The German Communist Party in Saxony, 1924-1933:

Factionalism, Fratricide and Political Failure.

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

to the University of Stirling, Spring 1998.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a case study of the KPD in Saxony between 1924 and 1933. It uses recently available documentation in what were formerly East German archives to reconstruct and assess the KPD's internal party life and political campaigning in the region. Chapter one places the thesis in the context of existing historical studies of the KPD and addresses the themes which run throughout the study. These themes concern: the extent to which the KPD's political behaviour can be ascribed to its domination by Moscow, the so-called "Stalinisation" explanation; the extent to which party ideology could influence members' political thought and actions in local settings; and the extent to which the KPD's political campaigning at grass roots level could achieve communist political objectives. Chapter two then outlines the Saxon economic, social and political developments which provide the backdrop for the KPD's activities in the region.

The main body of the thesis begins by addressing the impact of the "Failed October" of 1923, which was to have been launched from Saxony, on the KPD. The chapter deals with Ruth Fischer's attempt to pursue a policy independently of that set by the Comintern and the extent to which the left-wing leadership in Berlin could impose its policies in Saxony. Chapter four then looks at life inside the Saxon KPD during the fratricidal factional feuds of 1925 to 1928. The following chapter goes on to evaluate the extent to which the Saxon KPD's political campaigning during the mid-twenties could achieve influence on the SPD-led workers' movement and among the radicalised Mittelstand. Chapter six then addresses how the Saxon KPD received the Comintern's ultra-Left policy between 1928 and 1930 and questions the recent trend in the literature, which points to the policy's largely positive reception among the membership. The final chapter deals with the Saxon KPD during the

rise of the Nazis and asks whether it was possible to carry out the Comintern's policy of treating the left-wing SPD, which was dominant in the region, as the main obstacle to Communist objectives in Germany.

Abbreviations and Glossary

ADGB   *Allegmeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*

            (General German Trade Union Confederation).

Abwehr   Self-defence (by political parties).

AfS   *Archiv fuer Sozialgeschichte*

ASPD   *Alte Sozialdemokratische Partei* (Old Socialist Party)

BL   *Bezirksleitung* (District Leadership)

Ba.K.   Bundesarchiv Koblenz

Ba.P.   Bundesarchiv Potsdam

CEH   *Central European History*

Comintern   Communist International

DDP   *Deutsche Demokratische Partei* (German Democratic Party)

DMV   *Deutscher Metalarbeiterverband* (German Metal Workers' Union)

DNVP   *Deutschnationale Volkspartei* (German National People's Party)

DVP   *Deutsche Volkspartei* (German People's Party)

DTV   *Deutscher Textilarbeiterverband* (German Textile Workers' Union)

ECCI   Executive Committee of the Communist International

EHQ   *European History Quarterly*

GuG   *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*

HJ   *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth)

HJ   *Historical Journal*

IAH   *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe* (International Workers' Aid)

IRSH   *International Review of Social History*

IWK	*Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*
JCH	*Journal of Contemporary History*
JMH	*Journal of Modern History*
KJVD	*Kommunistsische Jugendverband Deutschlands* (Communist Youth)
KPD	*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (German Communist Party)
KPD(O)	*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands-Opposition* (German Communist Party-Opposition)
MdI	*Ministerium des Innerns*
NSDAP	*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (Nazi Party)
PVS	*Politische Vierteljahresheft*
RFB	*Roter Frontkaempferbund* (League of Red Front Fighters)
RGO	*Revolutionaere Gewerkschaftsopposition* (Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition)
RH	*Rote Hilfe* (Red Aid)
SAPD	*Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands* (German Socialist Workers' Party)
SAPMO	*Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR*
SAZ	*Sozialistische Arbeiterzeitung*
SPD	*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (German Social Democratic Party)
Sta.B.	Staatsarchiv Bremen
Stad.L.	Stadtarchiv Leipzig
Sta.L.	Staatsarchiv Leipzig

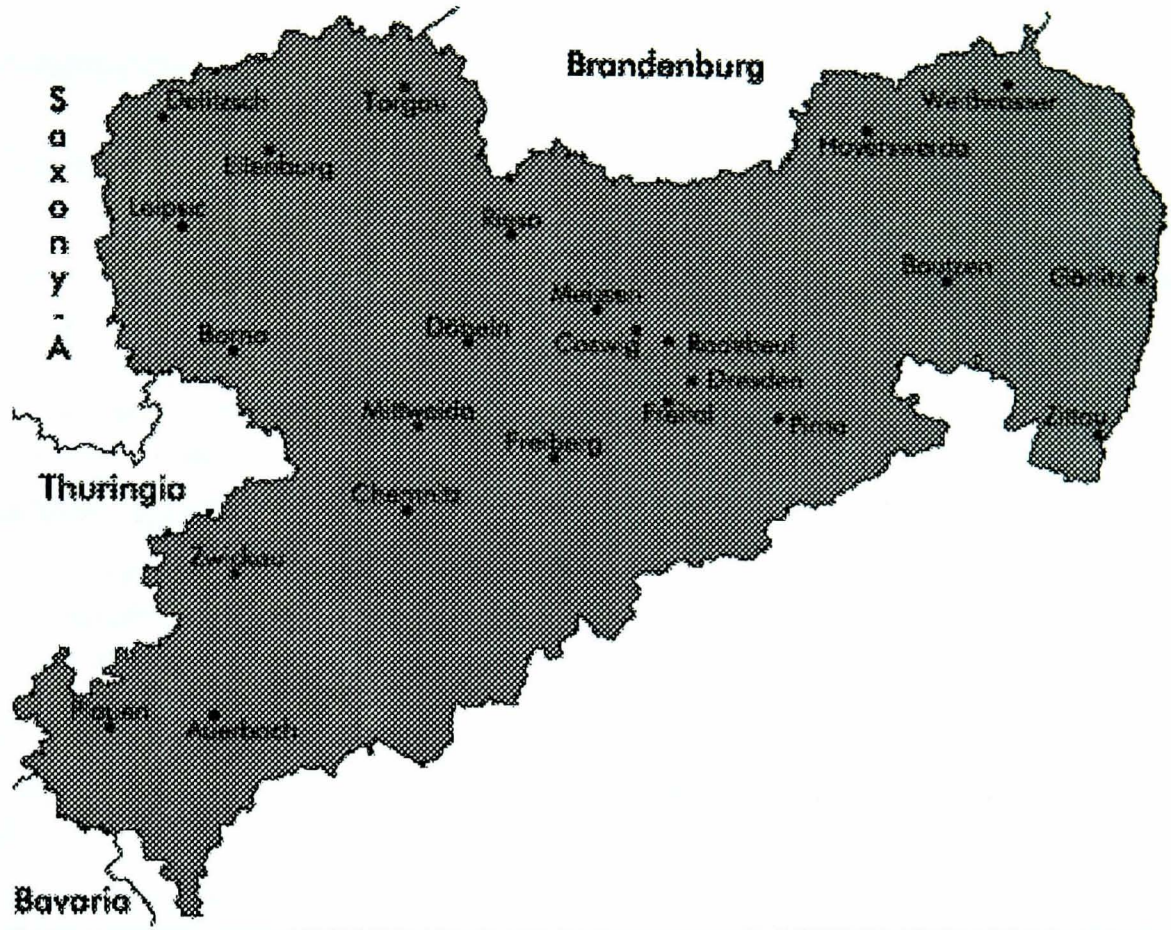| St.Ha.D.	Staatshauptarchiv Dresden.
UBL	*Unterbezirksleitung* (sub-district or local leadership)
USPD	*Unabhaengige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (Independent Social Democratic Party)
Vereine	Workers' Leisure Organisations
VfZ	*Vierteljahresheft fuer Zeitgeschichte*
VRP	*Reichspartei fuer Volksrechts und Aufwertu*ng (Reich Party for People's Justice and Revaluation)
VSI	*Verband saechsischer Industriellen (Saxon Industrialists' Association)*
WP	*Wirtschaftspartei (Economic Party)*
ZA	*Zentralausschuss* (Central Committee: pre-1925)
ZK	*Zentralkomitee* (Central Committee: post-1925)
ZSSL	*Zeitschrift des saechsischen statistischen Landesamts*

Acknowledgements

Map of Saxony

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1. Factionalism, Fratricide and Political Failure: An Introduction.

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is a study of the Saxon KPD as a political party during the Weimar Republic. The thesis deals with how the Saxon KPD functioned internally and how this affected its ability to interact with the wider political environment. The research was made possible by the fall of the *Ostblock* and access to the systematic documentary collection of the KPD's records in the former central party archive in Berlin. For the first time the earlier studies, which relied upon diaspora documents, can be put in the context of a mass of newly available material, which was previously for *parteitreu* eyes only. The conceptual point of departure for this thesis was the question: where did the KPD's centre of gravity lie between being Moscow's marionettes or German militants? In other words: to what extent could a political line set in Moscow be carried out on the streets of Saxony if it did not reflect local conditions experienced by local activists?

To answer these questions three main areas of investigation have been identified, which give the thesis its name: factionalism, fratricide and political failure. Factionalism deals with how dissident groupings organised and co-ordinated campaigns to revise the party line from left- and right-wing communist perspectives. An assessment will be made of what local factors conditioned the differing political dispositions in the Saxon KPD and whether the process of Stalinisation was able to uproot local influences on party members' political behaviour during the Great Depression and the rise of the Nazis. Fratricide refers to the KPD's relations with the wider social democratic workers' movement. The one constant in a sea of changing political tides in the KPD's tactics was to identify the SPD as the principal obstacle to communist objectives in Germany.

However, political behaviour was not acted out in isolation from the wider socio-economic environment. The thesis, therefore, evaluates the local conditions which disposed the rank-and-file membership towards attaining communist goals in contact with the wider workers' movement or in isolation and outright opposition to it. Finally, the KPD's political strategy led ultimitely to the party's own decimation following the Nazi's *Machtergreifung* in early 1933. The thesis, therefore, looks for the preconditions of the KPD's political failure and how this manifested itself in Saxony.

Saxony was chosen as the setting of this study not just because of the new possibilities for documentary research but also because of the strong pattern of regional developments of German socio-economic structures and political systems. There were 17 *Laender* in the Weimar Republic: the largest of which was Prussia with a population of some 38 million, followed by Bavaria with seven million and then Saxony with five million; Thuringia, Saxony's immediate neighbour, housed around one and one half million. The smallest *Land* was Schaumburg-Lippe with 48,000 citizens. Each state had diverse patterns of socio-industrial and economic developments, from "old industrial" Saxony to the "newly" industrialised areas of Central Germany and the Ruhr. Within Saxony there were also sub-regional patterns of development which influenced the KPD's political behaviour. Saxony provides a colourful stone in the mosaic of regions making up the Weimar Republic: the absence of a social basis for political Catholisism meant that the SPD, KPD and later the NSDAP were all represented above their average strengths in the Reich. Just as there is no monocausal explanation for the fall of the Weimar Republic, and its unstable socio-political compromise, so too is there no one template to apply to every regional or local setting.

The following review of the literature, and existing explanations for the political development of the KPD, is structured to reflect the trends of research and the contribution that this study will make. The five subsections correspond to the five central themes comprising the investigation of this thesis: What did the KPD's political line respond to? What were the consequences of following the Comintern's General Line? Did ideology or the local environment determine the KPD's local political behaviour? What impact did the KPD's tactics make on the Saxon political system? And what factors contributed to the KPD's continuing presence in the Weimar political system? The documentary sources are then detailed and an explanation of the methodology used in evaluating them is given. Finally, an explanation is given for the structure of the thesis and its relationship to the themes under investigation.

1.2 Trends of Research and New Departures.

The Stalinisation Thesis and its Critics.

Reviewing the literature on the KPD's relations with the Comintern in 1983 Hermann Weber wrote that: "The history of the KPD as a section of the Comintern is, in a certain sense, only to be understood as part of the history of the Comintern." The ECCI (Executive Committee of the Communist International) in Moscow, which was subordinate to the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union), could issue binding policy directives and expel recalcitrant individuals, groups and ultimately whole Communist Parties.[1] The debate among those who subscribe to the Stalinisation thesis involves identifying the point at which the Comintern acted solely to enforce Moscow's

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[1] Weber, H., *Kommunismus in Deutschland 1918-1945* (Ertraege der Forschung vol.198; Darmstadt,1983) p46.

foreign policy concerns, disregarding the revolutionary ambitions of its national sections. Daycock stress that Soviet foreign policy was decisive in shaping the KPD's policy at all times; Weber locates the decisive change in the mid twenties with the CPSU's adoption of Stalin's doctrine of "socialism in one country"; and Weingartner identified the turning point in 1928.[2] New literature using declassified Soviet documentation has modified the debate. Watlin emphasised the change in policy making fOr an open debate and the KPD leadership's ability to adapt directives to suit factional predilections to the dominance by 1928 of the parallel secret meetings between the Comintern and its "foreign" sections.[3] McDermott's assessment of the Comintern's room for interpretation of policy within the General Line for national Communist Parties stresses that there was some degree of flexibility.[4] However, the experience of the KPD indicates that this was only possible in issues peripheral to the Soviet Union's central foreign policy concerns.[5]

The literature indicates that, from the 2nd World Congress of the Comintern in 1920 at the latest, the General Line for all Communist Parties increasingly failed to account for national, let alone regional, peculiarities. Daycock called the KPD a "misplaced" party precisely because its objectives were not rooted in Germany but were formulated to

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[2] Daycock, D. W., 'The KPD and the NSDAP: A Study in the Relationship between the Political Extremes in Weimar Germany 1923-1933' (Ph.D.. Dissertation, London School of Economics,1980), p317; Weber, *Kommunismus in Deutschland*, pp47ff; Weingartner, T., *Stalin und der Aufsteig Hitlers: Die Deutschland Politik der Sowjetunion und der Kommunistischen Internationale 1929-1934* (Berlin, 1970), *passim.*

[3] Watlin, A., *Die Komintern 1919-1929* (Mainz,1993) p185.

[4] McDermott, K., 'Stalin and the Comintern during the "3rd Period", 1928-1933', in *European History Quarterly (EHQ)* 25 (1995), pp409-29.

[5] The best illustration of this is the KPD's enforced participation in the Nazi and DNVP led referendum in Prussia to oust the SPD led government, see Weingartner, *Deutschland Politik*, p174; Weber, H., *Hauptfeindsozialdemokratie. Strategie und Taktik der KPD 1929-1933* (Duesseldorf, 1982), pp40f.

assist the development of the Soviet state.[6] Literature on the KPD's political development in Germany by Flechtheim, Bahne, Weber, Fowkes and Winkler have all stressed the party's subordination to the Comintern. The KPD's political lines and leadership changed in relation to developments in Moscow and the role of party congresses was to confirm a policy already determined by the Comintern.[7] The one exception to this rule was the rise of the Left Opposition to power in the KPD following the so-called "Failed October" of 1923. Having criticised the long-term orientation of the tactics formulated by the 3rd World Congress of the Comintern in 1921, the Left Opposition used the events in Germany in 1923 to justify a left-radical policy. However, the Comintern was able to overthrow the independent minded leaders within the KPD's Left in September 1925 and appoint the Thaelmann leadership which was prepared to carry out its General Line.[8] Koch-Baumgarten has summarised why there was so little resistance, at least within the KPD's *leadership*, to such Comintern interventions in terms of the KPD's own needs: defence of the Soviet Union was increasingly seen as defence of a future revolution in Germany; the attraction of the Bolshevik Revolution and the Comintern helped to integrate disparate groupings in the membership and among the party's supporters; and no split-off grouping, from the KAG and KPD(O) on the right-

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[6] Daycock, 'Political Extremes', pp18-19.

[7] Bahne, S., *Die KPD und das Ende von Weimar. Das Scheitern einer Politik 1932-1935* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1976), pp68-71; Flechtheim, O. K., *Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (3rd ed.; Hamburg, 1986), p264ff; Weber, *Hauptfeind Sozialdemokratie,* pp63ff; Winkler, H. A., *Der Schein der Normalitaet. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik, 1924-1920* (Berlin, Bonn, 1988), pp417ff; Fowkes, B., *Communism in Germany under the Weimar Republik* (London, 1984), pp110ff.

[8] Weber, H., *Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus. Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (Gekuerzte Studentenausgabe, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1971), pp117f.

wing to the KAPD and Leninbund from the party's left-wing, was able to gain significant support.[9]

Studies of the KPD which ascribe the party's policy to developments in Germany rather than to the Cominternset out to identify socio-ecomonic preconditions which could validate the party line between 1928-33. Above all this relates to the role played by the "social fascist" thesis and the RGO-*politik* in causing the collapse of the Weimar Republic and the failure of the workers' movement to prevent Hitler coming to power. The first group of these studies explains the KPD's General Line as a response to the actions of the SPD in government. Hennig, Wuenderlich and Weiszt explain the acceptance of the "social fascist" policy by the wider communist movement as a response to the actions of the SPD in the Reich and Prussian governments. The SPD's involvement in the construction of *Panzerkreuzer "A"* (a so-called pocket battleship) in late 1928 and in particular the event of May Day 1929 (*Blutmai*), when the SPD-administered police force opened fire on illegal communist outdoor marches, were accepted as "proof" of the SPD's change from social democracy to "social fascism".[10] However, these are too close to the Comintern's, and therefore the Thaelmann Group's, interpretation. Although the SPD's entry into the Reich government in 1928 did have some impact on KPD policy, these studies understate the KPD leadership's efforts to provoke confrontation with the SPD and the fact that relations with the SPD throughout the '20s had not been based on the party's policies in Germany but changes sanctioned by the Comintern.

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[9] Koch-Baumgarten, S., 'Einleitung', in Flechtheim , *Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik*, p34.

[10] Hennig, E., 'Nachbemerkungen zu einem Aspekt des kommunistischen Tageskampfes gegen die Sozialdemokratie', in *Gesellschaft, Beitrage zur Marxschen Theorie* 6 (Frankfurt/M, 1976), pp292f; Wuenderlich, V., *Arbeiterbewegung und Selbstverwaltung. KPD und Kommunalpolitik in der Weimarer Republik. Mit dem Beispiel Solingen* (Wuppertal, 1980), pp57-8; Weiszt, J., *KPD-Politik in der Krise, 1928-32* (Frankfurt/M,1976), pp17f.

Wickham's research in Frankfurt-am-Main also explains the KPD membership's acceptance, even "welcoming", of the "social fascist" policy in terms of the political consequences of the process of industrial rationalisation. The workers' movement had been pushed apart at its foundations leaving no point of common contact for the "political innovation" necessary to challenge the General Line. The sociological split in the workers' movement produced the political split. Workers could either support the SPD, and its toleration of the Bruening government as a "lesser evil" to the inclusion of the NSDAP in government, or the KPD and its stance on "social fascism."[11] Peukert also saw the rank-and-file party membership's readiness to accept ultra-Leftism in terms of the separation between the SPD's and KPD's social constituencies: the KPD comprised unemployed workers and those not organised in the Free Trade Unions, while the SPD organised employed workers who were organised in the trade unions, allowing the KPD to treat Social Democrats as the "enemy."[12] While political and trade-union membership clearly did represent an obstacle to communist influence, these interpretations generalise the influence of local relations between the two parties' social basis. Furthermore they understate the role of the KPD in splitting the cultural and sports organisations and the trade unions in a manner hammering on the split in the workers' movement.

H.A.Winkler adopted a middle position which held that, although communist policy was imported through the Comintern, there was a "structural echo" in the KPD, which increasingly organised unemployed and unskilled workers, for a left-radical policy.[13] However, this explanation overlooked the passivity caused by the "social fascist" policy

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[11] Wickham, J., 'The Working Class Movement in Frankfurt-am-Main during the Weimar Republic', Ph.D. thesis (University of Sussex, 1979), pp28,188ff.

[12] Peukert,D., 'Zur Sozialgeschicht der KPD', in Kloenne, A. and Vack, K., *Zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, 4 (November 1978), pp35-7.

[13] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, pp438-9.

because it ignored the immediate and direct interests of the KPD's constituency among the unemployed, while continually asserting a factory policy that remained both unproductive and unpopular in the party.

A second grouping of studies details the impact of industrial rationalisation on the KPD's factory and trade-union policy. Schoeck's thesis was that the sociological split in the workers' movement conditioned the political split. The RGO, which tried to organise those workers neglected by the policies of reformism, was a "helpless reflex" to the social divisions in the industrial working class.[14] However, Schoeck's assessment of communist trade-union policy until 1928 as an attempt to overcome the split in the working class neglects the communist definition of "unity": all workers under the leadership of the KPD, precluding any genuine co-operation with reformism.[15] Schoeck's regional studies of the chemical, mining and metal industries in the Ruhr also fails to note that, at least in other regions, the split in the working class ran through the KPD.[16] The RGO-*politik* served to push the party out of the factories precisely because workers who had never been inclined to political organisation remained largely politically passive. Indeed, Stolle's case studies in the chemical and metal industries indicate that "mass workers" lost the ability to take up industrial action and therefore left the political movement, leaving the RGO-*politik* to be carried out by the small number of skilled (metal working) factory Communists who remained in the party in strongholds such as

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[14] Schoeck, E. C., *Arbeitslosigkeit und Rationalisierung. Die Lage der Arbeiter und die Kommunistische Gewerkschaftspolitik 1920-1928* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1977), p179.

[15] ibid, pp19-75.

[16] ibid, pp76-152.

Solingen and Stuttgart (Borsch).[17] Lucas points out that the KPD, as a party obsessed with organisation and discipline, was looking to workers without these traditions or inclinations to conform to the demands of a Leninist party.[18]

Stolle also argues that sociological changes in the KPD's membership constituency during the mid-1920s favoured a leftist political policy. However, Stolle adds the dimension of parallel changes in the KPD's functionary core, which, after 1924, was reconstituted from the left. This meant that in 1928 a "bureaucratic utopian communism" dominated the party and introduced a leftist policy.[19] Secondly, the "Left-Turn" in party policy was a response to the economic conjuncture at the time which enabled the first strikes over pay and conditions since 1923/4. These conditions had led to unorganised and organised factory workers taking joint action under reformist leadership. The KPD's call for "independent strike leaderships", in opposition to the unions' policy of arbitrated settlements, at first integrated the communist's supporters in the factories. But in the second half of 1928, as the movement subsided, the policy flowed into ultra-Left isolationism. Attempts were made to broaden the KPD's support among workers who did not belong to the SPD-led trade unions and "mass workers", but this failed.[20] In Saxony it is also correct that radical reformism exercised an attraction on Communist workers as well as the unorganised workforce. However, Communist union militants did not want an independently organised strike strategy. Their preference was for a policy of

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[17] Stolle, U., *Arbeiterpolitik im Betrieb: Frauen und Maenner, Reformisten und Radikale, Fach und Massenarbeiter bei Bayern, BASF, Borsch und in Solingen (1900-1933)* (Frankfurt-am-Main, New York, 1980), pp245ff, esp. 259-60.

