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### **Germany's Forgotten Champion of Land Reform: Adolf Damaschke**

- Adolf Damaschke, *Die Bodenreform. Grundsätzliches und Geschichtliches zur Erkenntnis und Überwindung der sozialen Not*. (Jena, 1900), 175-177, in: German History in Documents and Images [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=647](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=647), accessed Feb. 20 2019.

*Die Bodenreform. Grundsätzliches und Geschichtliches zur Erkenntnis und Überwindung der sozialen Not*, or *Land Reform* [Fundamental and Historical Observations on Understanding and Overcoming Social Hardship] is an economic book by German teacher, politician and economist Adolf Wilhelm Ferdinand Damaschke (1865-1935). GHDI's excerpt, "Depopulation of the Countryside," is taken from this book. *Die Bodenreform* was first published in 1902 and the last publication, the twentieth edition, was in 1923. Several editions are available in print or eBook format through the UCSB library or through UC interlibrary loan. Other editions are available through WorldCat libraries. The first edition of *Die Bodenreform* is available for access online as an eBook through Hathi Trust. The original copy was provided by the University of Wisconsin (<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89097113930;view=1up;seq=1>).

Adolf Damaschke was born on November 24, 1865 in Berlin. According to the German Wikipedia page on Damaschke, he was born into a family of carpenters, and during his childhood endured an impoverished lifestyle while living in a cramped tenement. Over-crowding denied Damaschke space in a public elementary school, but he was given an opportunity to attend a private school through public welfare. In 1883, at eighteen years old Damaschke was educated through the Berlin Pedagogical Seminar for elementary school teachers. Damaschke became a teacher ten years later but was penalized by his employer for protesting and campaigning for the freedom of teaching material. In response he chose to resign.

According to his German Wikipedia page, Damaschke received his first taste of what he would go on to dedicate his life to, land reform, through a lecture by German economist and politician Adolph Wagner. Wagner's lecture was on the profits of land speculators after the

Franco-Prussian War. In the lecture Wagner reported that land prices rose by up to 30 percent, leaving thousands of working-class families unable to pay rent, forcing them to become homeless. This could be linked to the GHDI's *Bodenreform* excerpt which focuses on the exodus of German people from the countryside and their subsequent conversion from agrarian farmers to urban laborers. In the excerpt, Damaschke notes that one "can turn rural workers into factory workers. But it is very difficult to create a new rural population from factory workers." He also warns that "more and more giant enterprises are united in few hands."

The German Land Reform Movement began in 1898 under the charge of Damaschke. He was also the leader of a previous land reform group that dissolved in 1896. *Die Bodenreform* was published in 1902, during this time Damaschke and the German Land Reform Movement gained ground. Damaschke, who was described as energetic, rallied popular support for his cause. By 1919, Damaschke and his movement had enough influence to declare Damaschke as a candidate for the German Presidency. His bid for the office, though, did not come to fruition. In the period after his campaign, Damaschke's popularity waned as many new political parties formed and were turned away by Damaschke's partisanism. Damaschke's popularity further dropped when opponents painted his reform ideas as disguised communism. Damaschke received several Nobel Peace Prize nominations during the first half of the 1930s, however he fell into obscurity as Adolf Hitler and the NSDAP rose to power. Damaschke passed away in Berlin on June 30, 1935. He was sixty-nine years old and was survived by his wife and three daughters.

Among his extensive list of works, Damaschke also wrote two autobiographies. Here is an ordered list of Damaschke's top five most widely held works according to WorldCat, followed by his two autobiographies.

- i. *Geschichte der nationalökonomie : eine erste einföhrung.* [History of Macroeconomics: A First Introduction]  
Published 1905 in Jena by Gustav Fischer.
- ii. *Die Bodenreform. Grundsätzliches und Geschichtliches zur Erkenntnis und Überwindung der sozialen Not.* [Land Reform. Fundamental and Historical Observations on Understanding and Overcoming Social Hardship]  
Published 1902 in Jena by Gustav Fischer.

- iii. *Aufgaben der Gemeinpolitik. [Tasks of Local Politics]*  
Published 1901 in Jena by Gustav Fischer.
- iv. *Volkstümliche Redekunst. Erfahrungen und Ratschläge. [Popular Speaking: Experiences and Advice].*  
Published 1911 in Jena by Gustav Fischer.
- v. *Marxismus und bodenreform. [Marxism and Land Reform].*  
Published in 1922 in Jena by Gustav Fischer
- vi. *Zeitenwende: aus meinem Leben. [Turning Point: From My Life].*  
Published in 1924 in Leipzig by Grethlein.
- vii. *Lebensweg eines Großstadtjungen. [Life Course of a City Boy].*  
Published in 1927 in Essen by Fredebul et Koenen.

