all be friends afterwards. That said, take it as seriously as Germans did in 1932. Only if you do, will you then be successful in learning why Germans did what they did in this, perhaps the most crucial year in their entire history. REMEMBER TO READ THROUGH THE ENTIRE HANDOUT CAREFULLY!

**Setting**

Rastenheim is our fictional industrial town in the Ruhr of northwestern Germany. It has a fairly large body of factory workers whose union has traditionally supported the SPD, but whose loyalties are now up for grabs. The factories are steel works supported by coal mines nearby. The town is surrounded by farmlands on hillsides whose relatively poor farmers eke out a living growing grapes for wine. Rastenheim has a small university and is a regional administrative center of the Republic. It therefore also has a fair number of students and civil servants. Placed as it is in the Ruhr, memories of the French occupation of 1923 are strong, and there is a lingering nationalism here. That said, the Depression has hit the town hard, and its workers have suffered, while the local factory owners, one of whom is Jewish, seem to be living in the same grand style as always. It lies near the demilitarized Rhineland, and while many of its men were once in the Freikorps, there are no army units stationed here. In a town this size, most people in leadership positions know each other.

**Roles****Nazis**

1. Political Strategist/Propagandist: You are in charge of general party strategy for this region but must work in conjunction with the others because they have their own independent avenues to the party leadership. Your party sponsor, however, is Hermann Goering, the Nazi Reichstag leader, and he has the ear of the Führer. You need a candidate for the election who will be pliant but able. You are especially good at organizing meetings, making posters, and formulating slogans. Party dues give you a beginning war chest of 50,000 marks.

2. SS Leader, this district: You are in charge of local party leader security and report directly to Heinrich Himmler. Though not an ideologue, you are an ardent anti-Semite and a fanatical follower of Hitler. You distrust anyone in the party who expresses the slightest lack of confidence in the world-historical inevitability of Nazi victory. You are also willing to do anything—anything—to insure that victory.

3. SA Leader, this district: You are in charge of the local SA group. You oversee security at party meetings and also plot acts of violence and sabotage against the party's enemies. You report to the SA leader Ernst Roehm who is the only Nazi capable, and willing, of challenging Hitler for the leadership of the party. You're a thug, and you hate the superior attitudes of the SS. You command a paramilitary gang of around 170.

4. Racial Theorist and Ideologue: You write the speeches and help to plot strategy. You are an even more ardent anti-Semite than the SS leader. You are an expert on the writings of the Führer and help to ensure that the national party line is followed at the local level.

### Communists

1. Comintern Liaison: You report on party activities to the Communist International controlled by Moscow. Your primary target has always been the SPD and the Republic. The Nazis can be dealt with later. You are especially intolerant of any deviations from the party line but sufficiently flexible in your methods to bend in winning what you believe in your heart will be the true victory of the Proletariat. Party dues and Soviet contributions give you a starting war chest of 60,000 marks.

2. Party Strategist/Propagandist: You are Jewish. You came to the KPD after the failure of the Spartacist Uprising. You were a supporter of Rosa Luxemburg, and your job now is to win a victory for the KPD no matter what. It is German workers who matter to you—no one else. You need a candidate for the Reichstag elections who will support the Communist Revolution when it comes.

3. Labor Union Liaison: You also are Jewish. You came to the party out of the steel unions after the Depression convinced you that the SPD had failed. You have contacts in the unions that are valuable to the party, but your recent arrival makes your devotion and ideology suspect to older party leaders.

4. Red Fighter's League Leader: You are the opposite number to the Nazi SA leader. You are in charge of security at KPD meetings and also in charge of covert operations and violence against other parties. You have a long police record stretching back to your work protecting strikers during the Great War. You're a thug. You command a paramilitary gang of around 120.

### SPD

1. Party Strategist/Propagandist: You've been in the SPD all your life. Friedrich Ebert was your hero, and you believe in the survival of the Republic. You are trying to save it even as support falls away from your party. You are also Jewish. Dues and national contributions give you a starting war chest of 100,000 marks, more than any other party.

2. Reichsbanner Leader: You are the SPD equivalent to the Red Fighter's League leader of the KPD and the SA leader of the Nazis. You've been around a long time, protecting meetings, attacking the meetings of others. Your forces are now outnumbered two to one by both the SA and the Red Fighter's League. You're slightly less of a thug than your counterparts. You have some ethics, and you command a seasoned gang of around 70.

3. SPD Union Liaison: You've held the steel unions of the town in your pocket for a long time, but they're beginning to move away. You need to try to hold them for the Republic, but you yourself are beginning to have doubts about your own party.