[18] Lucas, E., *Zwei Formen von Radikalismus in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (Frankfurt/M, 1976), p281.

[19] Stolle, *Arbeiterpolitik*, p262f.

[20] ibid, p264f.

industrial militancy from inside the unions. Stolle also overlooks the function of the KPD's Stalinisation in installing a functionary core compliant with the Comintern's directives and the elimination of democratic channels to influence policy making.

Finally, Heer-Kleinert has explained the KPD's factory policy in terms of the party's entrenched theoretical perspectives. The KPD's "negative fixation" with the SPD centred above all on its involvement in the process of industrial-rationalisation. The consequences of rationalisation in Germany were interpreted in terms of communist impoverishment theory. This held that the social basis for reformism would contract while the basis for a revolutionary policy under communist leadership would expand. The KPD should, therefore, turn to the unorganised workers, outside of reformist traditions, the unemployed and the poorest paid workers and take up a policy of open confrontation with the SPD.[21] However, this interpretation is also close to that expounded by the Comintern. Furthermore, when it became apparent that the unemployed were not an active social revolutionary force, the KPD was in no position to independently reappraise its policy to any significant degree. To simply say that ideology had closed off reality to those making policy overlooks both the crisis within the leadership over the party's response to the NSDAP between 1930-33 and the influence of local conditions affecting how these policies could be carried out.

The newly available documentation in the former central party archive confirms that the "Left-Turn" came from the Comintern and was drawn into the party's factional struggle. Significantly, it also indicates that in Saxony the "social fascist" policy was not "welcomed" by party activists but led to a further contraction in the party's membership until the Great Depression deepened in 1930. The limitations of the "social fascist" policy

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[21] Heer-Kleinert, L., *Die Gewerkschaftspolitik der KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt-am-Main, New York, 1983), pp282ff,360,375f.

on the membership's ability to carry out party campaigns even alienated rank-and-file leftists. As Koch-Baumgarten has pointed out, the KPD's policy was an isolation strategy, cementing the split in the workers' movement.[22] It will be argued in this thesis that the policy of organisational isolation was to eliminate the influences of contact with the social democratic workers' movement in order to reinforce national level hostilities to the SPD, for foreign policy reasons, at local level.

The Limits of Stalinisation: From the Centre to the Periphery of Communism.

The imposition of a General Line, which did not reflect opinion inside the KPD, had profound consequences for the party's political development. In the period 1924-30 this above all meant the KPD's Stalinisation. The term was originally used by the KPD's Left, which was involved in factional opposition to the implications of Stalin's policy of "socialism in one country" for world revolution.[23] Stalinisation meant the removal of all aspects of the KPD's ideology, organisation and traditions which could permit opposition to Soviet domination. The KPD became a monolithic party in which opposition currents came up against a strictly disciplined and centralised party machine.

Hermann Weber has explained what made the KPD's Stalinisation possible in terms of four factors. Firstly, the domination of the party apparatus over the wider party was interpreted as a symptom of modern industrial society. However, the early importation of party organisation from the CPSU's model must be stressed. Secondly, the KPD's inability to find an ideological position by 1924 between social democracy and syndicalism. However, by accepting the Comintern's "21 Conditions of Entry" in 1920

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[22] Kock-Baumgarten, *Einleitung*, p51.

[23] Bahne, S., 'Zwischen "Luxemburgismus" und "Stalinismus". Die "ultralinke" Opposition in der KPD', in *Viertelsjahresheft fuer Zeitegeschichte, 9 (1961)* (pp359-383), p360, note 4.

the KPD had accepted the principals of Leninism: above all the leading role of the party. The dispute centred on the "correct" tactic for a communist party in Germany. The KPD's increasing use of one-size-fits-all policies, in a country with such pronounced regional and sub-regional particularities, prevented a common tactical denominator being found to balance the local equation within the framework of agreed communist objectives. Control at the centre had replaced the original concept of a federated party structure to maximise local influence by local responses.[24] Thirdly, the discrepancy between the KPD's revolutionary goals and the non-revolutionary situation in Germany was identified as the cause of membership passivity, with the apparatus becoming almost the only active element. In Saxony, however, membership passivity was above all caused by two factors: inappropriate policy directives which did not relate to local conditions; and the power struggle in the party, which burned up the political oxygen necessary for wider political work. The more the party line became detached from local realities the more passive the membership became. Fourthly, and most importantly, was the KPD's dependence on Moscow and the Comintern. At least one third of the KPD's funding came from the Comintern. This paid for an expensive party apparatus, press and propaganda.[25] However, documentation of the Saxon party indicates that the Comintern was only prepared to fund political campaigns which would have an impact on national politics. The KPD was left to fund most of its day-to-day local campaigns from members' collections and donations.

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[24] *Bericht ueber den Gruendungsparteitag der kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands (Spartakusbund) vom 30. Dezember 1918 bis 1. Januar 1919* (Reprint: Frankfurt/M, 1978), pp43ff (Eberlein).

[25] Weber, *Kommunismus in Deutschland*, p66.

Weber, endorsing A. Kreigel's observations on the implications of dependence on the Comintern, detailed three factors affecting all communist Parties.[26] Firstly, democratic centralism increasingly placed decision making at the centre, excluding party members from influencing policy. Weber, however, tends to exaggerate the extent of the KPD's internal democracy between 1919-24 and the ranges of possible development open to the KPD.[27] Watlin's more recent work also stresses that 1928 marked the final defeat of democratic communism.[28] These interpretations, however, do not sufficiently stress that Stalinisation was a continuation of the process of Bolshevisation, which had begun in the early 1920s. Democratic channels of influencing policy and electing leaderships had ended by 1925 at the latest. However, this study of Saxony will look at the local limitations constraining the process of Stalinisation as a result of local conditions. Secondly, a permanent apparatus was constructed to carry out party policy. This, as Kreigel's work on the French Communist Party makes clear, represented a "core" group of ever loyal functionaries: in the early thirties the damaging effects of the KPD's General Line during the rise of the Nazis caused a crisis in the middle and lower functionary ranks, manifested in high rates of membership turnover.[29] Finally, re-organisation of the party on the basis of factory cells was justified with reference to the Bolshevik model of a revolutionary party. However, the KPD's re-organisation functioned in practice to atomise opposition groups within the party while connecting each party unit to the centre. This did not mobilise the KPD for carrying out party campaigns, as was asserted by the leadership. The process merely dissipated party energy, was "passively resisted" by the membership, and residential organisations (street cells and local groups) continued

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[26] ibid, p66f.

[27] Weber, *Wandlung*, pp8,10

[28] Watlin, *Die Komintern*, p185.

to carry almost all political work.[30] Each of these factors is connected by the political and organisational drive of Stalinisation to create a strictly centralised and disciplined party: a monolith with no place to hide for Opposition groups.

The development of Stalinist control over the KPD did not come to an end by 1929/30: the use of these political and organisational methods of control were simply easier to implement. However, "latent tendencies" (Reuter) continued to exist in relation to the influence of local conditions: that is, where close proximity to left-wing Social Democrats in the factories and municipal parliaments continued to outweigh "social fascist" ideology. During the rise of the Nazis local conditions often continued to favour, at least limited, contact with the local SPD to achieve immediate local objectives.

Reuter has presented a new thesis on the factional struggle which identifies Thaelmann as an "integration figure" around whom opposing factions could unite. Reuter's study arrived at this conclusion on the basis of interviews with former KPD members in Hannover during the early 1980s.[31] However, Reuter's study is geographically limited and appears to reflect a memory distorted by official party propaganda which presented Thaelmann, like Stalin, as the architect of party unity and technician of party strength. These findings do not explain developments in Saxony. Reuter and Daycock also described how rank-and-file members were often unable to detect changes in the party line from Left to Right in the 1920s and even switched factions during the factional feud.[32] In Saxony it is also correct that the leadership wanted to minimise the scale and depth of the purges. But persistent opposition to the party line was dealt with by

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[29] Bahne, *Scheitern*, p15f.

[30] Heer-Kleinert, *Gewerkschaftspolitik*, pp324ff.

[31] Reuter, G., *KPD-Politik in der Weimarer Republik. Politische Vorstellung und soziale Zusammenstellung der KPD in Hannover zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik* (Hannover, 1982), p92ff.

[32] ibid, p92; Daycock, 'Political Extremes', pp145-6.

expulsion. Furthermore, it is unlikely any party *activist* could have been unaware of the internal party power struggle in the twenties which was tearing the KPD apart.

Ideology or Local Conditions: What Produced the Political Tendencies in the Saxon KPD?

Local and industrial case studies have produced social and economic histories, which have broadened and deepened existing knowledge on the development of the KPD. The identification of local and regional expressions of radicalism in the workers' movement can be traced back to Cohn's contemporary study of the *Ruhrkreig* (1920) and Eliasberg's later work on the same topic.[33] However, it was E. Lucas' seminal study which identified two forms of workers' radicalism, both of which were housed in the KPD.[34] Lucas identified a skilled (metal) workers' form of radicalism in the Ruhr town of Remscheid. The town's early industrialisation, and the development of a tradition of organisation on the left-wing of the SPD and trade unions, conditioned a political tendency which was disposed towards a united front tactic involving day-to-day work in contact with the wider workers' movement, especially in the trade unions. By contrast the neighbouring mining town of Hamborn produced a second type of workers' radicalism. Rapid industrialisation, accelerated by the demands of the war economy (1914-18), threw up a "new working class", which predominantly comprised workers from non-industrial backgrounds, who had been strongly under-represented in the pre-war social democratic workers' movement. These workers favoured a spontaneous form

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[33] Colm, G., *Beitrag zur Geschichte und Soziologie des Ruhraufstandes vom Maerz/April 1920* (Essen, 1921), quoted in Winkler, H. A., *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung. Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1918 bis 1924* (Berlin, Bonn, 1984), p373; Eliasberg, G., 'Der Ruhr Kreig 1920', in *Archiv fuer Sozialgeschichte X (1970)*, pp291-377.

[34] Lucas, Zwei Formen, pp249f,280f (conclusions).

of protest over pay and conditions, acting independent of the social democratic organised workers' movement. While accounting for nuances as a result of particular local factors, subsequent studies have confirmed Lucas's conclusions. The skilled form of workers' radicalism in the KPD has been identified among metal workers in Solingen and Stuttgart by Stolle; in Hannau by Krause; and by Tampke in the southern Ruhr.[35] The second type of radicalism has been extended to include chemical workers and dockyard workers in addition to miners. Lucas's findings have been confirmed among miners in the western Ruhr by Tampke; among dock workers in Hamburg by Ullrich (1914-18); and among chemical workers in Ludwigshafen and Leverkusen by Stolle.[36] Stolle also concluded that when labour market conditions no longer permitted the chemical workers spontaneous actions in defense of their pay and conditions, during the period between 1924-28, they left the workers' movement.[37] Fowkes and McElligott have indicated that this type of workers' radicalism was present in the movement of unemployed workers, which was connected to the KPD during the late '20s and early '30s.[38] Interestingly, Peukert identified a common denominator for both of these tendencies located within the

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[35] Stolle, *Arbeiterpolitik*, pp128-223; Tampke, J., *The Ruhr and Revolution: The Revolutionary Movement in the Rheinish-Westphalian Industrial Region* (London, 1979), pp100f; Krause, H., *Zur Geschichte der USPD* (Glashuetten im Taunus,1976).

[36] Stolle, *Arbeiterpolitik*, pp129-223; Ullrich, V., *Die Hamburger Arbeiterbewegung vom Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieg bis zur Revolution 1918/19* (2 vols., Hamburg, 1976).

[37] Stolle, *Arbeiterpolitik*, pp245ff.

[38] Fowkes, B., 'Communism in Germany during the Weimar Period' (Unpublished paper to Saint Anthony's College Oxford, 1991), p15; McElligott, A., 'Mobilising the Unemployed: The KPD and the Unemployed Workers' Movement in Hamburg-Altona during the Weimar Republic', in Evans, R.J., and Geary, D. (eds.), *The German Unemployed. Experiences and Consequences of Mass Unemployment from the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich* (London, 1987), pp228-60.

KPD: all party members rejected the "Weimar Compromise" because of the social insecurities generated by industrial rationalisation and market dislocation after 1918.[39]

Recent research by Weitz explained the appeal of a left-wing KPD policy, which was directed against the SPD and its role in the Weimar state, as a product of two separate social worlds inhabited by Communists and Social Democrats. The SPD comprised employed workers, who were organised in the party's trade unions, social and cultural organisations. The KPD, by contrast, comprised largely unemployed workers, who had been excluded from the Social Democratic worlds of work and leisure, and lived in older more down-at-heel districts. According to Weitz, these factors predisposed rank-and-file Communists to the Comintern's post-1928 "left-turn". Weitz places the unemployed workers' support for the KPD during the Great Depression in the context of the development of the German political economy: a continuation of the imperial legacy of state intervention in the economy and social welfare programmes conditioned their adoption of Leninist strong state solutions to their problems.[40] However, in the "old" socio-industrial structure of Saxony there was no such clear division into separate social worlds. Even after the onset of mass unemployment Social Democrats and Communists came in contact in shared residential districts. Equally, the KPD repelled most of the politicised unemployed workers, who had joined the party between 1930 and 1933, by continuing to prioritise party campaigning in the factories. Crucially, there was no uniform political predilection within Saxon Communism. The three Saxon KPD party districts ranged between support for a united front policy in contact with the wider

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[39] Peukert, 'Sozialgeschichte', pp35f.

[40] Weitz, E. D., 'State Power, Class Fragmentation and the Shaping of German Communist Politics, 1890-1933', in *JMH* 62 (2) (1990) (pp253-97), pp279-86,295-97; Weitz has further developed these ideas in, Id. *Creating German Communism, 1890-1933. From Popular Protest to Socialist State* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1997).

workers' movement, in Erzgebirge-Vogtland; to a left-wing, or isolationist, political tendency in West Saxony. The sub-regional variations in the Saxon KPD's political trends indicate that the political tendencies in the KPD were not the result of ideological interpretations of national events issued by the ZK (Central Committee).[41] After the "failed October" and *Reichsexekution* of 1923, the Saxon KPD's local activists did not universally dismiss all contact with the SPD.[42] Instead, local Communists responded to local Social Democrats as they found them: local conditions outweighed blanket ideological political prescriptions.

To assess these political trends in the Saxon KPD it is therefore necessary to include other models of explanation. In explaining the rates of erosion of the SPD membership and vote in Saxony Franz Walter's important study applied the analytical framework of socio-political milieu to account for pronounced sub-regional variations.[43] This research demonstrated that where the SPD functioned in a heavily populated industrial region which had produced an organisational tradition in the SPD, ADGB (General German Trade Union Confederation) and sports and cultural *Vereine* the strength of attraction produced by the milieu held up the SPD's membership and vote, insulating the party from the socio-economic shocks which sustained the rise of the Saxon NSDAP. This was strongest in Western Saxony and Eastern Saxony, particularly between Leipzig and Dresden. However, the Nazi breakthrough was facilitated most rapidly and deeply in

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[41] Cf. Schleifstein, J., *Die "Sozialfaschismus"-These. Zu ihrem geschichtlichen Hintergrund* (Frankfurt/M, 1980), pp17ff,53ff.

[42] Bahne, S., "Sozialfascismus' in Deutschland. Zur Geschichte eines politischen Begriffs', in *International Rewiew of Social History (IRSH)* 10 (2) (1965) (pp211-45), p220. Bahne wrote that the impact of the "Failed Revolution" of 1923 tended to eclipse the pro-contact wing in the KPD associated with Heinrich Brandler.

[43] Walter, F., 'Sachsen - ein Stammland der Sozialdemokratie?', in *Politische Vierteljahrsheft (PVS)* 32 (2) (1991), (pp207-231); on the construction of milieu, pp215f.

southwestern Saxony where the SPD milieu was weakest. This model of explanation has been further developed by Szejnmann's study of the rise of the NSDAP in Saxony (1921-33) and the Saxon SPD's response to it.[44] It will be further argued in this thesis that the weaker the traditions of organisation in the local SPD and unions the less the membership's loyalty to the Reich leadership's official policies, weakening the political border between Communist and Social Democratic activists.

K-H Mallmann's recent study of the KPD has also applied the concept of locally produced milieu to explain the KPD as a social movement with its roots in the radical socialist traditions of the pre-war SPD. Mallmann challenges the received view of the KPD's internal party structure as an elaborate system of top down control. Instead the party is depicted as a rich tapestry of locally manufactured threats, as opposed to the monolithic Soviet "red" of the Stalinisation thesis.[45] This study of the Saxon KPD will argue that, although there were local limits to the system of party control facilitated by the KPD's Stalinisation, it did produce an omnipresence of representatives of official policy, driving the most able members out of the party.[46] The political behaviour of the Saxon KPD, as detailed in the following thesis, confirms Mallmann's view that the KPD's membership comprised a variety of political persuasions, which responded to the world outside of the party.[47] However, rather than presenting the KPD as the successor movement to the hopes and ambitions of the radical socialist wing of the Wilhelmine

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[44] Szejnmann, C-C. H., 'The Rise of the Nazi Party in Saxony between 1921 and 1933', Ph.D. thesis (King's College, University of London, 1994), pp165ff.

[45] Mallmann, K-M, *Kommunisten in der Weimarer Republik: Sozialgeschichte einer revolutionaeren Bewegung* (Darmstadt, 1996), pp34ff,44-5.

[46] For Mallmann's rejection of the Stalinisation thesis see especially, ibid, pp54-83,380ff.

[47] ibid, pp385-6; Id. 'Milieu, Radikalismus und lokale Gesellschaft. Zur Sozialgeschichte des Kommunismus in der Weimarer Republik', in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft (GuG)* 21 (1) (1995) (pp5-31).

SPD, the party's factions will be put in the context of the socio-political environment of every day working-class life. Mallmann's research identified a vibrant Communist sub-culture; however, the example of Saxony points to a *Diktatorpartei* which pumped the political line, and the continual changes in it imposed by Moscow, through a party membership which could never be fully convinced of an ideology which made increasingly little sense to their own political world.[48]

A leitmotif of this case study will be to examine the thesis that in an environment where it was possible to move towards communist objectives in contact with the left-wing of the SPD, a Right (pro-contact) communism was produced. However, where the barriers of strong SPD and union organisation, and loyalty to the official party line, excluded this possibility the KPD's district parties would incline towards the Left, which advocated isolation from the SPD to achieve communist objectives. The underlying question in this evaluation of sub-regional political trends in the Saxon KPD is to shed further light on whether the Reich KPD's disastrous General Line during the rise of the NSDAP, which presented the SPD as communism's "main enemy", was taken up at local level.

Communist Tactics and their Influence on the Wider political System.

Historical studies specifically on the KPD's political tactics between 1924-28 have received relatively little attention in comparison with the period 1921 and 1923, which Angress has detailed as the KPD's *Kampfzeit,* [49] and the period 1928-33, which has a historiography in its own right. The period 1924-28, if not a *terra incognita*, is a

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[48] On the KPD's subculture and internal life, with almost no analysis of factions and factionalism, see Mallmann, *Sozialgeschichte,* pp165.

[49] Angress, W. T., *Stillborn Revolution. The Communist Bid for Power in Germany, 1921-1923* (Princeton, 1963).

landscape of widely uncharted regions. The contribution of part of the following case study in Saxony will be to assess the KPD's ability to carry out the united front policy between 1925 and 1928 and the ultra-Left isolationist policy after 1928.

There are good reasons for a lack of national and regional studies of the KPD's tactics between 1924 and 1928. These years were dominated by the KPD's internal party feud and the Weimar Republic's return to a period of relative political and economic stability.[50] These factors, it appears, have give this period in the KPD's development a sense of less urgency, or attraction, to researchers. The subject, however, has not been completely overlooked. Flechtheim and Fowkes have covered the period both in terms of the KPD's internal affairs (Stalinisation) and the party's political campaigning.[51] Winkler and Watlin have stressed that all tactical changes in the KPD's policies between 1921 and 1928 did not alter the party's endgoal (ie communist strategy): to "unmask" the SPD leadership as allegedly hostile to workers' interests and win over the party's social basis. The KPD leadership had no real interest in a genuine united front with the SPD to gain improvements in German workers' social and material conditions.[52] It should be noted, however, that during the independent policies pursued during Ruth Fischer's leadership the KPD did not want to win over Social Democrats, fearing their reformist traditions would dilute the KPD's revolutionary fervour. However, even during the KPD's so-called "moderate" united front policy during the Campaign to Expropriate the German Princes in 1926, Winkler indicates that the KPD's intention was to "draw away the broad mass of

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[50] Lapp, B., 'Political Polarisation in Weimar Germany: The Saxon *Buergertum* and the Left, 1918/19-1930', Ph.D. Dissertation (University of California, 1991), p1. Lapp notes that the extent of "relative stability" in Saxony was more tenuous than in the Reich in general because of the social impact of structural economic problems.

[51] Flechtheim, *Die KPD*, pp151ff; Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, pp110ff.

[52] Watlin, *Die Komintern*, p47; On the period 1921-22, Winkler, *Von der Revolution*, pp528-9.

workers from the SPD to the KPD."[53] What these studies fail to emphasise is that while all communist groupings inside the KPD could agree on the endgoal of a revolution led by the KPD, it was precisely the question of the tactics, the means to this end, which tore the party apart. Goldback has also emphasised the early strong connection between Soviet foreign policy and the political role of the united front in Germany.[54] Geyer has detailed how in the mid-years of the Weimar Republic the united front policy was increasingly linked to the defence of the Soviet Union. The creation of a so-called "left-wing in the workers' movement" meant, in practice, creating a pro-Soviet mood within the German working class.[55]

Daycock has also demonstrated that the KPD's relationship with the SPD was not conditioned by the SPD's political behaviour, but by the stages in the KPD's internal party power struggle. The "moderate" political line in 1925/6 was part of the struggle against the various ultra-Left factions and the gradual return to a leftist policy thereafter was to exclude the influence of the Right and Reconciler factions.[56] Bahne's and Herlemann's studies of the KPD in the Ruhr point out that the use of "workers' majorities" (ie voting with the SPD) in 1926/7 in Town Halls to achieve concessions, especially for the unemployed, did help to extend the party's local political influence and to gradually reverse a declining membership. However, *Sozialpolitik* was always subordinated to the objective of attacking the SPD and the reputed "betrayals" of

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[53] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p275.