These books are all available only in German. According to WorldCat, there are also five books written about Damaschke, though they are not necessarily biographies.

This is Damaschke as pictured in the twelfth volume, second issue of the journal *The Single Tax Review*. It is titled “Adolph Damaschke: Editor *Bodenreform*.” The photographer, and the date of the photograph are not provided. It is on an unnumbered page between page twenty-four and twenty-five.



### Annotated Bibliography in Chronological Order

Beelitz, Curt. "Wirtschaft." *Archiv Für Rechts- Und Wirtschaftsphilosophie* 1, no. 1 (1907): 183.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23685360>.

- This is a book review of the fourth edition of *Die Bodenreform*. General searches for Curt Beelitz's identity and background proved inconclusive but a JSTOR search shows that Beelitz has multiple contributions to the *Archive for Legal and Economic Philosophy* suggesting that he was a writer for the journal. Beelitz praises the book's "pleasing form and clear arrangement," and states that he finds the book a "more suitable introduction to the problems of land reform than any other." The review **confirms that the first edition of *Die Bodenreform* was published in 1902**. This text is in its original German. Google Translate was used to translate the full text, and the title of the journal.

*The Single Tax Review*, 1912, V.12, no. 2 (1912).

- *The Single Tax Review* is a bimonthly American journal that focuses on "the progress of single tax and tax reform throughout the world." This issue of the journal, released for the months of March and April, headlined "Special Number for Germany." It has many mentions of Damaschke as well as an excerpt from the sixth edition of *Die Bodenreform*, as translated by Grace Isabel Colbron. The excerpt covers pages fifty-six to sixty-five of *Die Bodenreform*. With the use of Google Translate, I determined that the sixth edition *Die Bodenreform* pages covered in the journal are parallel to the pages in the first edition. The excerpt is of the fourth chapter, which is also titled *Die Bodenreform*. The chapter defines the three factors of production, namely land, labor and capital, and their role in the land reform issue. The chapter highlights how these factors are misinterpreted. Besides Damaschke, there are also mentions of, excerpts from and portraits of other leading German land reformers like Adolph Wagner. Damaschke is among those pictured in the journal.

Schrameier, Wilhelm. "Land Reform in Germany." *The Single Tax Review*, 1912, V.12, no. 4 (1912). 172-182

- This issue was released for the months of July and August. Wilhelm Ludwig Schrameier was the German colonial administrator of the German occupied Chinese city of

Tsingtao/Qingdao from 1897 to 1909. Schrameier writes about the origins of land reform ideas, and the German Land Reform Movement. He notes the influence of land reformers like Damaschke and Henry George. Schrameier writes that Damaschke embodied the movement. He quotes German economist Michael Flürscheim who said in the June 1911 edition of the journal *Bodenreform*, “that without Damaschke the [League of Land Reformers], at the time, would have ceased to exist.”

Our Correspondent. "German Presidency Campaign." *Times*, November 21, 1919, 11. *The Times Digital Archive*. <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:2048/tinyurl/9CoQY1>.

- This article from *The Times* details Damaschke’s candidacy as president of the German Republic. According to the article Damaschke opened his campaign when he addressed several thousand in the Circus Busch in Berlin. The article notes that Damaschke did not identify with any party and that he was president of the German Land Reformers. The article identifies Damaschke as a “serious candidate.”

FOR GERMAN PRESIDENT. (1920, Jan 23). *New York Times (1857-1922)*. <https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/docview/98228550?accountid=14522>

- This short *New York Times* article lists several prominent Germans who were considered possible presidential candidates. Damaschke is included in this list. The others mentioned are Chief Executive Friedrich Ebert, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, former Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, former Imperial Vice Chancellor Friedrich Foerster, and Lord Mayor of Berlin Adolf Wermuth.