### Faction Leaders

1. Local Monarchist/Nationalist: You are a Junker, former officer in the Great War who served under von Hindenburg on the eastern front and was awarded the Iron

Cross. You find the Republic distasteful and believe it will fall. Your dream is to restore the monarchy, and you support the presidential candidacy of Hindenburg because you believe he shares that goal. You feel you can use the parties opposing the Republic to bring the Kaiser back and restore proper order to Germany. You are wealthy and have considerable influence, especially over the civil service and with the industrialists. You are a local magistrate who is willing to use his authority against the Republic he represents. You technically command the local police commandant whom you despise. You have a war chest to contribute of 75,000 marks.

2. Industrialist #1: You own the steel works of Rastenheim. They have been in your family for three generations. Before that, your family was a merchant dynasty. You are not a member of the nobility, but you are at heart a monarchist. You fear, however, that the monarchists cannot stand against the Communists, and you are especially afraid of them. You represent many other large businessmen in the town and have access to a great deal of cash in the amount of around 100,000 marks. You can scrounge up a gang of 20. You are persuadable.

3. Industrialist #2: You own the coal mines around Rastenheim. You come from a very old Jewish family that has operated in this region for centuries. You are sensitive to anti-Semitism but believe your wealth and connections can protect you. You are linked to several large banking families in Berlin and Hamburg and have access to large amounts of cash that you are willing to lend to the right cause (around 150,000 marks). You have always allied yourself very closely to the SPD. You can call together a gang of 25 ruffians.

4. Retail Trader's Association representative #1: You represent the local shopkeepers and smaller artisans. The depression has been particularly hard on your group, and the political climate frightens you very much. You fought as a soldier towards the end of the War and did not see much action. You are a German nationalist. You control a voting block of around 1000 and a gang of around 15.

5. Retail Trader's Association representative #2: Like #1 you represent local retailers. You're Jewish and operate a pawnshop on the main street of the town. Unfortunately, business has been a little too good. You need to protect your interests and those of others in your community. You committed a crime years ago and managed to cover it up. You're afraid someone will find out about it. [NOTE: I will decide who finds out and when!] You control a voting block of around 500 and a gang of 10.

6. Steel Union Leader #1: You've been around the unions for a long time, and you've seen parties come and go. You want what's best for your workers, and you're not at all sure the SPD can deliver the goods anymore. You've held your men out of the Reichsbanner but haven't committed them yet to any other group. You're persuadable, but you're also ethical. You hold the union purse strings, but you can't count on as many men as your younger colleague. You control a voting block of around 1,500 and a gang of 25.

7. Steel Union Leader #2: You're a younger union leader and don't much like taking orders from the old timers even though you cooperate with them. You think the old SPD has sold the unions a bill of goods and want to change to another party. Everyone is trying to pull you to their side. You're a little anti-Semitic because you've had to sell some things at the pawn shop, but you're not a rabid anti-Semite. You're persuadable. You control a voting block of around 2,500 and a gang of 30.

8. Coal Mine Union Leader: You've worked in the pits most of your life, and you hate the owners with a passion unmatched by any other union leader. You believe fervently that the owners are a class that has oppressed the workers for years. You want back at them. Whoever will fulfill that wish has your support and that of your miners, who can be very valuable in a fight at a party meeting. You control a voting block of around 1,000 and a gang of 35 rough coal miners.

9. Farm Leader: You represent the farmers, mostly vintners, around Rastenheim. Your farmers are terrified of the Communists and the Depression. You want stability and order. You were a member of the Freikorps in the early 20s. You hate Jews. You command a voting block of around 500 and a gang of 15.

10. Civil Service/Police Leader: You represent Rastenheim's civil servants and, more importantly, its police commanders. Your men can decide whose meetings get protected and whose don't. You've never liked the Republic, and you've never liked the SPD, but you can be bought. You are hopelessly corrupt, and there's not an ethical bone in your body. You resent the local magistrate because he has something on you. You'd like him out of the way. On Day Three, you will have the power to cancel one of the three meetings, assuming you're alive to do it and also assuming that your squad of 150 loyal, corrupt, armed police is not hopelessly outnumbered. Remember, though, that allying with the wrong side could mean your job and everything you've worked for.

11. Student Leadership: You represent the student fraternities of the University. It's a widely varied group, but you are a good speaker with a lot of influence. Students are wavering between Communists and Nazis, concerned with which one truly represents the wave of the future. Your support is crucial, because you can call your supporters to demonstrate in the heart of the town at almost any time. You believe that Germany desperately needs a change, but you haven't yet decided which direction that change should take. You're persuadable and many of your students are fairly wealthy. You control a voting block of around 500 and a cash fund of 25,000 marks. If need be, you can add 35 angry students to any gang-related activity.