[54] Goldbach, M. L., *Karl Radek und die deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen. Ein Beitrag zum Verhaltnis von KPD und Komintern und zur Geschichte der deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen zwischen 1918-1923* (Hannover, 1973), pp100-116, esp. 105-6.

[55] Geyer, D., 'Sowjet Russland und die Deutsche Arbeiterbewegung 1918-1932', in *Vierteljahrsheft fuer Zeitgeschichte (VfZ)* 24 (1) (1976), pp29-31.

[56] Daycock, *Political Extremes*, pp143-4.

reformism.[57] In trade union policy Eisner has demonstrated that, unlike in local politics, the KPD's return to work within the Free Trade Unions never allowed the KPD to recover the level of influence enjoyed before 1923/4.[58]

Koch-Baumgarten has aptly summarised the KPD in these years as a party with a strong facade masking its limited political influence and internal crisis. The KPD had strongholds in Berlin, Central Germany, the Rheinland and Westphalia, North Germany and Erzgebirge-Vogtland in Saxony; it had a core of some two million votes in general elections; a membership above 100,000; a significant number of local councillors, regional and Reich parliamentary deputies; factions in the local trade unions and factories; and in 1927 there were 36 daily communist newspapers. However, the KPD lacked any decisive political influence; it had an increasingly passive membership; there was a high membership turnover and little support from either women or young workers; and, last but not least, the KPD was engaged in a fratricidal power struggle.[59] The contribution of this study will be to investigate the communist tactical conundrum in Saxony. To achieve a high profile campaign the KPD needed an issue of genuine popular appeal and the inclusion of the SPD and Trade Union leaderships. However, this was the means to a communist end: if the rank-and -file party membership engaged in the issue of subterfuge, by taking part in a genuine united front with local Social Democrats on an issue of socialist reform, the tactic could be regarded as "working in reverse". In Saxony this issue was acute because the parliamentary arithmetic in the *Landtag* impelled the

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[57] Bahne, S., 'Die KPD im Ruhrgebiet in der Weimarer Republik' (pp315-55), in Reulecke, J. (ed.), *Arbeiterbewegung an Rhein und Ruhr. Beitraege zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung in Rheinland-Westfalen* (Wuppertal, 1974), p330.

[58] Eisner, F., *Das Verhaltnis der KPD zu den Gewerkschaften in der Weimarer Republik* (Cologne, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1977), p207.

[59] Koch-Baumgarten, *Einleitung*, p29.

left-wing Saxon SPD to look to the KPD's support for a "workers' majority" to continue the programme of reforms begun in the early 1920s.

Hermann Weber's detailed study of the KPD's General Line between 1929-33 has become a standard work on Communist strategy during the Great Depression.[60] Weber identified five constants making up the KPD's central political objectives: (1) first and foremost was the defence of the Soviet Union from the alleged threat of an imperialist war of intervention; (2) the KPD should seize power by a means of a general strike and armed uprising. However, no plans were made for a German revolution; (3) the KPD claimed to be the "only workers' party", all others, including the SPD, were part of the "fascist camp", led by monopoly capitalism. Even after the NSDAP's political breakthrough as a mass party it continued to be seen as an "agent of capitalism"; (4) the SPD was the "chief enemy" within the working class; the party had "grown together" with an increasingly fascist state: the party's most dangerous component was its left-wing, which held the working class to the SPD by disguising its "imperialist role" with "radical phrases"; (5) the policy was carried into the trade unions using the *RGO-politik*; however, the KPD never finally decided on whether to set up independent Red Unions or to work within the Free Trade Unions.[61] Within the framework of the General Line Weber identified eight phases (ie seven tactical changes) which continually fluctuated between a rigid and more flexible policy in relation to conditions in the Comintern, the KPD and the situation in Germany. The dominant role of the Comintern was highlighted by Weber in that five of the seven tactical changes were initiated by its intervention.[62]

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[60] Weber, *Hauptfeind Sozialdemokratie*, is also published with an extensive documentary appendix as, *Die Generallinie. Rundschreiben des Zentralkommittees der KPD an die Bezirke, 1929-1933* (Duesseldorf, 1981).

[61] ibid, pp18-19.

[62] ibid, pp20ff.

Weber's study, however, focuses primarily on the policies of the KPD's Reich leadership, using a documentary basis of circulars issued by the ZK to the BLs (District Leadership). This study will question whether it was possible to maintain a General Line at local level which identified the SPD as the "main enemy" during the rise of the NSDAP to power.

Bahne's study of the KPD's General Line (1928-34) identifies how the policy was in fact an "ultra-Left isolation" strategy, functioning to uproot the party from the influences of conditions in Germany.[63] Bahne delineates the origins of the "social fascist" thesis, as a definition of the SPD and communist tactics towards it, as the response of the 5th World Congress of the Comintern in 1924 to the final ending of hopes in revolution in Eastern and Central Europe.[64] Fowkes points out that the KPD's return to this policy in 1928 was a justification for a policy decided upon by the Comintern for Soviet reasons of state and foreign policy.[65] This study will examine how the KPD leadership tried to use ideology, party discipline and organisational centralisation to build a Chinese Wall preventing contact between the party membership and the wider workers' movement, to shut out the influences of German society. However, it will be argued that, particularly during the rise of the NSDAP, local conditions remained decisive in determining Communist activists' political behaviour. It is correct that "deviation" from the General Line never succeeded in having the official party policy changed. However, local party organisations were the interface between the official policy and the political setting it was implemented in. The adapting of the ZK's directives to meet local conditions was, after all, an indicator of the extent to which "social fascist" ideology became a socio-political reality. Negt and Kluge observed that the higher communist functionaries went in the party the more insulated

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[63] Bahne, *Scheitern*, p12.

[64] Bahne, *'Sozialfaschismus'*, p25.

[65] Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, p146.

from reality they became. However, the attachment of ordinary members was "loose and brittle" because they could not be isolated from their environment.[66] This research will also make the distinction between what Kriegel called an "inner core" of ever loyal (higher) party officials and the "outer circles" comprising ordinary members and local functionaries.[67]

Eve Rosenhaft has researched the KPD's tactics at local level in Berlin. Central to her study is the thesis that despite the party's ideological limitations on interpreting the political situation, in practice its response was "tremendously vibrant and surprisingly responsive to the shifting needs of its actual and potential constituency".[68] This meant treating the NSDAP as the "main enemy" in the neighbourhoods which, following the onset of mass unemployment, had become the environment replacing the factory as the *actual* location of political conflict.[69] Although Rosenhaft saw the KPD's attitude to physical violence as "ambivalent", the party is presented as developing a response to the NSDAP's penetration of what the KPD believed to be its strongholds after 1929: both physical defence (Abwehr) and "ideological discussion" were used to beat back and win over the Nazi threat.[70] The Berlin KPD's treatment of the NSDAP as the "main enemy" is not, however, presented as marking a significant break with the policy of "social fascism". Instead the General Line's validity for rank-and-file activists is explained in terms of a response to the role of the SPD in government: party members' every day

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[66] Negt, O. and Kluge, A., *Oeffentlichkeit und Erfahrungen. Zur Organisationsanalyse von buergerlicher und proletarischer Oeffentlichkeit* (Frankfurt/M, 1972), pp349, 385-402.

[67] Kreigel, A., *The French Communists. Profile of a People* (trans: Elaine P. Halperin; Chicago, London, 1972).

[68] Rosenhaft, E., *Beating the Fascists? The German Communists and Political Violence 1929-1933* (Cambridge, 1983), ppx-xi.

[69] ibid, 7ff,18ff,26.

[70] ibid, p15ff.

experience with the SA, the police and the *Sozialstaat*, which were under SPD control, made a united front extending from the Nazis to the SPD seem possible.[71] Chapter seven of this study will assess the extent to which the KPD responded to mass unemployment and the rise of political violence in the neighbourhoods. A counter thesis will be presented that the KPD's principal concern was to hold the General Line against the SPD at local level.

Research by Conan Fischer has added a new and controversial aspect to the interpretation of why the KPD adopted a "nationalist policy", in the form of the Programme of National and Social Liberation", in 1930.[72] Fischer's thesis is that working-class nationalism in Germany rose up through the KPD's membership forcing the party to adopt it as a political strategy. The KPD's response was reinforced by an overlap in the KPD's and NSDAP's electoral and membership constituency which intensified their rivalries for the "anti-system" vote.[73]

A fundamental flaw in Fischer's argument is that he does not define working-class nationalism nor its relationship to the traditional German nationalism of the middle and upper classes. The KPD's social basis, especially after 1923/4, increasingly comprised unemployed workers, the unskilled and the deskilled members of the working class, who had suffered from the failures of the German economy to integrate them into society and had adopted the KPD as a vehicle for their rejection of the "Weimar Compromise".[74] Koch-Baumgarten has underlined the fact that the KPD did not have a German revolutionary tradition to draw on, but instead inherited the SPD's earlier role of

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[71] ibid, p211.

[72] Fischer, C., *The German Communists and the Rise of Nazism* (London, 1991).

[73] ibid, pp39,51-2,112f,118.

[74] Peukert, 'Sozialgeschichte', p35.

representing those outside the bourgeois "nation".[75] If Fischer wants to draw a distinction between the Weimar state and the German nation, or nationalism and patriotism, then this should be made clear and the terms defined.

Fischer's early articles on the "cross-over thesis" sparked off a debate with Dick Geary in the pages of the *European History Quarterly*. Crucially, Geary pointed out that Fischer had omitted the factors which distinguished and separated the NSDAP and KPD in their social basis and and political policies.[76] In Saxony this is of particular relevance because the NSDAP developed on the right-wing of the political spectrum and was perceived to be a party of the anti-Marxist political right-wing. It was the parties of the Saxon *Buergertum* which collapsed as the NSDAP expanded into a mass party. Chapter seven of this case study will examine the effect these factors had in relations between the KPD and the Nazis.

The KPD and the Saxon Political System.

The KPD's adherence to Marxist-Leninist ideology prevented the party from accepting its actual location in the working class.[77] Ideology, at least in the upper leadership, prevented the KPD from prioritising the interests of its actual social constituency among a minority of industrial workers and the unemployed. Instead the KPD held to the dogma that it represented the true, or "objective", interests of the whole working class, which

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[75] Koch-Baumgarten, 'Einleitung', p19.

[76] Geary, D., 'A Response to Conan Fischer's "Class Enemies or Class Brothers?"', *EHQ* 15 (4) (1985), pp453-64; Fischer, C., 'Class Emenies or Class Brothers? Communist-Nazi Relations in Germany, 1929-33', *EHQ* 15 (3) (1985), pp259-79; Id., 'The KPD and Nazism: A Reply to Dick Geary', in *EHQ* 15 (4) (1985), pp465-71.

[77] Weber, H., 'Zur Ideologie der KPD in der Weimarer Republik. Neue Literature', in *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung (IWK)* 2 (1985), pp203-8.

was defined to include significant elements within the lower middle classes. Political action, however, was to focus on the factory workforce. The KPD held to a political interpretation based on a straight socio-political polarisation: the revolutionary working class would increasingly come under the leadership of the KPD and the "counter-revolution" would come under the dominant influence of monopoly capital. The reality of socio-political relations during the Weimar Republic was a fragmentation within and between social classes. In the mid-1920s the "special interest" parties of the middle classes represented the losers in the post 1924 socio-economic settlement.[78] Downward social mobility did not lead to Communism, as the KPD claimed, but led, especially in Saxony, to a deepening "anti-Marxism". Within the manual working classes industrial workers were increasingly divided into interest groups reflecting age, skill and industrial branch.[79]

Despite the KPD's inability to respond to these developments during the Weimar Republic, the KPD acted as a form of political barometer indicating the degree of social tension. This study will attempt to explain the Saxon KPD's function within the Saxon political system by drawing on Neumann's early definition of political parties.[80] Neumann categorised the parties of the Weimar Republic into three groupings. There were parties of liberal "integration", rooted in the 19th century tradition of a loose association of notables, with members and supporters only becoming politically engaged during election campaigns. The "modern" parties of "integration" (SPD, Catholic Centre, KPD and NSDAP), on the other hand, were characterised by their membership's continual political engagement, organisational co-ordination by a party bureaucracy and an involvement in

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[78] Jones, *German Liberalism,* esp. pp476ff.

[79] Zollitsch, W., *Arbeiter zwischen Weltwirtschaftkrise und Nationalsozialismus* (Goettingen, 1990).

[80] Neumann, S., *Die Parteien der Weimarer Republik* (4 edn, Stuttgart, 1977), for the KPD, see, pp87ff.

all aspects of social and political life. The SPD and the Catholic Centre Party were parties of "democratic integration", whose structure and policies were democratic; the KPD and NSDAP were parties of "total integration", whose structures and objectives were totalitarian. This thesis will conclude with an assessment of why the KPD was able to sustain itself as a political force despite its unresponsiveness to developments in its socio-political basis.

1.3 The Documentary Sources.

The documentation used in this research comprise two main groupings. Firstly, reports made by or for the Saxon Ministry of the Interior, and the wider newspaper sources used in these reports. Secondly, the former Central Communist Party Archive (SAPMO) in Berlin. The most systematic collection of monthly situation reports on political and economic developments in Saxony are located in the national (police) archive in Bremen (Staatsarchiv Bremen). These documents are also to be found in the Saxony's Central Regional Archive in Dresden (*Staatshauptarchiv* Dresden), but with significant breaks in continuity. These reports are a synthesis of material compiled by bureaucrats in the Saxon civil service. Often the sources used are refered to directly. These sources principally included a wide range of press cuttings, stray communist documents which got into police hands, tip-offs from informers of various quality, and compiled statistical data. The Main Saxon Regional Archive in Dresden turns up the magnification on local developments. Often reports on the administrative districts and smaller towns (*Amts und Kreishauptmannschaften*) not only report on the political and economic situation, but also include the original sources used in the report. Similarly documents in the State Archive and City Archive (*Staats und Stadtarchiv*) in Leipzig help focus more clearly on

local developments in Saxony. The national archive (*Bundesarchiv*) in Potsdam also contains a number of reports on Saxony. However, there is considerable duplication with the Dresden archive. The National Archive in Koblenz contains a random selection of KPD documents. Most helpfully there are two extensive files of documentation on the KPD's campaigning in Saxony in 1932 which are largely missing from the central party archive.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall general access to the KPD's extensive and systematic documentary collection presented the researcher with new material on an old topic. Hermann Weber's study of the KPD's Stalinisation went unchecked for almost three decades not least because Weber had used the widest available documentary basis and had an insiders' eye view enabling a work of veritable revelation. The documentation does confirm Weber's central contention that between 1924 and 1930 the KPD was above all concerned with the internal party power struggle and factional infighting. However, the collection of reports of BL Meetings and reports made by the various party divisions charged with party work which issued directives to lower party units, and these units' responses, have added a new dimension to the study of the KPD. Above all these documents have allowed a study of the limits of Stalinisation in imposing the KPD's General Line at local level and made possible a separation of type between the party leadership and apparatus and ordinary members and lower functionaries. The greatest omission in the documentary collection in the party archive is in the regional leaderships' and party divisions' discussions in the early 1930s. The controversial nature of these years during the rise of the NSDAP makes this a regrettable absence. However, at the very least a wider range of documentation is available which includes reports from the

regional party apparatus about the difficulties experienced at local level in pursuing party policy.

The main problem in this research was arriving at an evaluation of such an extensive range of, often newly available, material. The methodology used is empirical: focusing the material using a series of questions and answering these question by interpretation in the light of information gleaned by studying the secondary sources. The accuracy of police reports is judged by comparing them to the wider documentation. A particular problem of interpretation does, however, effect the KPD's own records. The KPD used a tortuous *Parteisprache* at all levels of party activity: at closed meetings at all levels of leadership; in party circulars; in the press and in party propaganda; and in reports on developments inside the party and in political campaigning. The principal criticism of C. Fischer's study of the KPD and its relationship with the Nazis and German nationalism has been that the KPD's own documentation should not be treated at face value. This is not least because words were re-defined in the light of specific Marxist-Leninist philosophical concepts (ie the party ideology). German national interest was therefore redefined in communist terms: the KPD's leading political role in Germany was taken as the basis for a claim to represent the "objective" interests of all working people. Wickham's review of Fischer's work pointed out that there was no reason to believe that the KPD's own reports should read as a rational account of social and political developments. In this respect Wickham writes that: "By 1930 Bolshevisation had instrumentalised communist political language, so KPD propaganda served an often changing party "line". [81] However, the KPD's internal party records remain a valid and rich sources of documentary evidence. Instructions from the ZK and the BLs can be

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[81] Wickham, J., 'Review: *German Communists and the Rise of the Nazis*, by Conan Fischer', in *IRSH*, 37 (1992-3), pp414-16.

followed into the lower party organisations and the responses from mid and lower functionaries traced back up the communist hierarchy. While it is correct that the upper party leadership "analysed" the political situation through ideological lenses, the wider range of documents often illustrates how party policy failed to motivate the membership or to interest the politically active public. A comparison of different sources of internal party documentation also enables the researcher to take account of who wrote them, what their position in the party was and how the political situation was interpreted by the state authorities and the press. It seems unavoidable that a study of the KPD will involve a question of interpretation. However, this study of the Saxon KPD sets out to evaluate the KPD's documentation on the scales of probability.

1.4 Thesis Structure.

The structure of this thesis follows the main documentary basis for the years 1924-33, identifying the most important developments in the Saxon KPD. The thesis divides into four sections and seven chapters. The main sections on the Saxon KPD reflect the three changes in the party's political policy in these years. This chapter has detailed the aims of the research project itself by placing this study in the context of existing literature on the KPD and identifying the areas of contribution. Chapter two then places the Saxon KPD in the social, economic and political context of Saxony. The second section, chapter three, deals with the period 1924-25 in which the KPD was dominated by the former Left Opposition, which rejected the Comintern's united front policy (1921-23). The chapter asks whether it was possible to uproot right-wing communism from its Saxon strongholds after the so-called "Failed October" of 1923. It also contributes to the wider history of the KPD by assessing whether it was possible to pursue a policy independent of the Comintern's General Line. Section three evaluates the KPD's return to the united

front policy between 1925 and 1928. Chapter four assesses the limitations restricting the KPD's Stalinisation in determining the political behaviour of local Communists. Chapter five then looks at the ability of the KPD, using the united front tactic, to influence the Saxon political system in these years. The fourth, and final, section charts the roots and reception of the policy of treating the SPD as a "social fascist" party and its implication during the rise of the NSDAP. It will be argued that, in contrast to other studies of this period, the Saxon KPD did not "welcome" this tactical approach. Chapter seven then deals with the Saxon KPD's response to the rise of the NSDAP between 1930 and 1933. It will question whether the KPD on the streets of Saxony was able to maintain a General Line which interpreted the SPD as communism's "main enemy" in the face of Nazi violence. The change in emphasis from internal party events between 1924-29 to local political policy between 1929 and 1933 reflects a change in the documentation. The reasons for the absence of an evaluation of the KPD's relations with the NSDAP before 1930 are twofold. Firstly, it was a minor consideration in these years, on the fringes of the internal party debate. Secondly, it is a subject, at Reich level at least, treated in specific studies; it would have over-extended this study of the Saxon KPD.

2. The Saxon Setting

2.1 Introduction

After a long history as a state and an economic region stretching back into the middle ages, the modern boundaries of the Saxon state were set at the Congress of Vienna in 1815.[1] Significant territorial losses to the north and west between Erfurt and Eichsfeld were the consequence of supporting Napoleon and his continental system, which had protected the Saxon textile industry from British competition.[2] Throughout the 19th century Saxony's economic development brought her into increasingly close political association with the Prussian-led grouping of German states. Saxony joined the Customs Union in 1834, the North German League in 1866 and finally the *Kaiserreich* in 1871. Saxony covered only three per cent of the surface area of the newly founded German nation with eight per cent of the total population. By 1933 the Saxon population had reached 5.2 million inhabitants.[3]

2.2 The Saxon Economy

Early Industrialisation

In economic terms, Saxony's role as the "pioneer land" (Zwahr) of the first phase of the German industrial revolution was increasingly surpassed by the heavy industrial centres in

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[1] Bramke, W. (verantwortlicher Autor), Hess, U., Dittrich, G., and Rheinholdt, J., unter Mitarbeit von Kretschmer, K., Roth, H., and Rudloff, M., *Sachsens Wirtschaft im Wechsel politischer Systeme im 20. Jahrhundert. Strukturelle Entwicklung und soziale Problemfelder vom Ausgang der ersten Weltkrieges bis in die fruehen '60er Jahren* (Leipzig, 1992), p3 (henceforth: Arbeitsgruppe Sachsen)

[2] Gerlach, S., 'Einleitung', in Id.(ed) *Sachsen. Eine politische Landeskunde* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Cologne, 1993), p50.

[3] Statistics in Heyse, W., Das Problem der Arbeitslosigkeit in Sachsen, Dissertation (Dresden, 1938), p5.

western Germany.[4] Resistance to change, the consequence of a lack of raw materials, was shown in the 19th century and early 20th century by what Gerlach called Saxony's "very constant economic geography."[5] Above all this applied to the textile industry. Bramke observed that, although the Saxon economy in general was dominated by the textile industry, its early dependence on water power located the industry primarily in the Erzgebirge and Zittaugebirge.[6] The lack of raw materials in Saxony created an early dependence on producing finished goods for the export market. In the 19th century Saxony's geographic location, at the cross-roads of eastern and western trade, helped Saxony infiltrate the world market.[7] Equally, joining the Customs Union in 1834 provided Saxon industry with access to a larger German market without the restrictions of customs barriers.[8]

Of crucial importance in the social and economic development of Saxony was that villages were affected as much as cities by industrialisation.[9] The development of a close association between industrial and agricultural life was most pronounced in the textile region which included and surrounded the city of Chemnitz. To a greater extent that any

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[4] Zwahr, H., 'Sachsen im Uebergang zum Kapitalismus und im Revolutionsjahr 1830', in *Saechsische Heimatsblaetter* 30 (3) (1984), p104; Bramke, W., 'Die Industrieregion Sachsens. Ihre Herausbildung und Entwichlung bis zum Ende des zweiten Weltkreiges', in Schulze, R. (ed) *Industrie im Umbruch. Voraussetzung und Verlaufsmunster des regionalen Strukturwandels in europaeischen Vergleich* (Essen, 1993), p299.

