The foundation of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (German: Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD) can be traced back to the 1860s, and for much of the 20th and 21st centuries it has represented the centre-left in German politics. The SPD has been the ruling party at several points, first under Friedrich Ebert in 1918. The party was outlawed in Nazi Germany but returned to government in 1969 with Willy Brandt. Meanwhile, the East German branch of the SPD was merged with the ruling KPD. In Imperial Germany offers a particularly useful context in which to compare different programs at various levels of government. Looking at changes in welfare policy over the course of the nineteenth century, differences between state and municipal interventions, and intercity variations in policy, Steinmetz develops an account that focuses on the specific constraints on local and national policymakers and the different ways of imagining the "social question." CHAPTER THREE. The Rise of the Social Question and Social Policy in Nineteenth-Century Germany. 55. Part two: the prussian-german state and its social policy. 71. CHAPTER FOUR. The Central State in Imperial Germany. 73. CHAPTER FIVE. Social Democratic Party of Germany: Social Democratic Party, Germany’s oldest political party and one of the country’s two main parties. It advocates the modernization of the economy to meet the demands of globalization, but it also stresses the need to address the social needs of workers and society’s disadvantaged. In Germany’s 2009 parliamentary elections, the SPD experienced a devastating drop in support. The party won just 23 percent of the national vote, and its number of seats in the Bundestag fell from 222 to 146—a number well below the CDU-CSU’s 239 seats. The SPD was thus forced out of Germany’s coalition government and into a position of opposition.