### The Process

Votes can be obtained in the following way: First, faction leaders with voting blocks can, at any time, commit those blocks to one of the candidates. Second, additional votes are available at a cost of 50 marks each in campaign expenses. Third,

that party that has the most election posters placed in the room at the beginning of Day Three gets 1,000 extra votes (note: there can be no more than two copies of any one poster, and all must be larger than a standard 8x11-inch sheet of paper), and that party with the most gang members under its control at the end of Day Three gets 500 extra votes. The party with the highest quality poster, both in workmanship and in realism for the period, gets an extra 200 votes. Campaign money can also be used to buy extra gang members, at a cost of 20 marks per thug, but keep in mind that money used to buy thugs cannot then be used to buy votes.

**DAY ONE:** On the first day, the Nazis, KPD, SPD, and Faction Leaders will meet for 15 minutes to work out their initial positions and relationships. During the second 20 minutes, each of the Faction Leaders will make a brief speech of only TWO MINUTES outlining his/her position. During the last 15 minutes, each of the parties will try to secure a candidate from among the faction leaders. It will be assumed, unless he/she is won over by one of the other parties, that the Junker will stand as a nationalist candidate.

**DAY TWO:** Campaigning will commence. Each party will plan a public meeting for Day Three, and it will be up to the representatives of each to plot how they want to deal with the other. Most importantly, they will try to win over those faction leaders whose support is still available. Faction leaders who commit to a party must do so because that party appeals to them for a historically defensible reason. Remember that money is important for fighting a campaign. After thirty minutes on this day, all faction leaders must publicly commit either their gang members or their money to one of the three parties. Parties will then announce how much money has been amassed. The party with the most money might win. They can amass no more than the total amount allocated to the various positions. Towards the end of class, the parties will publish their positions by making brief five-minute speeches. Extemporaneous debates and demonstrations may also take place, but there can be no organized violence against candidates until Day Three.

**DAY THREE:** First, it will be determined which group has been awarded votes for the number of posters and for the highest quality poster. After an initial few minutes to organize, 10-minute party meetings will be held. The SPD will hold its meeting beginning with a speech by its candidate. Then the KPD will hold a similar meeting, followed by the Nazis. Demonstrations and interruptions are permitted. Physical violence, if planned, will be simulated by the use of individual sheets of notebook paper rolled up to resemble clubs. A meeting can only be successfully broken up if the number of thugs attacking the meeting outnumber those who defend it. Any party whose meeting is successfully broken up will lose 500 votes in the election. Once the meetings are over, a vote will be held among the Faction Leaders tallying their voting blocks and adding votes purchased or coerced with gang members to see who wins the election of 1932 in Rastenheim. On this day (and not before), the Nazis and the KPD can each assassinate ONE person, but it cannot be a candidate. If

the assassinated person is a faction leader, the voting block assigned to that leader no longer counts in the general voting. If it is a member of one of the parties, that party automatically loses 200 votes.

### Some Possible Outcomes

The simulation is structured to favor the Nazis, just as were conditions in 1932. Thus the Nazis usually win the election in Rastenheim. The extent of their victory has varied, however, and as in all student role-plays, the abilities and motivations of individual students playing specific roles have had a substantial impact on the exercise as a whole. Where particularly able students have taken other party roles, especially in the Communist KPD, the Nazi victory has occasionally been fairly close. In one case, the Communists were so desperate to win that they defied the readings and formed an unlikely coalition with the Socialists. Once the exercise was over, we discussed why such an alliance was unlikely in 1932, reviewing the enmity between Communists and Socialists, but we also noted that such a coalition became more likely later on in other countries when Hitler's Germany became an increasing threat to the Soviet Union.

It is always interesting to see which students want to play specific roles. The Nazi roles always go quickly (especially that of the SS officer), simply because students like to play roles they perceive as villainous. Yet I have seen no set pattern to indicate that a certain "type" of student will always take a certain role. I am often surprised at their choices, and that surprise helps to make the simulation continuously new and exciting for me as well as for the students.

Even long after it has ended, a simulation can continue to have an impact. Last fall, I had a visit from a student who had taken this particular class eight years ago. She asked what I was teaching, and upon learning it was German history, began to wax enthusiastic about that simulation. "That was really fun. I think I learned more in those three days in that class than I did in all of some of the other classes I took." I was happy to have the compliment, but kept thinking to myself how much better that simulation was now than it had been the first time we played it! Simulations can and should be revised and improved each time they are used. They require a fair amount of work, both for students and for teachers, but if they are structured well, they can be a highlight not only of one course, but of a student's entire learning experience, and the lessons learned can easily last a lifetime.