[5] Gerlach, 'Einleitung', p49.

[6] Bramke, *Industrieregion Sachsen*, p294.

[7] *Arbeitsgruppe Sachsen*, p3.

[8] Zeise, R., 'Die buergerliche Umwaelzung. Zentrum der proletarischen Parteibildung (1830-1871) (pp332-80)', in Czock, K. (ed), *Geschichte Sachsens* (Weimar, 1989), p341; Statistics in Boelcke, W. A., 'Wirtschafts und Sozialgeschichte Sachsens', in Gerlach, *Landeskunde*, p140. In 1847 Saxony housed two-thirds of all spindles and looms within the Customs Union

[9] Schlesinger, W., 'Einleitung', in Id. (ed), *Sachsen* (Stuttgart, 1965), pLVIII; Roellig, G., *Wirtschaftsgeographie Sachsens* (Leipzig, 1928), pp60-62.

other Saxon city, Chemnitz's development was interwoven with the surrounding rural areas. This was even more acute in the industrial villages of the Erzgebirge.[10] The ultimate expression of this economic structure was the persistence of cottage industry, which was widespread within the textile industry and the manufacture of finished products, such as musical instruments and toys.[11] This qualifies the nature of the rapid population growth which was generated by the rise of the textile industry: the huge average population density was part of a widely dispersed economic structure.[12] The strong connection between industry and agriculture allowed wages to be held low and this in turn inhibited the concentration of industry in large mechanised factories.[13]

Saxony's second most strongly represented economic sector, machine building, was originally an adjunct of the textile industry and centred on Chemnitz.[14] The impetus from the demand for locomotives, which spread the industrial revolution throughout Saxony, saw Chemnitz become the second largest centre of the machine building industry by 1871, outdone only by Berlin.[15] Immediately following the middle of the 19th century, the availability of a large workforce and cheap ground rent further extended the machine building industry to the flat-land surrounding Leipzig, the area around Dresden, and the suburbs of the cities themselves.[16] Leipzig began to produce machines for the printing industry and later for the rural economy, while Dresden initially produced sewing

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[10] Roellig, *Wirtschaftsgeography*, p52.

[11] Gerlach, 'Einleitung', p51; Zeise, 'Umwaeltzung', p372.

[12] On the development of the textile cities of Chemnitz, Plauen and Zwickau see Strauss, S., *Die Lage und die Bewegung der Chemnitzer Arbeiter in der ersten Haelfte der 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1960), p11f.

[13] Zeise, 'Umwaeltzung', p372.

[14] Bramke, 'Industrieregion Sachsens', p302.

[15] *ibid*, p303; Zeise, 'Umwaeltzung', p345.

[16] Boelke, 'Sozialgeschichte', p145.

machines and later specialised machines for the tobacco industry.[17] Crucially, these developments left the industrial structure decentralised in a diversity of specialised industries. In Leipzig by 1863 machines were being produced for the printing industry, wood-cutting machines, machines for the tobacco industry, the manufacture of industrial tools and lathes.[18] The division of Saxony into the economic sub-regions of the 20th century was becoming apparent by the 1860s: northwestern Saxony was established as a leading German machine building region, in contrast to the southwest, where textiles were dominant.

The Saxon Economy in the Kaiserreich

As a result of political pressure and economic necessity Saxony joined the North German League at its foundation in 1871. However, Bramke has called Saxony's subsequent economic development a process of "continuity within change".[19] While the rapid rise of the Ruhr, from a rural region in the middle of the 19th century to one of Europe's largest heavy industrial regions by 1914, was conditioned by the close proximity of raw materials,[20] Saxony's near absence of raw materials almost completely prevented her participation in the heavy-industrial revolution.[21] This was the key factor tying Saxony's industrialisation to the economic structures of the earlier 19th century. The economic

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[17] Gerlach, 'Einleitung', p51.

[18] Boelke, 'Sozialgeschichte', p147-8; Bramke, Industrieregion Sachsens', p304.

[19] Bramke, op.cit., p305.

[20] Tampke, J., The Ruhr and Revolution. The Revolutionary Movement in the Rheinish-Westphalian Region, 1912-1919 (London, 1979), p3.

[21] For details of coal mining in Saxony and its place in the regions industrial development see, Ruediger, B., 'Der Freistaat Sachsen in der Weimarer Republik', in Saeschische Heimatsblaetter 30 (3) (1984) (pp138-55), p141f.

consequence was a further proliferation and diversification of existing finished goods industries.[22] Saxony remained the centre of the German textile industry, employing 30 per cent of all Saxon employees in 1882.[23]

The machine building industry also increased its share of economic activity and continued to diversify production into a range of often highly specialised products. These products included cameras and projectors, optical and medical equipment, engineering equipment, hygiene and cosmetics articles, machines for the confectionery industry, celluloids and silks and, after the turn of the century, electrical motors.[24] Although the Saxon machine building industry was disproportionately strongly represented in the German economy, accounting for 12 per cent of all factories from a population of 8 per cent of the German total, the strong interconnection with the textile industry underlines the importance of textiles to the Saxon economy: almost 50 per cent of machine production in 1907 was for the textile industry.[25] This combination of factors which dominated the Saxon economy produced certain fundamental characteristics of the region's industrial structure. Saxony was dominated by the labour-intensive finishing industries in small and medium-sized factories, which had a strong dependence on export markets.[26] Economic stability was, consequently, tied to the availability of world markets and a supply of cheap labour to ensure these products could compete successfully. Despite pronounced sub-regional variations, the figures for factory size are revealing. In 1907 the number of workers

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[22] Kretzschmar, H., *Saechsische Geschichte. Geschichte der Neuzeit seit der Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts* (vol.2; Dresden, 1935), p210; Gerlach 'Einleitung', p52.

[23] Boelke, 'Sozialgeschichte', p146; Lapp, B., 'Political Polarisation in Weimar Germany: The Saxon *Buergertum* and the Left, 1918/19-1930', Ph.D. thesis (University of California, 1991), p11.

[24] Zeise, 'Umwaeltzung', p384; Gerlach, 'Einleitung', p52. Small electric motors actually helped sustain cottage industry where one worker could "mass produce" goods.

[25] Boelke, 'Sozialgeschichte', p147.

[26] *Arbeitsgruppe Sachsen*, p5.

employed in small factories (between one and five employees) was 91.2 per cent of the total workforce; 7.6 per cent of the workforce was employed in medium-sized factories (employing between five and fifty workers).[27] In 1933 small factories continued to make up 35.9 per cent of Saxon industry: two-thirds of these were run by a single worker.[28]

Saxony was also resistant to the "new" industries of the "technological" phase of the industrial revolution which took off in Germany around the turn of the century. It was not that the chemical, electro-technical and vehicle production industries failed to enter the Saxon economy. They were, however, strongly under-represented in Saxony's industrial profile.[29] The Saxon economy thus retained its characteristic structure until the Second World War, despite the crashing waves of war, inflation, world depression and the Nazi economic system.[30] Saxony was, therefore, a *Mittelstand* economy with a more dispersed industrial structure than the centres of heavy industry, such as the Ruhr and Central Germany.

Below the regional averages, however, Saxony had pronounced sub-regional peculiarities. Roellig's study was the first to identify the existence of the sub-regional economic structures in Saxony.[31] The first of these subregions was in northwestern Saxon stretching between Leipzig and Borna. From the 1870s this area had seen the rise to prominence of the metal and machine building industries, the paper industry which supplied Leipzig (the centre of the German publishing industry) and coal mining in the

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[27] Statistics in Zeise, 'Umwaeltzung', p403.

[28] Heyse, 'Arbeitslosigkeit', p7.

[29] Boelke, 'Sozialgeschichte', p159-60; Zeise, R., and Ruediger, B., 'Bundesstaat im Deutschen Reich (1871-1917/8)' (pp381-428), in Czock (ed), *Geschichte Sachsens*, p406.For details of the production of vehicles in Leipzig, Dresden and the Chenmitz-Zwickau area, especially Werdau, see Gerlach, 'Einleitung', p52.

[30] Bramke, 'Industrieregion Sachsens', p305.

[31] Roellig, 'Wirtschaftsgeography', p49ff.

Borna area: the result was a more concentrated economic structure. The economic structure conditioned the industrial structure with large and medium-scale factories concentrated in Leipzig, Oschatz, Grimma, Doebeln and Wuerzen.[32] These factors made northwestern Saxony the most self-enclosed industrial area of the province, with the least degree of interconnection with the rural economy.[33]

The second of the sub-regions identified by Roellig was the Dresden-Elbe valley area, which included the industrial region between Pirna and Meissen.[34] With little primary industry, the Dresden area depended largely on producing finished goods in the textile and machine building industries.[35] Although Dresden-Bautzen was the ninth most densely populated region in Germany, with 346.3 residents per square kilometre compared to the Reich average of 140.3, there was a greater interconnection with the surrounding countryside than in northwestern Saxony.[36] The high average population density masks the proliferation of small towns and industrial villages. In 1925 the bulk of the population was housed in nine small cities of between 10-20,000 residents and 17 communities of between 5-10,000 residents and a dispersion of industrial villages.[37] The economic structure conditioned an industrial structure encompassing a proliferation of small

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[32] Ruediger, 'Freistaat Sachsen', p141; Stuade, F., 'Sachsen im Preussisch-deutschen Reich', in *Saechsische Heimatsblaetter* 30 (3) (1984), p170; Zwahr, H., *Zur Konstituierung der Proletariats als Klasse. Strukturuntersuchung ueber das Leipziger Proletariat waehrend der industriellen Revolution* (Berlin (East), 1978), p198f.

[33] Roellig, 'Wirtschaftsgeographie', p54.

[34] Ruediger, 'Freistaat Sachsen', p141.

[35] Schwarzenbach, H., 'Ueber den Kampf der KPD gegen die Gefahr des Fascismuns und fuer die Verteidigung der Lebensrechte des deutschen Volkes in Ostsachsen in der Zeit von 1929-1933', Dissertation (Berlin (East), 1969), p28.

[36] Statistics in Heyse, 'Arbeitslosigkeit', pp4-5.

[37] Statistics in Schwarzenbach, 'Ostsachsen', p27.

factories, especially in the textile industries, and more medium sized factories in the machine building sector.[38]

The third area was southwestern Saxony, centring on the city of Chemnitz. This region was strongly dependent on the textile industry which in turn conditioned the area's industrial geography. Although Chemnitz and Plauen were significant industrial cities, the textile industry was widely dispersed throughout the sub-region, most particularly in the Zwickau area.[39] The census statistics show the Chemnitz-Zwickau area to be the most densely populated locality within Saxony, with 499 residents per square kilometre; 78 per cent of these residents were employed in the census category "industry and handicrafts".[40] However, what lay behind the statistical facade is crucial. There was a proliferation of industrial villages where even communities of less than 1,000 were involved, at least in seasonal or part-time work, in the cottage industries which covered the landscape.[41] With 75 per cent of Saxony's textile industry in this economic area the figures for population distribution are revealing: 38 per cent of textile workers lived in communities of less than 5,000, 20.4 per cent lived in small towns of less than 10,000 and only 17.4 per cent of textile workers lived in the two major cities (Plauen and Chemnitz) with a population exceeding 100,000.[42] The "dwarf" structure of the rural economy in southwestern Saxony created a dependence within the farming and peasant communities on supplementing their

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[38] Roellig, *Wirtschaftsgeography*, p50.

[39] ibid, p53.

[40] Statistics in Uhlmann, G., 'Der Kampf der Chemnitzer Werktaetigen unter Fuehrung der KPD gegen die Errichtung der faschistischen Diktatur (August 1932 bis Januar 1933)', Dissertation (Karl Marx University, Leipzig, 1966), p18.

[41] ibid.

[42] Zahn, A., 'Die berufliche und soziale Gleiderung der saechsischen Bewolkerung in saemtlichen Gemeinden mit ueber 5,000 Einwohnern', in *Zeitschrift des Saechsischen Statistischen Landesamt (ZSSL)* 76 (1930), pp61-78.

income by work in the cottage industries of the textile industry and other home work occupations such as the manufacture of toys (from wood).[43] This created not only a strong socio-economic bond between industrial and agricultural life but placed the industrial village in an environment influenced by both rural and industrial determinants. H. Fenske goes as far as to state that this led to a dissolution of the boundaries between city and countryside.[44] The industrial village structure in the textile dominated southwest of Saxony is the crucial determinant in the sub-regional pattern of industrialisation, not the statistical averages which present a misleading picture of socio-economic relations.

The Saxon Economy during the Weimar Republic and the Rise of Social Insecurity

The predominance of the textile industry in Saxony made the regional economy largely unable to adapt to the demands of the war economy (1914-18); this was reinforced by a lack of raw materials and primary industry. Furthermore the disruption to trade caused widespread and significant damage to the Saxon economy. Only the metal industry received economic impetus from the demands imposed by the war with the machine building industry finally displacing the clothing industry as the second most significant sphere of production by the early 1930s.[45] This had the result that during the Weimar

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[43] In 1907 the Saxon rural economy comprised: 56.4 per cent of rural enterprises were run by a sole worker; 30.2 per cent with between two and five workers; and 4.9 per cent with between 6 and 10 workers; 5 per cent with between 11 and 50 workers; and 2.3 per cent with over 50 workers. For reasons unstated these figure add up to only 98.5 per cent. See Roellig, *Wirtschaftsgeographie*, p51. Further, Roth, I., *Die Wirtschaftsstruktur des erzgebirgischen Dorfes* (Greifwald, 1938), p138; Heinicke, H., *Bauerliche Betriebsverhaltnisse in den erzgebirgischen Kreishauptmannschaft Sacwarzenberg, Annaberg and Stollberg* (Leipzig, 1937), p18; Lobmeier, K., 'Die sozialoekonomische Lage und das Verhalten der "alten" Mittelschichten in der Kreishauptmannschaft Chemnitz', Dissertation (Leipzig, 1989), p69.

[44] Fenske, H., *Wahlrecht und Parteiensystem: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Parteiengeschichte* (Frankfurt/M, 1972), p287.

[45] Zeise and Ruediger, 'Bundesstaat', p425.

Republic Saxony remained an "old" industrial region dominated by the textile and related clothing industries, followed by the metal and machine building industries, and then a diversity of local production such as musical instruments and toys in Erzgebirge and Lausitz.[46] The new, more dynamic, chemical, optical, electro-technical and vehicle industries, which weathered the post-war economic storms more successfully, continued to be strongly under-represented in the Saxon economy. Consequently, the industrial structure continued to be most dispersed and small-scale in the southwest and more concentrated in the northwest.

Despite the relatively slight impact of the First World War on the occupational and social structure of Saxony, the gradual process of industrialisation had created shifts in the representation of social groups. Between 1907 and 1925 the workforce had increased numerically by 33 per cent, reaching 57 per cent of the adult population. The proportion of white collar workers, the "new" middle class (Angestellte), rose by 200 per cent, even more strongly than the German average, reaching 18.8 per cent of all those in employment. Industrialisation had the opposite impact on the "old" independent middle classes in small scale-production and distribution, which fell to 13.2 per cent of the working population in 1925.[47] Although the rural economy had shrunk to only 9.1 per cent of the workforce in 1925, it did remain significant, not least because of its strong connection with industrial employment in the southwest of Saxony. When the agricultural depression hit Germany in the mid 1920s and industrial employment contracted, a double blow was given to employment prospects in the southwest of Saxony, creating early and widespread political protest.

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[46] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', pp11-12.

[47] *Arbeitsgruppe Sachsen*, p6.

Demographic developments in Saxony were also related to the process of industrialisation. As the economy expanded between 1843 and 1871 the population rose from one to 2.5 million; this was followed by the most rapid phase of industrialisation and population growth between 1871 and 1900, when the population reached 4.8 million. Thereafter the population curve in Saxony reached a plateau, rising by only 0.4 million between 1910 and 1925. The population grew as a proportion of the Reich total until 1900, then between 1900 and 1933 grew more slowly than the national average. If the Reich average is represented by 100 then the Saxon population growth represented in 1824: 186; 1871: 221; 1900: 260; 1910: 258; 1925: 248.[48] However, the wide dispersion of Saxon industry conditioned the pattern of residency: the large cities (over 100,000) were centres of production but housed only 32.2 per cent of Saxon industry with a total of 34.9 per cent of the population; for the mid-sized cities (10-100,000) the figures are 20 per cent to 18 per cent respectively; and for communities of less than 10,000 the proportion is 47.6 per cent to 46.3 per cent.[49] Behind the high average figure for population density and industrial structure lay a pattern of socio-industrial relations stamped by the "old" (19th century) mould.

The process of long-term growth meant that Saxony had a strong degree of homogeneity in its social composition. Even in the early period of rapid population expansion from 1843-1871, 80 per cent was the product of a surplus of births, the remainder coming from immigration from the neighbouring rural parts of Prussia, Bohemia and the small Thuringian states.[50] While the heavy industrial centres of the Ruhr and Central Germany experienced often massive population growth when demand produced by the war

[48] Statistics in Heyse, *Arbeitslosigkeit*, pp5-6; Zeise, 'Umwaeltzung', p373.

[49] Roellig, *Wirtschaftsgeographie*, pp52-3.

[50] Forberger, R., *Die Industriellen Revolution in Sachsen 1800-1861* (vol.1; Berlin (East), 1982), p351.

economy drew in a workforce from a wide range of social origins, Saxony by 1916 had become a net exporter of labour. These factors kept the population overwhelmingly "indigenous" Saxon.[51] Saxony remained a predominantly Lutheran state (87 per cent) with a Catholic community of some 3.8 per cent, largely living in the Bautzen area. The remaining 10 per cent was accounted for by a tiny Jewish population, centred on Leipzig, and a strong representation of the militant atheist movement of Free Thinkers who had officially left the church.[52] The percentage of the population in employment also rose from 44.1 per cent in 1907 to 53.9 per cent in 1925. This was largely the result of an increase in the longevity of workers and, largely in the textile industry, an increase in the number of women in employment.[53] Saxony as a region with a high degree of ethnic and religious homogeneity did not, however, experience harmonious relations between social classes. Instead research by B. Lapp confirms a picture of political polarisation which became acute during the economic instability which characterised life under the Weimar Republic.[54]

Until the First World War Saxon industry had responded moderately to cyclical economic fluctuations exhibiting what Bramstedt called a "resistance to crisis". Bramstedt identified the reasons for this in the predominance of the export based consumer industries which insulated the Saxon economy from fluctuations in the German economy.[55] However, the post-war period was characterised by changes in the structure of world demand,

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[51] *Arbeitsgruppe Sachsen*, p6.

[52] ibid, p5.

[53] In 1925 26.5 per cent of the Saxon workforce were employed in the textile industry, of these employess 47.5 per cent were women see, *ZSSL* 72/3 (1926/7), p248.

[54] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p1.

[55] Bramstedt, P., 'Die Krise der saechsischen Industriewirtschaft', in *Veroeffentlichung des Verbandes Saechsischer Industrieller* 67 (Berlin, 1932), pp3-4,8,41f.

production and labour markets, which transformed the earlier advantages into disadvantages. During the Weimar Republic the Saxon economy responded intensely and rapidly to changes in demand. This translated into widespread social insecurity for the working population who lost their job security, saw living standards eroded, particularly after 1929, and were exposed to the ever present threat of unemployment. Economic turbulence also adversely effected the *Mittelstand* economy, particularly after the currency stabilisation of the mid 1920s, when a disproportionately high number of firms went into liquidation.[56]

One of the results of the First World War was to split up the economic region uniting southern Saxony and Bohemia. This put Saxony in competition with a rival producing the same goods with currency and wage rate advantages and customs barriers to help increase exports and reduce imports. Geographically this also reinforced Saxony's position on the periphery of the German economy.[57] More significantly, this pattern was generalised on a global scale as the former agrarian nations had further developed their economies while the war had ruptured the trade of the belligerent nations. Latin America, North America, Canada, Japan and China featured among these "newly" industrialised textile manufacturing competitor countries.[58] These nations' close relationship with the rural economy kept wages low while Saxony, a region whose economic evolution had permitted this before 1918, lost its wage advantage as a result of labour legislation during the Weimar Republic.[59] While Saxony retained outdated work methods and technology

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[56] Adler, H., 'Die Wirtschaftskrise im spiegel der saechsischen Konkurstatistik', in *ZSSL* 78/79 (1932/33), pp305-10.

[57] *Arbeitsgruppe Sachsen*, p7; Heyse, 'Arbeitslosigkeit', p12.

[58] Kabermann, H., 'Die Exportquote der Saechsischen Industrie', Dissertation (Dresden, 1929), p20.

[59] Bramstedt, 'Industriewirtschaft', p30f. For details of local differences see, Gerlach, 'Einleitung', p55; Boelke, 'Sozialgeschichte', p155.

the "newly" industrialised countries employed modern methods and machinery.[60] Furthermore, customs barriers were erected internationally and the principle of autarky was applied more widely by the many Eastern and Central European states which were given national self-determination after the war.[61]

While the trend in the "old" industrialised nations was to develop the production of capital goods and supply the demand created for machinery in the "newly" industrialised nations, Saxony's financial weakness prevented a significant degree of structural economic adaptation. After Germany's period of inflation (1914-23) banking had been further centralised and concentrated. This ended investment by local banks in the local economy and was replaced by a credit system based on real value to ensure the return of loans from centralised banks. The small and medium scale of Saxon industry meant that it lost out in a period of credit shortage to more profitable large-scale industry which also absorbed the largest share of foreign loans in the years following the currency stabilisation.[62] Consequently, Saxon industry could not afford to pay for the costly rationalisation of production which was the only legal way during the Weimar Republic of reducing labour costs.[63] Production costs were also increased because of the need to import raw materials from both within Germany and abroad and then to pay freight costs again to transport finished goods to harbours in northwestern Germany, a factor aggravated by the increased dependence on foreign trade.[64] These factors produced constant complaints from the VSI

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[60] Ruediger, 'Freistaat Sachsen', p141.

[61] Kabermann, 'Exportquote', p24.