Special Cable to *The New York Times*. (1935, Aug 01). ADOLF DAMASCHKE DEAD IN GERMANY. *New York Times (1923-Current File)* <https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/docview/101391346?accountid=14522>

- This is an obituary for Damaschke in the *New York Times*. It was published two days after his death. The obituary provides a brief biography. The obituary praises Damaschke as “one of the best known advocates of land reform in Germany before the Hitler regime came into power.” It discloses Damaschke’s position as president of the bund of German land owner reformers. It mentions Damaschke’s role as editor of the journal *Freiland*, which later became the *Deutsche Volksstimme*. The obituary mentions Damaschke’s

“Presidential possibility in 1919.” It notes Damaschke’s role as a permanent counselor in the department for homesteads in the Reich Ministry for public works. The obituary also mentions Damaschke’s 1931 nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. Further investigation through the Nobel Peace Prize’s website reveals that Damaschke was nominated five more times for a total of six nominations. He was nominated once each in 1931 and 1934 and was nominated twice each in the years 1933 and 1935.

Silagi, Michael, and Susan N. Faulkner. "Henry George and Europe: In Germany, George's Followers, Headed by Adolf Damaschke, Won Several Statutes and a Constitutional Revision." *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 52, no. 3 (1993): 369-384. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3487160>.

- This is an article by Dr. Michael Silagi from Georg-August-University Goettingen. It was translated by Susan N. Faulkner. In the article, Silagi notes Damaschke’s founding of the Union of German Land Reformers and how under his charge, the group peaked at around 100,000 members. He compares this to a previous land reform group prior to 1898, which only mustered around a few hundred members at its peak. Silagi cites German industrialist Heinrich Freese, who, in his book also titled *Die Bodenreform* (full title *Die Bodenreform; ihre Vergangenheit und ihre Zukunft* [*The Land Reform; Her Past and Her Future*]) details Damaschke’s role in this previous land reform group, the German Union for Landownership Reform. Damaschke joined the group in 1890 and quickly rose through the ranks. By 1891 he became the group’s Secretary, the next year he was named Third Director, in 1893 the Second Director of the Union, and finally becoming the leader for the group. Damaschke moved away from Berlin to live in Kiel in 1896, effectively ending the German Union for Landownership Reform. In 1898, Damaschke revived the movement as the Union of German Land Reformers, which would not be named so until 1904. Silagi cites Damaschke’s 1925 autobiography *Zeitenwende: aus meinem Leben* [*Turning Point: From my Life*], which revealed that in 1919, 80,000 signatures were collected to support Damaschke as a candidate for President of Germany thanks to help from Damaschke’s friend and co-campaigner Adolf Pohlmann, a Berlin schoolteacher.

Wikipedia. 2019. "Adolf Damaschke." Last modified 10 February 2019.

[https://de.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Adolf\\_Damaschke&oldid=185541770](https://de.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Adolf_Damaschke&oldid=185541770)

- This is the German Wikipedia article for Damaschke. Subjects of the article include Damaschke's early life, his early career as a teacher and his transition into a leader in the land reform movement. The article also details Damaschke's legacy and his religious beliefs. The article notes that though "Damaschke's ideas could not prevail 'on a large scale,' they nevertheless strongly influenced the political thinking and actions of his contemporaries." The article mentions that seventy-six members from various political parties of the Weimar National Assembly of 1919 considered themselves "Damashkians." Damaschke and these seventy-six followers pushed to include an article in the Reich Constitution, which became **Article 155**. Here is Article 155 of the Reich Constitution in its entirety as provided by Wikisource ([https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Weimar\\_constitution](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Weimar_constitution). Accessed Mar. 06 2019).

The distribution and use of the soil shall be controlled by the state in such a manner as to prevent abuse and to promote the object of assuring to every German a healthful habitation and to all German families, especially those with many children, homesteads for living and working that are suitable to their needs. Discharged soldiers shall receive special consideration in the homestead law that is to be drafted.

Landed property the acquisition of which is necessary for the satisfaction of the demand for dwellings, for the promotion of colonization and reclamation, or for the improvement of agriculture may be expropriated. Entailments shall be abolished.

The cultivation and use of the soil shall be the duty of its owner toward the community. An increase in the value of land which accrues without the application of labor or capital to the property shall inure to the benefit of all.

All natural resources of the soil and all economically useful forces of nature shall be under the supervision of the state (Stoat). Private royalties shall by law be transferred to the state.

- The Wikipedia article also notes Damaschke's candidacy as president. It mentions that Damaschke's fellowship was strong to the point that they elected him as a candidate in the case of a popular election, but the popular vote was constitutionally omitted, voiding Damaschke's candidacy in the process. The article indicates that after his failed campaign strong resistance against Damaschke's ideas developed. As a result, his popularity diminished.

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