[62] Bramstedt, 'Industriewirtschaft', p15.

[63] ibid, p40.

[64] ibid, p 28f; Heyse, 'Arbeitslosigkeit', pp18-22,25.

(Verband Saechsischer Industriellen) about the cost of wages and social benefits, a stance which intensified labour-capital conflicts.[65]

Certain structural factors served to reinforce the problems of Saxony's export dependence. The rise in the machine building industry to second place in Saxony's economic activity only further increased dependence on newly industrialised countries overseas.[66] Furthermore, the Saxon machine building industry was strongly inter-linked with the agrarian economy, which went into crisis in the mid 1920s, and the textile industry, which began to stockpile goods by 1928: as the world demand for textiles fell and agricultural concerns went into debt, orders for the machine building industry declined.[67] Changes in the structure of exports also made a marked impact: between 1913 and 1929 consumer goods had fallen from 54 per cent of all German exports to 44 per cent, while production goods had risen from 46 per cent to 56 per cent of all exports.[68] Kabermann estimated that in the same period (1913-1925) Saxony's share of textile exports doubled, reaching 60 per cent of the total.[69]

Structural economic problems produced chronic social insecurity and an ever present fear of downward social mobility. Even during the era of "relative stabilisation" during the mid 1920s, unemployment in Saxony peaked above the German average in the down-turn of 1925/6. The residual benefits of Saxony's industrial structure were felt in an export led

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[65] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p16; Adolf, J., 'Dissertationsproject zum Verband Saechsischer Industrieller (VSI)', in Bramke, W. (Verantwortlicher Autor), *Projekt Sachsen im 20. Jahrhundert. Politische, wirtschaftliche und soziale Wandlung in einer alten Industrieregion. Jahresbericht September 1993 bis August 1994*, pp28-41; Social costs per head of population were consistently above the German average, see Boelke, *Wirtschafts und Sozialegeschichte Sachsens*, pp53.

[66] *Arbeitsgruppe Sachsen*, p9; Kabermann, 'Exportquote', pp53ff.

[67] Kabermann, op.cit., pp53-7; Ruediger, 'Freistaat Sachsen', p152.

[68] Bramstedt, 'Industriewirtschaft', p16.

[69] Kabermann, 'Exportquote', p36.

recovery in 1927, reducing unemployment to the lowest figure in Germany's industrial regions.[70] However, the Great Depression brought the final blow. The wide range of products in the finished goods sector for the export market, almost 30 per cent of which entered the North American market in the second half of the 1920s, meant that Saxony was hit harder than any other German region as demand fell over the precipice built high on the over-production of the post-war years.[71] As world demand plummeted, Saxon unemployment rocketed: in May 1932 of a workforce of 2.1 million (excluding civil servants) only 1.4 million remained in employment; in the consumer industry only 36.5 per cent of productive capacity was in use.[72] Although Saxony was characterised by a relatively high level of unemployment in the second half of the 1920s, its causes were different from those that operated in the wider German context. In Germany structural unemployment was the result of a wave of industrial rationalisation following the currency stabilisation. The creation of stable financial relations placed wage costs back firmly at the centre of the profitability question. However, unlike in the late *Kaiserreich*, markets were contracting and the German economy began to stagnate. Equally significant was the widening parameters of those at risk from unemployment. In the late Imperial period unemployment had mainly affected the young, the old and the unskilled; now skilled workers were threatened and their pay rates put under pressure. Furthermore, the "new" middle class of white collar workers in the administration of industry was effected by

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[70] *Arbeitsgruppe Sachsen*, p9; Ruediger, 'Freistaat Sachsen', p142.

[71] Kretzschmar, *Saechsische Geschichte*, p209; Kabermann, 'Exportquote', p97. Between 1913-28 German exports fell from 22 per cent of GDP to 16 per cent. This was a consequence of Germany's reduced share of world trade which fell from 13.2 per cent to 9.1 per cent in the same period, see Petzina, D., 'The Causes and Extent of Unemployment in the Weimar Republic', in Stachura, P. D. (ed.), *Unemployment and the Great Depression in Weimar Germany* (London, 1986), p40.

[72] Boelke, 'Sozialgeschichte', p156.

unemployment for the first time.[73] In Saxony it was other structural economic changes which brought about mass unemployment. The aftermath of the war acted as a structural axis on which a stable economy was rotated around almost 180 degrees: changed patterns of domestic and international supply and demand, "new" competitor nations producing with cost advantages, state protection and new technology and a financial weakness preventing the monetary means of industrial restructuring, combined to made Saxony's export dependence become a handicap to achieving stable socio-economic relations.[74]

The *Mittelstand* was also threatened by the prospect of downward social mobility. The inflation robbed the *Rentier* middle class of their savings thereby destroying their prosperity and security. The fact that tax returns per head of population showed a rise in income in Saxony, largely on the basis of industrial earnings, only served to accentuate the *Mittelstand's* fear of being subsumed into the proletariat.[75] In general the "distribution of income in German society (during "relative stabilisation") shifted in favour of those who derived their income from wealth or property."[76] However, these financial benefits also divided the interests of those within the working classes and the lower/middle classes. For employed workers living standards rose at the expense of a structurally unemployed underclass; among the lower/middle classes unemployment threatened the white collar workforce for the first time while their general overall financial gain was in contrast to the

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[73] Stachura, P. D., 'The Development of Unemployment in Modern Germany', in Id. (ed.), *Unemployment and the Great Depression*, p7.

[74] Bramstedt, 'Industriewirtschaft', p41f; Heyse, 'Industriewirtschaft', p27f; Kabermann, 'Exportquote', p95f.

[75] Bramstedt, op.cit., p15. Annaul tax returns per head of population in 1925 were 76.1 marks in Saxony; the German average was 55.5 marks. In the period 1924-30 the average hourly wage rose from 47pf to 78pf.

[76] Petzina, D., 'Problems in the Social and Economic Development of Weimar Germany' (pp37-57), p52, in Dobkowski and Wallimann (eds.),*Towards the Holocaust.*

structural decline of the "old" middle classes of independent retailers and producers. The subsequent currency stabilisation did few favours for many small businesses in Saxony's *Mittelstand* economy: between 1926 and 1933 a disproportionately high figure of 13 per cent of all bankruptcies were in Saxony.[77] Equally, as spending collapsed during the Great Depression, so too did the economic basis of the Saxon artisans and shopkeepers.[78] For the *Mittelstand* the economic insecurity of the Weimar Republic could hardly have contrasted more with the stability during the *Kaiserreich*. Geiger's observation that the perceived threat to these social groups from "above and below" affected 50 per cent of the German population in 1925 holds even more true in Saxony.[79] The seeming chaos of the Weimar period, hardly surprisingly, intensified a search for particular interest representation before consolidating a mass social basis for the political extremes in the form of the NSDAP and the KPD. It was this economic instability and social insecurity that underlay the political system during the Weimar Republic.

2.3 The Saxon Political System

The Imperial Legacy

From the time of the European revolutions of 1848/9 onwards the vexed question of electoral reform was never far from the political centre stage. The entrenched interests of the Saxon political elite prevented a smooth process of widening the parameters of the political nation. It was this obstacle that the early liberal reformers and then the social

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[77] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p18.

[78] ibid.

[79] Geiger, T., 'Panik im Mittelstand', *Die Arbeit* 7 (1930), pp637-654.

democratic movement found blocking their efforts to introduce popular sovereignty.[80]

Saxony's early industrialisation, and the large proportion of working people in the population, made the region what Lipinski called the "cradle and classic territory" of the social democratic movement.[81] This was expressed in political organisation and electoral success. Saxony was an organisational centre of the early workers' movement: during the 1860s prominent Saxon activists, such as Bebel and Liebknecht, were active in founding the SDAP, the SPD's forerunner, at Eisenach in 1869; almost one-quarter of the delegates at that congress had received their mandate from Saxony. Within Saxony the workers' movement focused on Leipzig, the industrial area around Glauchau, Meerane and Zwickau and Dresden and its environs. Chemnitz joined these pioneers of social democracy in the mid 1870s when the SPD was founded at the Gotha Congress, thereby ending the first split in the workers' movement.[82] The importance of Saxony to the early workers' movement is underscored by the fact that in 1867, four of the SDAP's seven Reichstag deputies were elected in Saxony; the party's central organ, *Vorwaerts*, was founded in Leipzig in 1876; during Bismarck's Anti-socialist Laws (1878-1890) of 647 banned socialist organisations in Germany 156 were in Saxony; and membership of the SPD, the trade unions and the associated *Vereine* was above the German average.[83]

By the mid 1870s the SPD received its highest electoral support in the textile dominated areas of Zwickau-Glauchau, Chemnitz and Stollberg and the lowest vote in Eastern Saxony. However, by the end of the century Saxony, with the exception of purely rural

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[80] Schlesinger, *Sachsen,* pLXf; Zeise, 'Umwaeltzung', p360; Gross, R., *Die politische Geschichte Sachsens,* in Gerlach, *Sachsen. Eine politische Landeskunde,* p110-11.

[81] Lipinski, R., *Der Kampf um die politische Macht in Sachsen* (Leipzig, 1926), p5; Gross, op.cit., p114.

[82] Lipinski, *op.cit.*

[83] Kretzschmar, *Saechsische Geschichte,* p208; Schlesinger, *Sachsen,* pLXV.

areas, had turned red *en masse*.[84] The electoral rise of the SPD was so strong that only the property and taxation qualifications limiting the franchise for the *Landtag* excluded the SPD from governmental authority. By the end of the 1860s the SPD had entered municipal parliaments in a range of cities and industrial villages such as Crimmitschau, Glauchau, Meerane and Werdau.[85] Similarly the SPD's vote in Reichstag elections rose from 19.7 per cent in 1871 to its peak in 1903 of 58.5 per cent, gaining deputies in 22 of the 23 Saxon electoral districts, giving Saxony its epithet as the "Red Kingdom."[86] In Saxony itself the rise in living standards allowed an increasing number of the populace to breakthrough the wealth restrictions of the franchise, challenging the Saxon political elite on its home territory. In 1877 the SPD entered the *Landtag* for the first time, with one deputy, and began its campaign for an equal and secret franchise.[87]

In contrast to southwestern Germany, where the ruling elite was prepared to offer universal franchise, at least for adult males, the Saxon political elite responded to the rise of the SPD by imposing a three-class franchise, modelled on the Prussian system, to retain its dominance. In 1896 the Conservative Party, the National Liberals and, unlike its Prussian sister party, the Left Liberal Progressive Party, all united in petitioning the government for a new restrictive franchise. Crucially for the development of the Saxon political system, this disenfranchised some 80 per cent of the population, including a significant proportion of the *Mittelstand*.[88] The new franchise created a peculiarly Saxon

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[84] Walter, F., 'Sachsen - ein Stammland der Sozialdemokratie?', in *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* (PVS) 32 (2) (1991) (pp207-231), p209.

[85] Zeise and Ruediger, 'Bundesstaat', pp394-5.

[86] ibid, p401. The remaining one seat was won by the German Reform Party in the Wendisch region.

[87] Straude, 'Sachsen', pp131-2.

[88] Warren, D., *The Red Kingdom of Saxony: Lobbying Grounds for Gustav Stresemann, 1901-1909* (The Hague, 1964), p23.

form of floating voter: significant numbers of former Conservative and Anti-Semitic voters opted for the SPD on the single issue of the franchise. This was part of a wider electoral protest potential which had surfaced in the Saxon political system: during times of economic dislocation voters had looked to parties which appeared to voice their concerns. During the 1890s the Left Liberal Party failed to address the concerns of its constituency among small-scale employers, artisans and peasants who felt politically and economically sidelined.[89] This translated into a surge of electoral support for Saxon political Anti-Semitism, in the form of the German Reform Party, which in the 1893 Reichstag election won almost 100,000 votes and six seats.[90] Although in relation to the 1890 Reichstag elections there was a clear transfer of votes from the Conservative and National Liberal parties to the Anti-Semitic German Reform Party, the Progressive Party's vote almost collapsed.[91] However, the German Reform Party also suffered electoral defection because of its failure to address the interests of a diverse constituency of protesters, creating a search for a new vehicle of protest.

The SPD, with its prominent campaign for the universal franchise, became the recipient of support from those feeling excluded from the political nation. In the 1903 Reichstag elections, in which the wider franchise permitted the expression of Saxon grievances, the SPD gained support from a significant number of former Conservative and Anti-Semitic voters.[92] However, Franz Walter has demonstrated that the SPD was subject to electoral

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[89] Zeise and Ruediger, 'Bundesstaat', p392.

[90] Fricke, D., 'Antisemitische Parteien, 1879-1894', in Id. (ed), *Lexikon zur Parteiengeschichte. Die buergerlichen und kleinbuergerlichen Parteien und Verbande in Deutschland, 1789-1945* (vol.1; Leipzig, 1983), p85ff.

[91] McKibbon, R., 'The Myth of the Unemployed: Who did Vote for the Nazis?', in *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 15 (2) (1969) (pp25-40), p39.

[92] Levy, R., *The Downfall of Anti-Semitic Political Parties in Imperial Germany* (New Haven, 1975), p99.

defection in one specific area: German nationalism. The SPD reached its political zenith in the 1903 Reichstag elections, with 58.5 per cent of the popular vote. However, this fell to 48 per cent in the Hottentoten Reichstag election of 1907 which placed nationalism at the centre of the political stage. Having won 22 of the 23 electoral districts in 1903, the number of SPD electoral districts contracted to eight. The average drop in the SPD vote throughout Germany was only 2.8 per cent, in Hamburg it fell by only 1.5 per cent to 60.1 per cent. In Saxony, however, it fell by 10.5 per cent. Furthermore the collapse in the SPD's vote was centred on the textile region in southwest Saxony.[93]

The intransigent political domination of Saxon Conservatism, which was based on a small and declining rural class of landed interests, also fragmented the Saxon middle classes into interest groupings. Lapp identified a political fissure running between the "old" middle class of shopkeepers, artisans and peasant farmers and the "new" middle class of white collar workers and minor civil servants from the political elites.[94] Divisions also ran through the political and economic elites. From the turn of the 20th century the Conservative government placed the burden of taxation on trading, commercial and industrial interests, thereby weakening the political ties which held these economic interests to conservatism's political exclusion of the SPD.[95] The most pronounced impact of this development was the foundation of the VSI in 1902 to represent the interests of Saxon industry. The VSI and its leading figure, Gustav Stresemann, was committed to a strategy using political lobbying to address economic concerns.[96] However, Stresemann

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[93] Walter, 'Stammland', p219.

[94] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', pp3-4.

[95] Retallack, J., 'What is to be done? The Red Spectre, Franchise Questions and the Crisis of Conservative Hegemony in Saxony, in *Central European History* (CEH) 23 (4) (1990), p282.

[96] *ibid*, p278; Warren *Red Kingdom*, pp63-83; Ritter, A. G., 'Das Wahlrecht und die Waehlerschaft der Sozialdemokratie in Koenigreich Sachsen, 1867-1914', in Id. (ed.), *Der Aufsteig der deutschen*

and the VSI were never able to persuade a majority of the National Liberal Party, which feared the SPD's advance, that industry's cause was best served by electoral reform to end the Conservatives' monopoly of political power.[97] The electoral reform of 1909, in which the VSI had played a prominent role, was too minor to shake significant numbers of *Mittelstand* voters from the SPD. Against the most detailed calculations carried out by the authorities the SPD rose above the restrictive franchise qualifications of property, income, age and constituencies redrawn to favour rural voters. In the 1909 *Landtag* elections the SPD gained 53 per cent of the vote and 25 of the 91 seats. While over half of the SPD's vote came from single ballot holders, 26 per cent came from those with three ballots and 8 per cent from those with the maximum of four ballots.[98] Failure to participate in improvements in living standards had a tradition of protest voting in Germany.[99] In Saxony this was intensified by the impact of the franchise question. In the late Imperial period these factors had created a political direction in the Saxon political system favouring the electoral rise of the SPD. However, the SPD's role as a vehicle of protest did not survive the impact of the First World War and the political and economic developments during the Weimar Republic. The SPD itself fragmented into a majority, the MSPD, while the left-wing became a party in its own right, the Independent Socialist Party (USPD).

Arbeiterbewegung. Sozialdemokratie und Freie Gewerkschaften im Parteisystem und Sozialmillieu des Kaiserreiches (Munich, 1990), pp84-88.

[97] Retallack, 'Red Spectre', pp307-8. In particular older members of the National Liberal Party favoured the continuation of the alliance with the Conservatives.

[98] ibid, pp306-7. A table of the ballot results is given in Zeise and Ruediger, 'Bundesstaat', p417.

[99] McKibbon, 'Unemployed', p39.

The Early Years of the Republic

In October 1918 the Saxon SPD followed the Reich leadership's lead and joined the Saxon government under Gustav Heinze, ending its history of political exclusion. However, three days after the final announcement of universal suffrage the spread of the council movement from Kiel reached Saxony on 9 November.[100] The Saxon USPD, in parallel to developments in the Reich, joined the Saxon Council of Peoples' Representatives on 15 November. The new government comprised six ministers equally divided between the SPD and USPD, who had been appointed at a meeting on 8 November of the Saxon Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in Dresden.[101] The MSPD was predominant in the councils of Dresden and Chemnitz, while the USPD was dominant in the Leipzig area.[102] The Spartacus Bund remained on the political fringes, with a regional stronghold in Chemnitz.[103] This political co-operation between the MSPD and USPD broke down at the beginning of January 1919 in Saxony as in the Reich. The Saxon USPD left the regional government on 17 January. The rupture was principally caused by the divergence in political objectives between achieving socialism through enshrining workers' councils and socialisation in the constitution, as advocated by the USPD, and the emphasis placed on immediate elections favoured by the MSPD.[104]

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[100] Kretzschmar, *Geschichte Sachsens*, p242f.

[101] Gross, 'Geschichte Sachsens', p115. Lipinski, *Kampf um die politische Macht*, p13. The MSPD ministers were Buck, Fleissner and Gradenauer; and the USPD ministers were Geyer, Lipinski and Schwarz.

[102] Morgan, D., *The Socialist Left in the German Revolution* (Cornell, 1975), p171.

[103] For an overview of the Revolution of 1918 in Saxony see, Huber, E. R., *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte seit 1789* (vol.7; Stuttgart, 1981), pp1032-37.

[104] Fabian, W., *Klassenkampf in Sachsen* (Loebau, 1930), p46; Lipinski, *Kampf um die politische Macht*, p17.

The elections to the Saxon *Landtag* on 2 February 1919 produced a minority MSPD government under Minister President Gradenauer. Interestingly, Gradenauer's election by the Saxon *Landtag* included the votes of individual DNVP and DVP deputies who wanted a return to political stability. The DDP abstained as a protest at their exclusion from power. The USPD also abstained but resolved to "tolerate" the administration.[105] Within the Saxon SPD this began the generation of political waves from the party's right and left-wings, culminating in the split off of the ASPD in 1926. The minority MSPD government's policies mirrored those of the national party, producing a combination of factors which added to the USPD's radicalisation in the course of 1919. The Leipzig USPD had taken measures to promote participation in the Central German general strike of late February and early March, reinforcing its commitment to socialisation and the council system.[106] The Gradenauer government then decided to impose order and end the continued USPD challenge to liberal parliamentary democracy by using the disorder surrounding the murder of the Saxon Minister for War, Neuring, on 12 April, to impose a state of emergency.[107] This began a process culminating in the military suppression of the workers' councils in Leipzig, the so-called *Noskepolitik*. In Saxony the suppression of the council movement was carried out under General Mercker, whose troops entered Leipzig on the night of 10-11 May. The gulf now created between the MSPD and USPD created the preconditions for the MSPD-DDP government in the *Landtag*.[108]

The MSPD-DDP coalition lasted from October 1919 to November 1920. However, party political and electoral factors combined to remove the basis of the Weimar coalition. The

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[105] Kretzschmar, *Saechsische Geschichte*, p245.

[106] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p44. The socialisation movement in Saxony was small in comparison to the Ruhr and centred on the mining union in the Borna area until 1921. See *Arbeitsgruppe Sachsen*, p10.

[107] Gross, 'Geschichte Sachsens', p116.

[108] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p50;Lipinski, *Kampf um die politische Macht*, p17.

absence of the Catholic Centre Party, the third party of the Weimar Coalition, from the political system in Protestant Saxony, made developments more intense. Firstly, the prospect of a coalition with the DDP had never been acceptable to the SPD's left-wing, which favoured a more class-based political strategy with the objective of democratising the state bureaucracy and dissolving the middle-class citizens' militias.[109] This was symbolised by Gradenauer's enforced resignation after the Kapp Putsch, which had reinforced the left-SPD's desire for more radical policies. At the same time, the USPD moved towards participation in a socialist coalition as a defence against the counter-revolution, as embodied by the military and the rise of the political right.[110] The electoral decline of the SPD and DDP after the Kapp Putsch reflected a left-right polarisation in the German electorate in which the parties in office lost out to their opponents.[111] With the right-SPD unable to form a majority administration with the DDP after the *Landtag* elections of December 1920, the path was open for the left-wing to form a socialist reform government with the USPD. This was the basis of the Buck-Lipinski government which lasted until January 1923.

Events in Saxony and Thuringia now fell out of step with developments at Reich level.[112] While the SPD lost its leading influence in national government, a leftist Saxon coalition between the MSPD and USPD tried to rebuild a Republic impregnated with socialism in

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[109] Fabian, *Klassenkampf*, p95.

[110] ibid, p81f.

[111] Miller, S., and Potthoff, K., *A History of the SPD from 1848 to the Present* (Leamington Spa, 1987), pp89ff; Jones, L. E., *German Liberalism and the Dissolution of the Weimar Party system: 1918-1933* (Chapel Hill, 1988), p60.

[112] Tracy, D., 'Reform in the Early Weimar Republic: The Thuringian Example', in *Journal of Modern History* (JMH) 44 (2) (1972) (pp23-50), pp195-212.

the manner envisaged by left-wing socialists in November 1918.[113] The socialist reform governments of 1921-1922 were of decisive political impact for the remainder of the Weimar Republic, to a significant extent moulding the framework of the party system and social conflicts. The MSPD-USPD alliance set out to give Saxony a radical democratic-socialist stamp by addressing the key issues in order to break what it regarded as the bastions of bourgeois socio-political hegemony. This principally involved the secularisation of the education system, the democratisation of the Saxon bureaucracy, including the related reform of the administration of municipal government, and the use of the Laws for the Protection of the Republic act against any challenges to the Republic by the extreme Right, from within either the civil service or the political movement.[114] However, the foundation of the VKPD in late 1920 had now made a political and electoral impact in the Saxon party system. The USPD-MSPD coalition had only 40 of the 96 *Landtag* mandates, while the VKPD had nine deputies. This placed the success of the socialist reform agenda in the Communists' hands.[115] There has been little research into the application of the KPD's United Front policy, which came from the 3rd World Congress of the Comintern in 1921, at regional level in the early 1920s. The policy was given impetus in Germany following the assassination of Erzberger, which occasioned extensive discussions between the KPD, USPD and MSPD. Thuringia became the testing ground for the KPD's policy of facilitating workers' governments when the regional elections of September 1921 produced a left-majority of two seats. In Thuringia, as in Saxony, the

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[113] Rudolf, K., 'Die Sozialdemokratie in der Regierung. Das links-republikanisches Projekt in Sachsen 1920-23' (pp212-25), in, Grebing, H., Mommsen, H. and Rudolf, K. (eds.), Demokratie und Emanzipation zwischen Saale und Elbe. Beitrag zur Geschichte der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterbewegung bis 1933 (Essen, 1993).

[114] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', pp65ff; Lipinski, *Kampf um die politische Macht*, pp19ff.

[115] Three of these mandates came from the USPD.

drive in the SPD making this possible came from a left-wing faction, which believed it would be possible to pursue socialist reforms with the KPD as most communist deputies were former members of the Saxon SPD.[116] In Thuringia the left-SPD grouped around August Froehlich and in Saxony it centred on the Chemnitz Left around Erich Zeigner.[117] The KPD's policies, however, became ingrained in the communist conundrum of what political tactics to employ: outright opposition to the SPD or limited contact to "unmask" it as allegedly hostile to workers' interests. The united front was not aimed at achieving the socialist parties' reform agenda but proving the limitations of these parties' political parameters. For this reason the KPD's association with the socialist government's reform agenda in Saxony and Thuringen intensified a nascent debate on party tactics in the KPD.[118]

The reunion of the USPD and MSPD in September 1922, forming the VSPD, enhanced the standing of the left-wing of the Saxon party. Saxony became a centre of the VSPD's left-wing opposition around Max Seydewitz, A. Artz, H. Liebmann and Erich Zeigner.[119] However, it remained the VSPD in the Chemnitz area which most strongly advocated co-operation with the VKPD. Interestingly, the impetus for co-operation with the VKPD from within the SPD was coming from certain state employees, especially primary school teachers, rather than traditional proletarian social groups.[120] The USPD in Leipzig had been led by anti-Communists such as Lipinski, who had acquiesced in the policy of co-

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[116] Klenke, D., *Die SPD Linke in der Weimarer Republik* (vol.1; Munster, 1987), pp375-6.

[117] Winkler, H. A., *Von der Revolution zur Stabilizierung: Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1918-1924* (Bonn, 1984), p527; Reisberg, A., *An den Quellen der Einheitsfrontpolitik* (vol.1; Berlin (East), 1971), pp238ff.

[118] Winkler, *op.cit.*, pp527f.

[119] Ruediger, 'Freistaat', p441.

[120] Loesche, P., and Walter, F., 'Auf dem Weg zum Volkspartei?', in *AfS* XXVIIII (Bonn, 1989) (pp75-136), p134.

operation with the KPD as a "lesser evil".[121] Radicals like Curt Geyer, who had gone over from the USPD to the KPD, felt compelled to leave the "moderate" Saxon setting for the radicalism of Hamburg and Berlin.[122] The basis for the right-SPD was strongest in the Dresden-Bautzen area and consequently remained the Saxon SPD's strongest proponent of coalition with all parties accepting the Weimar Constitution.[123] The formation of the VSPD, however, significantly reduced the "Dresden faction's" influence over policy in Saxony.

This reluctant alliance of the political Left in Saxony has been shown by Lapp's research on the Saxon *Buergertum's* response to the socialist administrations of 1921-1922 to have significantly contributed to the sharpening of political antagonisms. This polarisation, which is central to Lapp's thesis, was also shown in the Saxon party system by the demise of the DDP, and its policy of class reconciliation, and the rise of the DNVP in rural areas and the DVP in more urban constituencies.[124] The socialists' efforts to impose their radical reform programme in Saxony helped to create a mood of "class war" even before the crisis year of 1923.

2.4 The Year 1923: The Turning Point

The impact of the year 1923 on the Saxon and German economy, society and party system can hardly be overestimated in explaining the final rejection of the Weimar

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[121] Wheeler, R. F., 'Vorwort', in Geyer, C., *Die Revolutionaer Illusion* (Stuttgart, 1976), pp11-13; Lipinski's position is in, Lipinski, *Kampf um die politische Macht*, esp. pp52ff.

[122] Wheeler, 'Vorwort', p15. After the KPD's so-called "March Action" in 1921 Geyer abandoned the KPD, finally returning to the VSPD in 1922.

[123] Hausmann, C., 'Die "Alte Sozialdemokratische Partei" 1926-32. Ein gescheitertes Experiment zwischen den parteipolitischen Fronten', in, Mommsen et. al. (eds.), *Demokratie und Emanzipation*, (pp273-94), p275; Geyer, *Revolutionaer Illusion*, p78.

[124] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', pp58ff.

Republic.[125] The socio-economic and psychological impact of defeat in the First World War and the terms of the Versailles Treaty, the rise of organised labour onto the stage of national decision making and the inflationary fiscal policies used since 1914 all became acute in 1923.[126] In the Reich government a cabinet of so-called non-party experts under Chancellor Cuno replaced the Wirth administration as the Ruhr occupation became only a matter of time.[127] Political conditions in Saxony, however, were different. By March a left-wing SPD minority government relied on the KPD's support in the *Landtag* in the hope of accelerating a reform programme.[128] The Saxon SPD, in particular its left-wing, had been increasingly concerned about the threat to the Republic from the radical Right and the central government's reluctance to deal with it. In the hope of rectifying the situation, the Saxon SPD adopted a policy of closer reliance on the KPD.[129] Ironically, in the course of 1923, this created the most favourable possible conditions for the KPD's united front policy of winning over radicalised Social Democrats.

A convergence of factors created the possibility of a "Left Alliance" in the Saxon *Landtag*. At the 4th World Congress of the Comintern in December 1922 Bukharin presented the ideological justification for Soviet Russia's need for "tactical alliances" with capitalist states. In Germany this obliged the KPD to work for the successful implementation of the Rapallo Treaty.[130] The Comintern Congress regarded any change in relations with Germany as unwelcome. However, the Ruhr occupation brought Russo-German relations into crisis, interrupting the inflow of German industrial goods required

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[125] Kretzschmar, *Geschichte Sachsens*, p246.

[126] Jones, *German Liberalism*, pp476-7.

[127] Kolb, E., *The Weimar Republic* (Trans: Falla, P. S.; London, 1988), p45-6.

[128] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p99.

[129] Kretzschmar, *Geschichte Sachsens*, p247.

[130] Weber, H., *Die Kommunistische Internationale. Eine Dokumentation* (Hannover, 1966), pp99-107.

for Soviet economic reconstruction; furthermore, it threatened to move the balance of European power further away from Soviet Russia's only ally, Germany, towards the strongly anti-Soviet France and Poland.[131] The conflict between the German political Right's nationalism, which worked in favour of Soviet foreign policy, and the KPD's hopes for a German revolution now became acute. The result was that for the first six months of the Ruhr crisis the Comintern and all other Soviet agencies played down the issue. Despite the obvious implications of the Ruhr crisis it received no direct treatment at either the Comintern Congress or the KPD's 8th Congress in late January 1923 after the occupation had begun.[132]

At the KPD's Leipzig Congress a factionally based dispute, over the definition of the United Front policies' advocation of "workers' governments", raged between the party majority under Heinrich Brandler and the Left Opposition under Ruth Fischer, Arkady Maslow and Ernst Thaelmann. The Left took up a position of outright rejection of the KPD's participation in regional governments with the SPD, while Brandler, influenced by the situation in his stronghold of southwestern Saxony, favoured its tactical use.[133] The confluence of certain unique conditions, above all the importance of Germany to Soviet state policy and the Bolshevik leadership crisis as Lenin became increasingly ill, meant that Moscow only directly acted to preserve the unity of the KPD and to prevent any attempted revolution which would threaten the Rapallo treaty.[134] This allowed the balance

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[131] Carr, E. H., *The Interegnum* (Penguin, 1966), p166.

[132] Flechtheim, O. K., *Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (3rd Ed; Hamburg, 1986), p137; Angress, W. T., *Stillborn Revolution. The Communist Bid for Power in Germany, 1921-1923* (Princeton, 1963), pp258f.

[133] Angress, op.cit., pp281ff; Winkler, *Von der Revolution*, p620.

[134] Goldbach, M-L., *Karl Radek und die deutsch-sowjetische Beziehungen. Ein Beitrag zum Verhaeltnis von KPD und Komintern und zur Geschichte der deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen zwischen 1918-1923* (Hannover, 1973), p75.

of opinion within the regional KPD memberships to influence the accent placed on the party's tactics: the Ruhr became quite different from Saxony.

In Saxony, the KPD initially reacted to the developments of 1923 by placing greater emphasis on the party's demands for a "workers' government" and the creation of the extra-parliamentary Proletarian Hundreds and Control Committees. The latter had already been part of the KPD's effort to create "Action Committees" which would draw in workers who were not KPD members. Communist propaganda stressed joint proletarian interests instead of their actual partisan interests.[135] For these ends the Buck-Lipinski cabinet was brought down by a KPD motion of no confidence on 30 January 1923 using the pretext that the SPD had permitted a *voelkisch* meeting in Leipzig.[136] This began a political process in the Saxon SPD which culminated in the victory of the Chemnitz Left's policy of co-operation with the KPD. Following lengthy debate in the SPD, a Committee of Seven, dominated by the Left around Georg Graupe, Hermann Liebmann and Max Seydewitz, appointed Erich Zeigner as Minister President to carry out a programme relying on the KPD's official support.[137] For the KPD the terms of their support were particularly favourable: its remained possible to criticise the SPD administration, while the Proletarian Hundreds and Control Committees received official sanction from the Saxon government on 18 March.[138] Saxony and Thuringia became the only German states with regional governments officially sanctioning organisations which were banned throughout the rest of the country by August. However, it was precisely here that the definitions and

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[135] Angress, *Stillborn Revolution*, p289-90; *Arbeitsgruppe Sachsen,* p10.

[136] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', pp99-100.

[137] Klenke, *SPD Linke*, p374; Pryce, D. B., 'The Reich Government Versus Saxony, 1923: The Decision to Intervene', in *CEH* 10 (1977) (pp112-147), p120.

[138] Winkler, *Von der Revolution*, pp620-1. For the terms of the KPD-SPD agreement, see Fowkes, B., *Communism in Germany under the Weimar Republic* (London, 1984), p93.

intentions of the SPD and KPD differed most substantially. The SPD saw these organisations as instruments for the defence of the Republic and, particularly, the Control Commissions were viewed as organisations to act against profiteering from the inflationary crisis at the expense of working-class consumers.[139] For the KPD they were organisations of the United Front to create the conditions for revolution by providing greater penetration into the unorganised and Social Democratic workers than the trade unions or official factory councils offered.[140] The fact that this crucial difference was known is shown by the refusal of the Leipzig SPD to co-operate with the KPD in the Proletarian Hundreds.[141] The Zeigner government's inability to stabilise the crisis in Saxony, in the face of the central government's refusal to provide financial assistance, meant that the organisations set up to defend the Republic came under increasing communist influence.[142] The Saxon KPD's United Front tactic continued to enable the Communists to gain ground at the expense of the SPD at grass roots level.[143]

In the Ruhr the policies of the Left Opposition made a significant challenge to the official Communist line. The conditions produced by the occupation of the Ruhr were identified as a means of creating a "short cut to revolution" (Angress) by the Left.[144] Not only did the Left openly oppose the official party line but also gave support to a failed putsch

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[139] Feldmann, G. D., 'Bayern und Sachsen in der Hyperinflation', in *Historische Zeitschrift* 283 (3) (1984) (pp569-609), p584.

[140] Daycock, D. W., 'The KPD and the NSDAP: A Study of the Relationship Between the Extreems in Weimar Germany', Ph.D. thesis (London School of Economics, 1980), p79; Angress, *Stillborn Revolution*, pp465f.

[141] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p113.

[142] Feldmann, G. D., 'Saxony and the Problem of Unemployment in the German Inflation', in *AfS* XXVII (1987) (pp103-44) p103f.

[143] *Arbeitsgruppe Sachsen*, p10.

[144] Angress, *Stillborn Revolution*, p305.

attempt in Muehlheim in mid April and in May tried to give a strike over wages in Dortmund a revolutionary content.[145] The popularity of the Left in the areas under Franco-Belgian occupation was shown at a conference held in Rhineland Westphalia in late March when the *Zentrale* gained a bare majority in support of official party policy.[146] Fears in Moscow concerning the threat to the Comintern policy in Germany and the danger of a split in the KPD brought about a meeting of the ECCI in late April. Although the reins of restraint were placed around the Left, an agreement was worked out sanctioning the continuation of the United Front in Saxony, and forcing the Left to limit their agitation to the regions they controlled. This was an agreement which played for time rather than resolving the conflicts within the KPD. The co-opting of four members of the Left onto the *Zentrale*, extending it from 21 to 25 members, did nothing to alter the balance of forces in the national leadership.

In the summer of 1923 the KPD adopted the so-called "Schlageter Line", which involved efforts to recruit supporters of the far Right by using an appeal to German nationalism. The change of policy was motivated by concerns in Moscow that Chancellor Cuno's endeavours to reach agreement with the French would bring about the abandonment of the Germano-Soviet *entente cordiale*.[147] There is very little evidence of the policy being carried out in Saxony. However, at national level the KPD's propaganda continued to assert that this policy too was a tactic for revolution in Germany. In parallel to the party's

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[145] On the Left Opposition in the Ruhr see, Angress, *Stillborn Revolution*, pp306f. On the events in Dortmund see, *Dokumente und Materialien zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, (Berlin (Ost), 1973), Series 7, vol.2, p331; Fischer, R., *Stalin and German Communism. A Study in the Origins of the State Party* (Cambridge, 1948), p220; Carr, *Interegnum*, p170.

[146] Angress, *Stillborn Revolution*, pp306-7.

[147] Depleux, L., *National Bolshevismus in Deutschland 1919-1933* (Munich, 1985), p178; Schueddekopf, O-E., *Nationalbolshewismus in Deutschland 1918-1933* (Frankfurt/M, Berlin, Vienna, *1973*), pp109-11.

overtures to the supporters of the far Right an "anti-Fascist" campaign was conducted. Indeed, in Frankfurt-am-Main, Thuringia and Saxony the KPD was able to enlist the support of left-wing Social Democrats, who believed the KPD was acting against the threat of fascism.[148] However, at the meeting of the ECCI in May, which adopted the "Schlageter Line", there was no mention of revolutionary objectives.[149]

In Saxony during the "Schlageter Line" the KPD and SPD were both regarded by the right-wing nationalist and Fascist groupings as "traitors" and "internationalists". Furthermore, the KPD was involved in numerous cases of breaking up patriotic and nationalist events attended by the middle classes.[150] The Zeigner government in Saxony during the summer and autumn of 1923 was increasingly focusing on the Left's "common enemies": the *Reichswehr*, capitalists and the political and para-military organisations of the far-Right. The purpose of the policy was to unite a diverse basis of support and to deflect the KPD's criticisms that the Saxon government's measures against these groupings were inadequate.[151] In the Ruhr, however, a small number of local KPD groups carried placards with both the red star and the swastika on them; leaders such as Ruth Fischer and Remmele were also applauded by joint audiences of the political extremes.[152] The debate in the communist press with far-Right nationalists brought strong condemnation from the SPD's central organ *Vorwaerts*, but did not adversely affect

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[148] Wickham, J., 'The Working-Class Movement and Working Class Life in Frankfurt-am-Main during the Weimar Republic', Ph.D. thesis (Sussex University, 1979), pp91-2; Winkler, *Von der Revolution*, p648f.

[149] Weber, H., *Kommunismus in Deutschland 1918-1945* (Ertraege der Forschung vol.198; Darmstadt, 1983), p91.

[150] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p113.

[151] Pryce, 'Saxony 1923', pp112-47; Gordon, H. J., 'Die Reichswehr und Sachsen 1923', in *Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau* 11 (1961) (pp677-92), p677f.

[152] Daycock, 'Political Extremes', p82.

relations with the SPD in Saxony.[153] One explanation for this was the divergence between the KPD's nationalist propaganda, which was aimed at the national level, and the policy on the ground in Saxony. More importantly still, the KPD was rapidly gaining support at local level as inflation and unemployment rocketed in second half of 1923.

Political conflict between the SPD and the parties of the Saxon middle classes was made more acute because the SPD's policies openly undertook to ameliorate the conditions of the working classes at the expense of the middle classes, while blaming the crisis on capitalists' exploitation of the inflation for profit.[154] Lapp has contributed to the understanding of 1923 at local level in Saxony by demonstrating how farmers, shopkeepers and industrialists were subject to the threat of physical violence should they fail to yield foodstuffs or increase wages to compensate for price rises. The government's inability to adequately police these disturbances caused widespread panic and feelings of defencelessness among wide sections of middle-class opinion. The SPD, as the party in government in Saxony, made socialism inseparable from the state of terror and persecution of the middle classes in the minds of all those calling for a return to *Ruhe und Ordnung*.[155]

The KPD's tactics changed again in late September 1923. However, the Soviet Politburo's reasons for calling on the Saxon KPD to enter the regional government as a springboard to revolution did not in the first instance have their origins in Saxony. The immediate trigger was the Cuno government's ending of passive resistance to the French occupation of the Ruhr. It was feared in Moscow that the new "Great Coalition" under Stresemann, which included the SPD, would now take a western foreign policy

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[153] Depleux, *National Bolshevismus*, p185.

[154] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p111.

[155] ibid, p118-28.

orientation, abandoning the previously good relations with Soviet Russia.[156] Using declassified Soviet documentation Babichenko has added interesting details to the decision making process in Moscow. At a previously unknown meeting of the ECCI on 21 September, including representatives from the French, Czech, German and Russian parties, the KPD's leader, Heinrich Brandler continued to put pressure on the Comintern to take revolutionary action in Saxony. Eleven days prior to the ECCI's meeting Brandler had written to Radek that the "revolutionary tension" throughout Germany was acute and "we [the KPD] should gain the victory and (have) put in hand complete illegal preparations."[157] However, the crucial details continue to accord with Angress' standard work on this topic. The Soviet Politburo appointed a Committee of Four, under Radek, to take control of the "German October"; the preparations were regarded as a purely technical matter using the party's M-Apparat and Ordnungsdienst rather than relying on mass support.[158] Daycock has also detailed how the KPD avoided relying on the factory councils because of their domination by the SPD.[159] The Chemnitz Congress on 21 October, which included a representative section of the organised working class, has traditionally been regarded as the decisive factor in making Brandler change his mind and call off the uprising to avoid another disaster like in March 1921.[160] However, the KPD

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[156] Winkler, *Von der Revolution*, p623; Schueddekopf, *Nationalbolshewismus*, p131; Angress, *Stillborn Revolution*, p396.

[157] Babichenko, L. Z., 'The Politburo, Comintern and the German Events of 1923', in *Novaia I Noveishaia Istoriia* 2 (1994 (pp126-40), p128 [Personal translation by Ben Fowkes].

[158] Angress, *Stillborn Revolution*, pp369ff; Babichenko, op.cit., pp128-33.

[159] Daycock, 'Political Extremes', p79.

[160] The original interpretation comes from Brandler's own statements, see, Fowkes, B. (trans.), 'Correspondence Between H. Brandler and I. Deutscher, 1952-59', in *New Left Review* 105 (1969) (pp56-81), pp56-7; 'Record of A Discussion with Heinrich Brandler', in, ibid (pp47-55), pp51-3; For recent documentary based research ,see, Becker, J. and Jentsch, H., 'Heinrich Brandler. Biographische Skizzen/Zeitzeugenberichte', in, *Jahrbuch fuer Historische Kommunismusforschung* (1996) (pp273-95).

was only using the Chemnitz Congress to "test the water" because of the imminent intervention by the Reich government to depose the Saxon SPD-KPD coalition government. Originally a national conference of revolutionary (ie KPD dominated) factory councils had been planned.[161] Babachenko, with reference to the documentation, indicates that although the Chemnitz Conference may have influenced Brandler, it was the Soviet advisers who "conducted the orchestra".[162] The KPD leadership saw its tactics as buying time during which the Action Committees would maintain the "revolutionary tension."[163] On 29 October the Chemnitz Left faction in the Saxon SPD made a joint call with the KPD for a General Strike.[164] For future relations between the SPD and KPD at local level this joint call was of greater significance than the strike call's failure to hit an echo in the workforce.

During the KPD's period of preparations for the "German October", governmental power had largely left the control of the Saxon SPD for the *Reich* government in Berlin. Immediately following the conclusion of passive resistance on 26 September, President Ebert authorised a state of emergency, placing executive power with the *Reichswehr* minister Gessler. In Saxony, executive power was handed to the regional military commander, General Mueller. This was despite a request by the SPD members of the "Great Coalition" in Berlin that the social democratic Minister of the Interior in Saxony, H. Liebmann, should assume these powers.[165] The conflict between the Saxon and Reich governments now became acute. Disputes between the Saxon regional government and the Reich had constantly focused on the Saxon SPD's opposition to the *Reichswehr's*

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[161] Winkler, *Von der Revolution*, p651.

[162] Babichenko, 'Events of 1923', p140.

[163] ibid.

[164] *Dokumente und Materialen*, 7/2, pp469-71.

[165] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p134.

illegal recruitment among far Right groups in Saxony: now this became the regional administration's *raison d'etre*.[166] Chancellor Stresemann, however, was under constant pressure from the VSI to depose the Zeigner government.[167] Not only was the Zeigner government ultimately defenceless against the superior forces of the central government;[168] it was now deserted by the Saxon KPD, which had abandoned government office. The Saxon SPD's call for the KPD to join a government of "Republican and proletarian defence" no longer accorded with the KPD's political tactics.[169] Thus ended the Saxon SPD's policy of trying to recruit the regional KPD for a programme of "proletarian unity". It was with some irony that Stresemann, somewhat dubiously, justified the overthrow of the Saxon and Thuringian governments which rested on the support of their parliaments, by pointing to their association with the unconstitutional objectives of the KPD.[170]

2.5 The Saxon KPD in the Regional Political System

Developments in Saxony show that Krause's thesis for the rise of the USPD, which accounted for particular patterns of urban development, holds equally true for the Saxon KPD.[171] The Saxon districts of the KPD all evolved in manners specific to their sub-regional contexts. The Saxon KPD was divided until 1929 into three party districts, all of which closely approximated to the corresponding electoral districts of Leipzig, East

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[166] ibid, p106.

[167] Winkler, *Von der Revolution*, p667.

[168] Pryce, 'Saxony 1923', p143; Winkler, *Von der Revolution*, p655f.

[169] Lapp, 'Political Extremes', pp135-7.

[170] Winkler, *Von der Revolution*, pp655f.

[171] Krause, H., *Zur Geschichte der Unabhaenigen Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands* (Frankfurt-am-Main, Cologne, 1975), pp315ff. Krause supplies statistical details of the USPD's electoral impact in regional and national elections between 1918 and 1924.

Saxony and Erzgebirge-Vogtland. The first of these was the district Erzgebirge-Vogtland. The administrative districts (*Amtshauptmannschaften*) included in this district were: Plauen, Oelsnitz, Auerbach, Zwickau, Schwarzenberg, Stollberg, Glauchau, Rochlitz, Floeha, Marienberg and Chemnitz. The party district West Saxony included the administrative districts: Leipzig, Borna, Grimma, Oschatz, Grosshain and Doebeln. In East Saxony the party district included: Zittau, Loebau, Bautzen, Kamenz, Meissen, Freiberg, Dippoldiswalde, Pirna and Dresden.[172]

During the First World War the SPD local organisation in the sub-region of Erzgebirge, which included the city of Chemnitz, was the only SPD organisation to defect to the Spartacus Bund.[173] The KPD's membership had taken the "direct route" (Fowkes) to the party: from the left-wing of the pre-war SPD to the Spartacus Bund during the war, joining the KPD at its foundation in 1918/19.[174] The KPD party district in Erzgebirge-Vogtland in 1919 was already one of the party's strongest organisations, numbering some 14,000 members.[175] The KPD's vote in 1920 also indicates that it was gaining disproportionately strong support in the industrial villages which were based on cottage industries and small-scale production as compared with the larger cities.[176] However, by the November 1922 regional elections the KPD's vote was almost evenly distributed across all sizes of community.[177]

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[172] SAPMO *Findbuch, Band V, Teil 1*, pp110,118,142.

[173] Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, p7.

[174] *ibid, p170f*. On the Spartacus Bund in Saxony see, Wohlgemuth, H., *Die Entstehung der KPD* (Berlin (East), 1978), pp66,76,175f.

[175] Weber, H., *Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus. Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (Gekuerzte Studentenausgabe; Frankfurt-am-Main, 1971), p372.

[176] *Statistisches Jahrbuch fuer den Freistaat Sachsen* (StJFS) Nr.44, 1918/20 (Dresden, 1921), pp425-6.

[177] *ibid*, Nr.45, pp404-5.

Following the Saxon trend, the USPD in Erzgebirge-Vogtland voted strongly against joining the Comintern. Wheeler noted that in the Central German textile region the vote opposing joining the Comintern was 10 per cent of the total USPD's vote in a region making up only 5 per cent of the party's membership.[178] Voting pattern's confirm that the electorate also opted for the Saxon VSPD rather than the VKPD.[179] In the period 1919-1923 southwestern Saxony was an electoral stronghold of the SPD and the KPD, with both parties polling above their Saxon and national average figures. However, the sub-region was not well integrated into the workers' movement of the Free Trade Unions, the sporting and cultural *Vereine* or the political parties themselves.[180] Wheeler observed that the impetus to join the KPD came from the newly organised and less skilled rank-and-file members rather than functionaries who had been active in the pre-war labour movement.[181] Studies of Frankfurt-am-Main and Solingen, the former a SPD stronghold and the latter a KPD stronghold, have endorsed Wheeler's thesis for Germany as a whole.[182] Erzgebirge-Vogtland modifies Borkenau's "radical discontinuity" thesis, according to which the "new" working class in heavy industry who had been under-represented in organised labour, joined the KPD.[183] In southwestern Saxony a socio-political environment was created in which the ties securing the SPD's political predominance were weaker than in more concentrated industrial structures: this allowed

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[178] Wheeler, R. F., *Die USPD und Die Internationale. Sozialistischer Internationalismus in der Zeit der Revolution* (Frankfurt/M, Berlin, Vienna, 1976), p254.

[179] *StJFS*, Nr.45, pp404-5.

[180] Walter, 'Stammland', pp215ff.

[181] Wheeler, *USPD*, p239-45.

[182] Wickham, 'Working Class Movement', pp3-4; Wunderlich, V., *Arbeiterbewegung und Selbstverwaltung. KPD und Kommunalpolitik in der Weimarer Republik. Mit dem Beispiel Solingen* (Wuppertal, 1980), p34.

the expression of a radicalisation on the Right and Left of the political spectrum, motivated by economic hardship. The wider expression of this environment was the tradition of protest voting from the late imperial period.[184] It will be argued in this study of the Saxon KPD that in this environment a right-wing political tendency in the KPD developed the belief that it could achieve communist objectives in contact with the wider workers' movement.

A factor which had limited the anchoring of the SPD in southwestern Saxony was the disinclination of textile workers to join the workers' movement. The industry's high proportion of female employees further accentuated this trend.[185] In 1925 70 per cent of Saxony's textile workers were no longer represented in works' councils by the Free Trade Unions.[186] However, in the face of the same problem, the KPD failed to anchor its vote in these localities. Until 1923/4 the KPD had been the principal beneficiary of a trend of protest voting. But after the crisis of 1923 the direction of protest voting switched from left to right. In what was largely an environment influenced by both rural and industrial factors the NSDAP was able to make its earliest and most penetrative impact on these protest voters.[187] Geary has also given the specific example of Chemnitz, and its "unusual"

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[183] Borkenau, F., *World Communism. A History of the Communist International* (2 edn.; Michigan Ill., 1962), p142.

[184] For an analysis of Saxon electoral trends during the late imperial period see, 'Die Wahlen zum Deutschen Reichstag im Koenigreich Sachsen', editorial, in *ZSSL* 78/9 (1932/3), pp171-300.

[185] On women see, Tipton, F.B., *Regional Variations in the Economic Development of Germany During the 19th Century* (Middletown, Conneticut, 1976), pp30-38.

[186] Peterson, B., 'The Politics of Working-Class Women in the Weimar Republic', in *CEH* 10 (2) (1977) (pp87-111) p108.

[187] Walter, 'Stammland', p224.

industrial structure, to show that some early KPD voters transferred their allegiance to the NSDAP at the end of the Republic.[188]

In 1919 the membership of the KPD district East Saxony (Dresden-Bautzen) was 6,555.[189] However, the domination of the local party organisations by Otto Ruhle's "syndicalist" tendency meant that the membership collapsed as a consequence of the purge of left-wing Communists by Paul Levi in late 1919.[190] East Saxony was the heartland of the right-wing of the Saxon SPD.[191] Not only was the rise of the KPD restricted but the USPD failed to make significant headway until the 1920 Reichstag elections indicated the extent of disillusionment with the SPD's *Noskepolitik*. In these elections the right and left-wings of the local USPD stood separately: the left-wing gained 1.9 per cent of the vote and the right-wing 9.4 per cent.[192] The USPD's successes were evenly distributed over all types of communities, with the exception of small rural areas, which held disproportionately to the MSPD.[193] The SPD membership, especially in the industrial villages between Dresden and Meissen, was firmly tied to the workers' movement, not only in the party and trade unions but also in the social and cultural *Vereine*.[194] The more concentrated industrial structure, with a strong representation of the machine building industry, favoured the anchoring of the SPD socially and politically.[195] The creation of the VKPD in December 1920 did not bring a mass base to the KPD: membership rose from

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[188] Geary, R., *European Labour Protest 1884-1939* (London, 1981), p165.

[189] Weber, *Wandlung*, p378.

[190] Koch-Baumgarten, 'Einleitung', in Flechtheim, *Die KPD*, pp16,23-4.

[191] Hausmann, 'Gescheitertes Experiment', pp275ff.

[192] *StJFS*, Nr.44, p427.

[193] *ibid.*

[194] Walter, 'Stammland', p216.

[195] For details of the social and economic structure of East Saxony see, Schwarzenbach, 'Ostsachsen', pp30f.

1,000 in 1920 to 5,349 in 1923.[196] The KPD's electoral breakthrough was equally restricted: the party's vote rose from 1.2 per cent in the June 1920 Reichstag election to 8.4 per cent in May 1924.[197] The sub-regional patterns of political socialisation and socio-economic development had created a strong barrier to the development of the KPD. It will be argued in this thesis that where the KPD was weak the party apparatus was more able to dominate the party's local political evolution.

The district party organisation of the KPD in West Saxony was initially included in the party's Central German district. The foundation of the West Saxon KPD in 1920 coincided with the party's first electoral participation.[198] The importance of the machine building industry and the textile and related clothing industries in Leipzig did not favour the defection of a left-wing of the USPD to the VKPD. Wheeler's study of the social and economic reasons for the left-right division of the USPD in the metal trades points to the specific branch of production.[199] The pro-Comintern metal workers in Solingen were employed in small factories producing high quality cutlery for a declining export market.[200] Leipzig, however, was the one Saxon region which had reacted to changing patterns of national and international supply and demand by orienting the machine industry to the manufacturing goods sector.[201] D. McKibbon has detailed how the demands of the war economy increased the prominence in the local SPD of radicalised metal workers in

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[196] Weber, *Wandlung*, p378.

[197] *StJFS*, Nr.44, pp425-6; *ibid*, Nr.46, pp404-5.

[198] Ruediger, *'Freistaat Sachsen'*, p143.

[199] Wheeler, *USPD*, pp255f.

[200] Wunderlich, *Selbstverwaltung*, pp15ff. The Soligen metal workers' pay rates were the lowest in Germany see, Wuenderer, H., 'Materialien zur Soziologie der Mitgliedschaft der KPD in der Weimarer Republik', in *Gesellschaft. Beitraege zur Marx'chen Theorie* 5 (1976) (pp257-77), p270.

[201] McKibbon, D., 'Who Were the German Independent Socialists? The Leipzig City Council Election of 6 December 1917', in *Central European History* 25 (4) (1992), pp432ff.

the machine building industries as the more moderate printing and publishing workers declined in influence.[202] The USPD won a landslide victory in the December 1917 city council elections, taking 74 per cent of the third-class vote. McKibbon examines subsequent developments, presenting the USPD's consolidation of control over the SPD apparatus as political opportunism: moderate socialists like Lipinski followed radicals like Curt Geyer into the USPD in order to retain their political positions.[203] What McKibbon has identified here is the origins of the right USPD party organisation in Leipzig.

In addition to the industrial influences on political dispositions, the West Saxon sub-region was strongly integrated into the social democratic subculture of *Vereine* as well as union and political membership. A consequence of this was a stable membership.[204] In West Saxony the tendency towards political organisation was further accentuated by the largely urban pattern of industrial development. The weakness of support for joining the Comintern was also reflected in the electoral results of the USPD in the 1920 regional elections: the right USPD polled 25.9 per cent and the left 7.6 per cent. This was parallelled at the party political level with almost all members of the Leipzig USPD returning to the VSPD in 1922.[205] Despite the clear restrictions placed on the expansion of the KPD in West Saxony, the "indirect route" (Fowkes) to the KPD through the left-wing of the USPD did permit a communist impact on the political system. The Leipzig KPD in 1921 organised 14,000 members; when the union with the left-wing of the USPD became

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[202] ibid, pp430ff. Note: the textile and clothing industries are taken as a statistical neutral because of the high numbers of female employees. Here McKibbon clearly underestimates the political influence in the SPD of these workers.

[203] *ibid*, p442.

[204] Walter, 'Stammland' p271; Klenke, *SPD Linke*, pp733-747.

[205] Tubbesing, J., 'NKVD - Antifaschistischer Block-einheitspartei. Aspekten der Geschichte der antifaschistischen Bewegung in Leipzig', Magisterarbeit (Bielefeld University, 1993), pp8-9.

electorally detectable at the regional elections of 1922 the KPD gained 12.1 per cent of the popular vote. In the May 1924 Reichstag elections the KPD vote peaked at 15.7 per cent.[206] However, the KPD's real breakthrough followed what can be called the third, and most prolific, route to the KPD: the impact of structural unemployment after 1923/4. In this environment the KPD's attacks on the role of trade union and SPD functionaries increasingly isolated the party from those workers it set out to proselytise. In turn, the KPD's inability to set the political agenda forced the membership away from the wider workers' movement and into a left-radical communism which lived politically in isolation from and opposition to the social democratic workers' movement.

The social, economic and political context outlined in this chapter will provide a backdrop for the main theatre of the thesis, which sets out to explain why the KPD behaved differently in the three Saxon party districts. The following chapters will argue that, although the Comintern set a General Line without regard to the particularities pertaining to Germany, and the "Stalinised" KPD leadership was increasingly able to control internal party life, local conditions as experienced by the membership coloured their political complexion. In other words: specific every-day experience rather than a uniform ideology produced a communism rooted in the wider workers' movement or isolated from it. As the organisation and ideology of the KPD was constant throughout Saxony, and Germany, the structure of party militants' every-day-life will be assessed as the variant in the equation, which produced the differing political tendencies and party strength of Saxon communism.

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[206] *StJFS*, Nr.45, pp404-5.

3. Stalinisation by a Different Name: Ruth Fischer, Left-Wing Communism and Saxony.

3.1 Introduction: The Ruth Fischer Era in the KPD.

The year 1924 brought the final rise of the Left Opposition in the KPD into the leadership. The Left in the KPD, around Ruth Fischer, Arkady Maslow, Ernst Thaelmann, and figures such as Werner Scholem, Karl Korsch and Arthur Rosenberg, had consistently disputed the united front policy, which had been adopted at the 3rd World Congress of the Comintern in 1921. The KPD's left-wing in 1924/5 set out to exploit the impact of the "Failed October" to change the Communist Party's tactics in Germany.[1] The events in Germany during 1923 and their aftermath, however, were tied into the factional struggle in the CPSU as leading figures manoeuvred for position. New research has documented the CPSU's decisive role in the formation of policy in Germany throughout 1923.[2] However, the internal party feud was not an objective debate on the actual causes of the "October Defeat". The "old leadership" in the KPD, around Heinrich Brandler and August Thalheimer, were associated with Radek and his patron Trotsky. The new alliance between Stalin and Zinoviev meant that Brandler became the scapegoat necessary to sideline Trotsky, absolve the Comintern of responsibility for a policy failure and to enable a friendly leadership constellation in the KPD.[3] Initially it appeared that the Comintern would continue to hold the support of a majority of the KPD's *Zentrale*. In the course of November 1923 a so-called Centre Group split of from the Brandler leadership: the

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[1] For a discussion of the relationship between the KPD and the Comintern, Weber, H., *Kommunismus in Deutschland 1918-1945* (Ertraege der Forschung vol.198; Darmstadt,1983), p46f; Watlin, A., *Die Komintern, 1919-1929* (Mainz,1993), pp50ff,65.

[2] Babichenko, L. Z., 'The Politburo, Comintern and the German Events of 1923', in *Novaia i Noveishaia Istoriia* 2 (1994), p128 [Personal translation by Ben Fowkes]. Watlin, *Die Komintern*, p73.

[3] Tjaden, K. J., *Struktur und Funktion der KPD-Opposition (KPO)* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1964), p20.

national leadership of this faction was characterised by its declaration of unconditional support for the Comintern's statements on the situation in Germany.[4] However, during early 1924 it became clear that the collapse in the KPD after 1923 had facilitated the Left's independent rise into the party leadership. It quickly became clear that the KPD leadership would take the Comintern's leftist rhetoric far beyond what was wanted in Moscow.[5]

In Saxony there were very specific reasons for the intensity of the factional struggle: the region had been the centre of the united front policy and the stronghold of the Brandler leadership. The Left asserted that the German revolution should not have been attempted from Saxony, with its *Mittelstand* economic structures. Instead, the strongholds of the Left, in Berlin, Wasserkante and Rheinland-Westphalia, which housed a heavy industrial economic structure, were claimed to make up the matrix of proletarian revolution.[6] Between 1924 and 1925 the KPD's left-wing challenged the party's ideological profile and the cohabitation of different communist tendencies in the Reich leadership, which had characterised the previous period.[7] Each faction in the KPD took its ideological predilections from a diversity of socio-economic and local political influences. The Left wanted to jettison the influences of local conditions on communist political behaviour, in a country with strongly regionalised patterns of development, and create a monolithic party under the slogan: "Bolshevik Unity". The KPD's right-wing represented an off-shoot of radicalised workers who had been organised in the pre-1914 German workers' movement.

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[4] Weber, H., *Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus. Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (Gekuerzte Studentenausgabe, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1971), pp56ff. The Centre Group's thesis on the events in October 1923, however, did not represent the views of a united grouping.

[5] Fowkes, B., *Communism in Germany under the Weimar Republik* (London, 1984), pp110ff.

[6] *Bericht ueber die Verhandlungen des 9. Parteitages der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands* (Berlin, 1924), pp112-7,128-64.

[7] Weber, *Wandlung*, p58.

This political tendency in the KPD reflected a fusion of Luxemburgism and Leninism: a desire for contact with the wider workers' movement to win over its left-wing for communism, but with a Leninist emphasis on the role of the party. The KPD's right-wing was above all prominent among trade-union activists and councillors in the municipal councils: areas of contact with the SPD. This branch of German communism did not want to create an organisational division within the working class, in the form of separate communist trade-unions or auxiliary organisations.[8] The Left, by contrast, advocated a policy of independent organisation from the social democratic workers' movement, using separate trade unions and auxiliary organisations. Isolating the KPD's membership from the "reformist" influences of the SPD took precedence over creating a wider interface on which to win over workers for communism.[9] The Left's policy in 1924/5 of "organising the revolution" focused on the KPD's agency in "making the revolution" by politicising the whole party: the party was to be viewed as the generator of revolution and not merely the cable through which the charge would run.[10] The Left's main base of support, among unemployed workers, also eased the policy of isolation from the social democratic workers' movement, from which they felt excluded.[11] The Centre Group was essentially an artificial product of the impact of the "October Defeat" and the power struggle in the communist movement. The faction largely comprised functionaries in the party apparatus, who increasingly looked towards Moscow's forms of organisation and leadership to bring

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[8] Schoeck, E. C., *Arbeitslosigkeit und Rationalisierung. Die Lage der Arbeiter und die Kommunistische Gewerkschaftspolitik 1920-1928* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1977), pp24-8.

[9] Weber, *Wandlung*, pp16-17.

[10] Weber, H. (ed) *Voelker hoert die Signale. Der deutsche Kommunismus 1916-1966* (Munich, Cologne, Berlin, 1967), p135.

[11] Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, p120; Weber, *Wandlung*, pp18-19.

revolution to Germany.[12] The faction split in the spring of 1924 when Remmele, Ernst Schneller and Wilhelm Koenen joined the Left after the 9th Party Congress, while others under Meyer continued to oppose the new Left leadership.[13]

Saxony had become the epicentre of the factional feud in the KPD: more importantly the fault line which ran through the KPD, on the tactics for a revolutionary party, were acute in this region and had their roots in specific local political and economic conditions. This chapter addresses two fundamental questions about the KPD's political development. Firstly, to what extend could the KPD under Ruth Fischer set a political policy in Germany independently of the Comintern? And secondly, could a left-wing communism be imposed on the Saxon KPD if this did not accord with the every-day experiences of the local party activists? The view that the events in Saxony in 1923 produced a universal ideological rejection of all contact with the SPD, in the form of an inherent left-wing political trend, will be disputed and a counter explanation given to explain the differences in the Saxon KPD.[14]

3.2 The Introversion of the KPD.

The Situation in Saxony

The events of 1923 made an impact on all of the parties in the Saxon political system. The social consequences of the hyper-inflation between 1922-23 and the deflationary policies to achieve the ensuing currency stabilisation, further weakened the glue holding the

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[12] Weber, *Wandlung*, p89ff.

[13] ibid, pp17;60-1; Weber, *Kommunismus in Deutschland*, p98.

[14] Stolle, U., *Arbeiterpolitik im Betrieb: Frauen und Maenner, Reformisten und Radikale, Fach und Massenarbeiter bei Bayern, BASF, Borsch und in Solingen (1900-1933)* (Frankfurt-am-Main, New York, 1980), pp260ff.

middle-class electorate to the traditional middle-class parties, the DDP, DVP and DNVP.[15] The *Mittelstand* structure of the Saxon economy and the high representation of the independent "old" middle classes made the region an early political indicator of the national trend towards the rise of "special (economic) interest" parties.[16] However, if the economic policies of the Weimar Republic's early years had produced social fractures within middle-class opinion, then the year 1923 in Saxony had reaffirmed hostilities to the socialist reform agenda of the Saxon SPD.[17] The events of 1923 also pushed the SPD towards a more class assertive policy. At the SPD's National Congress in Heidelberg in 1925, delegates accepted a policy prohibiting coalition at national level with the parties of the middle class. The centre of this drive to the left, which placed the creation of socialism above loyalty to the bourgeois Republic, was in the Saxon SPD.[18] In Saxony, however, the tensions produced by the policy of relying on the KPD's support for socialist reforms, produced a strong counter reaction in the party's *Landtag* faction. The *Sachsenkonflikt*, an internal party debate on the SPD's attitude to coalition government,

[15] Jones, L. E., 'The Dissolution of the Bourgeios Party System', in Bessel, R. and Feuchtwanger, E. J. (eds.), *Social Change and Political Development in Weimar Germany* (London, 1981), (pp268-288), p271.

[16] Lapp, B., 'Political Polarisation in Weimar Germany: The Saxon *Buergertum* and the Left, 1918/19-1930', Ph.D. Dissertation (University of California, 1991), pp169f,207f.

[17] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p200.

[18] Fowkes, B., 'Defence of Democracy or Advance to Socialism? Arguments Within German Social Democracy in the mid 1920s'(pp247-64), in Dobkowski, M. and Wallimann, I. (eds.), *Towards the Holocaust. The Social and Economic Collapse of the Weimar Republic* (New York, 1983), pp250ff. Although the SPD remained out of the national government in the mid 1920s, its votes allowed Stresemann's foreign policy while the various governing coalitions relied on the support of the parties of the middle classes. For domestic policy, see, Kolb, E. *The Weimar Republic* (trans. Falls, P. S.; London, 1988), pp51ff.

culminated in the split-off of the Saxon SPD's right-wing.[19] Of the SPD's 40 deputies in the *Landtag*, 23 of them, under the leadership of Max Held and Karl Bethke, broke party discipline by heading a Saxon Great Coalition, which included DDP and DVP ministers. In April 1926 the tension between the Saxon SPD's party machine and membership and the recalcitrant right-wing of the *Landtag* faction culminated in the latter's expulsion. The ASPD was founded as a separate political party, which advocated class compromise through coalition politics as the best means to represent working-class interests.[20] Not only did the Saxon SPD's left wing disagree, but the so too did the electorate: the ASPD's real significance was in winning four seats in the 1926 *Landtag* election and facilitating an essentially middle-class regional coalition government, which lasted until 1929.[21] Despite the Saxon SPD membership's move to the left after 1923, the new Left *Zentrale* in the KPD wanted to ignore regional peculiarities in determining political behaviour and create an ideologically driven communist party.

The KPD's left wing, from their new vantage points in the party leadership, was not interested in local differences in the Saxon SPD, which influenced the KPD's relation to the wider workers' movement. Instead, the events of 1923 were to be used as a validation of the KPD's rebirth from the ashes of "defeat" as an ideologically left-radical communist party: the way to becoming a "truly" revolutionary party was by stressing the KPD's

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[19] Vossen, S., 'Der Sachsenkonflikt' (pp263-72), in, Grebing, H., Mommsen, H. and Rudolf, K. (eds.), Demokratie und Emanzipation zwischen Saale uns Elbe. Beitrag zur Geschichte der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterbewegung bis 1933 (Essen, 1993). Winkler, H. A., *Der Schein der Normalitaet. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik, 1924-1930* (Berlin, Bonn, 1988), pp195-202,327-331; Hunt, R. N., *German Social Democracy: 1918-1933* (Yale, 1964), pp211-21; Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', pp144-67.

[20] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', pp144-50.

[21] Fenske, H., *Wahlrecht und Parteiensystem: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Parteiengeschichte* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1972), p298.

profile as a party without connection to the traditions and tendencies of social democracy.[22] The intensity of the attack on the "old order" in the KPD, and the role of the Saxon KPD in 1923, forced even the chameleon tendency, of ever adaptable functionaries, to defend their part in recent events. Sigrid Raedel, a leading Saxon functionary, pointed out that: "Saxony tried out the practical question (of revolution) and is now being punished for it."[23] It was widely acknowledged in the Saxon KPD that: "The Saxon question had become the central question of our party's tactics while the Ruhr has become a secondary question."[24] In other words relations with social democracy was the central issue, while the overtures made to the far right, during the "Schlageter Line" in the Ruhr in 1923, was omitted from the debate.

At the District Party Congresses, which elected delegates to the Reich Party Congress, the Saxon KPD divided across the factional spectrum. While other party districts, such as the Ruhr, went over to support of the Left, Saxony, the centre of the internal party dispute on tactics, did not want to abandon all that had gone before.[25] In West Saxony, despite considerable debate on trades union policy (ie the formation of independent communist unions), Maslow secured a landslide victory for the Left's interpretation of the "October Events" and the re-formulation of relations with the SPD. From 67 delegates the Left

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[22] For extensive details see, Angress, W.T., *Stillborn Revolution. The Communist Bid for Power in Germany, 1921-1923* (Princeton, 1963), pp281ff.

[23] SAPMO (Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR) I 3/8/14, Protokoll vom Bezirksparteitag Ostsachsen 15-16.3.1924, Bl.9.

[24] SAPMO, I 3/9/57, Resolution der Mitte, Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland 15-16.3.1924, Bl.83.

[25] For the Ruhr, where the district party congresses were a "precursor" for the "left turn" sanctioned by the 9th Reich Party Congress see, Herlemann, B., *Kommunalpolitik der KPD im Ruhrgebiet 1924-1933* (Wuppertal, 1977), p27ff.

received 63 votes, the four opposing votes coming from the Centre Group.[26] The Centre Group was not a united faction, although it voted on a factional slate: it housed both Rightists, who wanted to retain influence in the KPD, and Comintern-loyalists, whose leading regional figures were in contact with Stalin and Zinoviev. In East Saxony it was the latter grouping who dominated the district party. The Centre Group's leading district functionaries set out to "demonstrate" that the Comintern's united front policy had been correct, but the KPD's "application" of it had been at fault. All leading regional figures in the KPD knew that the Comintern had instructed the KPD to enter the Saxon SPD-led government in autumn 1923; however, to openly state this was treated as sacrilege. Horn's speech stressed the KPD's policy was only to "unmask" the SPD and thereby increase the KPD's mass base.[27] Sigrid Raedel defended the Comintern's policy by putting forward the view that to abandon all aspects of the united front, as advocated by the Left, would turn the KPD into a sect.[28] During the debate at the District Party Congress the Centre Group repeatedly asserted that its platform had the Comintern's explicit backing. Horn indicated that the Comintern was calling for party "unity" on the basis of a leadership coalition between the Left and Centre, which would then carry out a leftist variant of the united front policy, stressing the united front from below and outright propaganda attacks on the SPD leaderships at all levels. Horn quoted a letter from Zinoviev to Wilhelm Koenen, a leading Comintern-loyalist in the Saxon KPD, which stated that: "Without the Centre Group the Left cannot work and govern the KPD."[29] The fact that the Left had no intention of tempering their challenge to party policy by entering a leadership coalition

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[26] SAPMO, I 3/10/106, Bezirksparteitag Westsachsen am 8-9.3.1924, Bl.16ff. The *Zentrale's* speaker for the Centre Group was Remmele.

[27] SAPMO, I 3/8/14, Bezirksparteitag Ostsachen am 15-16.3.1924, Bl.7(Horn).

[28] ibid, Bl.9(Raedel).

[29] ibid, Bl.7,11(quote)(Horn).

brokered by the Comintern was made clear by the Left's representative at the East Saxon district Party Congress. Arthur Rosenberg stated that: " World revolution was now unstoppable. The Left would not be held back by representatives of other views."[30] The district party was also informed that a purge of the Left's opponents in Berlin had already begun.[31] The District Party Congress finally accepted the Centre Group's resolution against that of the Left by a margin of 43 votes to 34; the political leadership went to Renner who represented the Centre Group.[32]

In Erzgebirge-Vogtland, the other Saxon party district, the Centre Group included both Right Communists, who wanted to retain influence on party policy to limit locally the impact of a "left-turn" in the Reich party, and Comintern-loyalists. Fritz Heckert's speech for the Centre Group at the District Party Congress represented a clear defence of the Comintern's position:

> The party had wrongly believed that it could take the left-wing of the SPD on the way to revolution. We should not have made reformist calls for bread and benefit from the *Landtag* because this awakened democratic illusions in the masses... Social Democratic workers thought the KPD had come onto their own territory and that extra-parliamentary struggle had become unnecessary.[33]

The Centre Group's resolution called for the Comintern to "show its brother parties the way" and stressed that the KPD's "false application of the united front", not the policies decided at the 3rd and 4th World Congresses of the Comintern, had led to defeat.[34] However, the real significance of the District Congress was the continued influence in the

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[30] ibid, Bl.10(Rosenberg).

[31] ibid, Bl.11(Raedel).

[32] ibid.

[33] SAPMO, I 3/9/57, Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 15-16.3.1924, Bl.12.

[34] SAPMO, I 3/9/57, Resolution der Mitte, Bl.83.

district of the Right. The Brandler-Thalheimer Group had officially only four delegates out of 52. However, the delegates voted for Siewert as Political Secretary and Kuehn as Organisational Secretary: thus two leading members of the Right retained the two most important positions in the district Party.[35] Furthermore, Paul Boettcher, Communist Finance Minister in the Saxon government of October 1923, was placed at the head of the list of Reichstag election candidates along with Max Hoelz, another right-wing Communist.[36] Behind what was a seeming landslide majority vote for the platform of the Centre Group, gaining 41 votes to seven for the Left and four for the Right, Erzgebirge-Vogtland remained a stronghold of the Brandler Group.[37] The *Zentrale* in Berlin immediately made its position clear stating that: "It is impossible to elect comrades holding such views into leading positions."[38]

By the 9th Reich Party Congress in April 1924, 19 of the 26 district party leaderships were led by the Left. Two of the seven districts which had rejected the Left's position were in Saxony, placing the region in conflict with the new national majority. Local factors had influenced the political perspectives of the Saxon district party organisations. West Saxony, which in line with the majority of district parties throughout the Reich had moved to the Left, had been unable even in a period of acute social breakdown, to significantly penetrate the SPD's core constituency. The left functionaries who rose into the party apparatus after the collapse following 1923 blamed the KPD's failure to cause a revolution starting in Saxony on the united front tactic's seemingly mistaken policy of contact with the SPD. These developments have been explained at national level as part of

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[35] ibid, Bericht ueber den Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 15-16.3.1924, Bl.77.

[36] Weber, *Wandlung*, p60.

[37] SAPMO, I 3/9/57, Resolution der Linke, Bl.84; Resolution der Gruppe Brandler-Thalheimer, ibid, p85.

[38] ibid, Bericht ueber den Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 15-16.3.1924, Bl.77.

the KPD turning in on itself and looking to "substitute actions" in the absence of a revolutionary movement.[39]

In the decentralised industrial structure predominant in the south-west of Saxony, in Erzgebirge, Vogtland and the Chemnitz-Zwickau textile area, political and economic factors combined to assist the KPD's breakthrough. The organisational tradition in both the SPD and trade unions was much more weakly developed and the local SPD was strongly left oriented, disposing it to co-operation with the local KPD.[40] This produced a breach in the SPD's organisational wall through which the united front tactic could recruit Communist membership and sympathy. The united front tactic may not have produced a revolution in Saxony but it had produced at district level a mass party with a vote and membership which held up much more strongly throughout 1924 than in the Left's strongholds of Berlin, the Rheinland-Westphalia and Wasserkante.[41] District activists had no immediate incentive to abandon a tried and tested tactic which had widened the district party's influence. In East Saxony, with the exception of the southern areas in the administrative districts of Freiberg and Dippoldiswalde, which were in Erzgebirge, the strength of the SPD in the industrial centres had strongly limited the KPD's breakthrough.[42] The district communist leadership attributed the resilience of the local SPD to the strength of the socialist tradition in the sub-region and the SPD's well organised party and press apparatus, which contrasted to the KPD's organisational and financial weaknesses.[43] The traditional presentation of Saxony as a centre of right-wing

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[39] Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, p118; Stolle, *Arbeiterpolitik*, p262ff.

[40] Klenke, D., *Die SPD Linke in der Weimarer Republik* (vol.1; Munster, 1987), pp374,404.

[41] Statistical details in Weber, *Wandlung*, pp359-94.

[42] On East Saxony as a stronghold of the right-wing of the Saxon SPD see, Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p154.

[43] SAPMO, I 3/8/23, Protokoll der Bezirksleitungsitzung (BLS) vom 19.5.1924, Bl.27.

communism must, therefore, be modified to take account of the division of political tradition and socio-industrial development which divided the southwest of the region from the northwest to east. It became increasingly clear, however, that in power the Left had no more interest in making concessions to regional factors than the Comintern had in conceding to the Left's calls for national variations in the General Line. This set the stage for the new *Zentrale's* conflict with the Saxon party and the Comintern.

Immediately after the District Party Congresses, which were held in the course of February 1924, Zinoviev warned the Left that the Comintern would not countenance a rejection of the united front tactic.[44] However, at this early stage in the dispute with the Comintern, Ruth Fischer was able to unite the Left in its factional objective of dominating the party apparatus and implementing a policy of isolation from and outright confrontation with the SPD.[45] With a threefold majority of Left delegates over the Centre Group at the KPD's 9th Reich Party Congress in April 1924 the stage was set for the official adoption of the programme of the former Left Opposition.

At the KPD's 9th Congress the Comintern demanded that the KPD's policy resolutions did not conflict with the central thrust of its international policy. Principally this meant that the KPD's left-wing was told to abandon its advocacy of independent communist trade unions and to continue the united front, albeit with the emphasis from below (ie only with the SPD's rank-and-file members). To ensure the implementation of the Comintern's policy Zinoviev called for the inclusion of the Centre Group in a leadership coalition. However, Ruth Fischer sanctioned none of these demands.[46] These issues remained the

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[44] St.Ha.D., (Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden), MdI,Nr.11126, Kaempfer, Nr.60, Beilage, 14.5.1924.,"Zur Lage in der KPD"., (Zinoviev; written in 3.1924), Bl.189.

[45] Weber, *Wandlung*, pp63-4.

[46] ibid, p63.

central areas of conflict between the KPD's new *Zentrale* and the Comintern until the "Open Letter" of the 1st of September 1925, which ousted the Fischer leadership and imposed the Comintern's General Line. The Comintern's intention of using the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Commission, set up in April 1924, to combat concerns about British foreign policy in China, brought mounting pressure on the KPD to desist from antagonising the national section of the Socialist International of Trade Unions in Germany.[47] Soviet foreign policy required as influential a Communist Party in Germany as possible, not an ultra-Leftist sect under the party's Left.[48] As the priority of Soviet state policy could not be openly stated, Moscow developed a pseudo-revolutionary rationale, which stressed the importance of the united front policy for all communist parties. At this stage, however, the Left in the KPD did not rely on the Comintern for its majority position in the KPD and continued to reject a return to the united front policy. The left-wing of the SPD, which at local level was most disposed towards limited co-operation with the KPD, continued to be regarded as the greatest threat to the purity of communist policies in Germany.[49]

The KPD's 9th Congress defined the party's central objective as "organising the revolution" in the shortest possible time. This required:

> A complete break with the ideology of the past period, when the false application
>
> of the united front tactic filled the party with the feeling of weakness and when the
>
> KPD saw itself as a party among others. The KPD is the party of the

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[47] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p424.

[48] ibid, pp423-4; Flechtheim, *Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (3 edn.; Hamburg, 1986), pp165-6.

[49] *Bericht ueber die Verhandlungen des IX Parteitages. Abgehalten in Frankfurt/M vom 7. bis 10. April 1924*, (Berlin, 1924) [hereafter: *Bericht.9.Parteitag]*, pp112-117,128-64.

proletariat...the party must be made uniform. Its leadership must be uniform, its ideology made uniform, its structure made uniform.[50]

During the Fischer-era it became clear in Saxony that this assertion of uniformity meant a purge of all those who disagreed. The term used in the quest for a monolithic party was Bolshevisation, whereby party discipline was invoked to legitimise "liquidating" factional opposition and the party's re-organisation on the basis of factory cells was to provide the organisational structures to channel the Left's agenda, with the minimum of resistance, from the Zentrale to the lowest cell. The adoption of ultra-Leftism in the KPD was undertaken during a period of a rapid social and economic stabilisation, which weakened the appeal of the Left: both the party membership and functionary core contracted as the crisis of 1923 ebbed.[51]

Imposition of Left Leaderships in Saxony

When the Fischer Group took control of the central party apparatus at the 9th Congress it was able to act against the recalcitrant districts.[52] The resistance of the Centre Group in East Saxony was relatively weak and short lived. As the Left had co-operated with Zinoviev at the 5th World Congress of the Comintern, the Comintern-loyal component of the Centre Group, mistakenly, thought that its cause would be best served by cooperation with the Zentrale at district level. With the co-operation of the district apparatus, the Left Zentrale was able to hold a District Party Congress in June, which finally gave East Saxony's support for the decisions of the 9th Reich Congress. The BL was placed under the leadership of Schneider and Gaebel, freeing Sigrid Raedel and Ruddolf Renner for

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[50] ibid, pp334ff.

[51] Weber, Wandlung, pp18-9.

[52] Details of the Districts outwith Saxony, Weber, ibid, pp74-84; Flechtheim, Die KPD, p159.

work in the Reich apparatus.[53] However, developments in Erzgebirge-Vogtland were complicated by the continued occupation of the district apparatus by the Brandler faction, under Siewert and Kuehn.[54] When the ZA met on the 20th of May, the first meeting after the 9th Congress, only Erzgebirge-Vogtland continued its opposition to the *Zentrale*.[55] To purge the leadership associated with implementing the Brandler policy in 1923 the *Zentrale* sent Paul Schlecht into the district to prepare a palace coup and install a new left-wing leadership under the Berzt Group.[56] This was finally achieved at the District Party Congress in May 1924 which endorsed the resolutions of the 9th Congress.[57] The Left had already made clear its refusal to compromise at district level. At the District Congress in March it was stated that: "Only through the whole party's orientation on the basis of the Left, under a united Left leadership, can the KPD overcome the present crisis and become a real communist party."[58] The Right stronghold of Erzgebirge-Vogtland was now placed under a *Zentrale-Kommisariat*: a leftist BL was imposed in a stronghold of right-wing communism; its function was to root out all dissent to the policies of the Reich leadership.

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[53] SAPMO, I 3/8/15, Bezirksparteitag der KPD Ostsachsen am 21-22.6.1924, Bl.1;12-13. Renner and Raedel continued to work in the party apparat after submitting to party discipline.

[54] SAPMO I 3/9/57, Bericht ueber den Parteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland, Bl.77. For details on the factionally bases debate on party policy, SAPMO, I 3/9/57, Protokoll. Bezirksparteitag am 15-16.3.1924, Bl.1-51.

[55] Weber, *Wandlund*, p77.

[56] ibid, pp77-8.

[57] SAPMO, I 3/9/58, Kaempfer, Nr.65/7Jg, Beilage, 20.5.1924, Bl.8.

[58] SAPMO, I 3/9/57, Resolution der Linke am Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 15-16.3.1924, Bl.84.

The 5th Congress of the Comintern and the Fischer Gambit.

The Left Zentrale had a prominent Achilles heel: only the "ultra-Left" around Scholem, Katz and Rosenberg and a minority in Fischer's own faction were prepared to come into open conflict with the Comintern. The assertion of independence in policy making at the 9th Reich Congress would therefore have to be tempered with the need to hold together the diversity of groupings which comprised the KPD's former Left Opposition. Ruth Fischer was already involved in efforts to prevent the publication of material detailing the disagreements between the Left *Zentrale* and the Comintern.[59] The Left, while in fact continuing to challenge the legitimacy of the Comintern's United Front policy,[60] now informed not only the wider party membership but also the Left factions' district level factional adherents that it was implementing Comintern policy.[61]

At the 5th World Congress of the Comintern Fischer's tactics aimed at holding the unity of the German Left. Instead of carrying the policy of "mobilisation from below" into the Comintern's World Congress and blaming the "failed October" in Germany on the Comintern and its united front policy, as Bordiga and the Italian "ultra-Left" did, Ruth Fischer and the German delegation co-operated with Zinoviev against the Right in France and Czechoslovakia and the "ultra-Left" in Italy.[62] Retaining the leadership of the KPD became central to Fischer's strategy. Ruth Fischer was aware that Bolshevik uniformity meant the Comintern's "international" tactic had implications for the KPD's domestic German political line. For this reason the "Fischer-gambit" began whereby the uppermost

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[59] Weber, *Wandlung*, p67.

[60] The challenge to the United Front is made clear in *Die International* during the first half of 1924, see, Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, p123.

[61] SAPMO, I 3/9/58, Kaempfer, Nr.65/7Jg, Beilage, 20.5.1924., "Die angenommene Resolutionen", Bl.8.

[62] Weber, *Wandlung*, pp81-3.

leadership under *Fischer* and the ultra-Left played for time in the hope that the Left's policies in Germany would be justified by events. This was the policy which became known as "double bookkeeping": its prospects of success ultimately lay in the outcome of the power struggle in the CPSU, which at this point seemed far from clear cut. The resolutions adopted at the 5th Congress of the Comintern, as they were refracted through the Left-Zentrale, were transmitted throughout the KPD into the party's grass-roots. The Saxon KPD, as a centre of Right Communism, became absorbed in a paralysing factional struggle over the correct policy for a communist party and its relationship with the wider social democratic workers' movement.

My Enemies Enemy is my Friend: The Fischer Leadership Purges "Trotskyism" in Saxony.

After the "failed October" of 1923 the Fischer *Zentrale* was able to exploit the "anti-Luxemburgist" mood within leading functionaries in the Centre Group and the Left to purge the Right faction. In the course of 1924 some 60-70 per cent of all full-time functionaries in the KPD were purged .[63] This momentum was channelled into a campaign against "Trotskyism."[64] In the Soviet Union this campaign was part of the Stalin-Zinoviev axis's campaign to oust Trotsky from influence in the Politburo. The campaign was intended to be parallelled by the removal of the "ultra-Left" (ie the most independent minded Communists) in the European Communist Parties.[65] However, in Germany the

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[63] ibid, p74; Fowkes, *German Communism*, p122.

[64] Weber, *Wandlung*, p89ff.

[65] ibid, p90.

Left exploited Trotsky's association with the party's "old leadership" under Brandler, to eliminate Right-communism and its influence in the KPD.[66]

After the *Zentrale* adopted the campaign against Trotsky, the district party apparatus was instructed to implement the purge.[67] The Saxon district party press also openly sided with the Stalin-Zinoviev faction in the CPSU.[68] Despite concerns that an "ideological" debate would paralyse party work the BL in Erzgebirge-Vogtland decided that the campaign would prevent the membership being taken by surprise if the CPSU suddenly ousted Trotsky.[69] The BL then organised "Trotsky or Lenin" conferences, at which a vote was taken and a propaganda tirade made against "Trotskyists" in the form of the Brandler faction. These conferences were then reported in the regional press.[70] The BL's ability to purge local activists was made dependent on "demonstrating" breaches of party discipline. However, the ECCI at the beginning of 1924 had made it clear that should the leading members of the Brandler faction be purged, the Comintern would intervene to reverse the KPD's decision. This was not least because the Right had acted as loyal Comintern members and their role as scapegoats today could easily become that of party leaders again tomorrow.[71]

The campaign against Trotsky, which peaked during the winter of 1924/5, took on its greatest dimensions in Saxony in Chemnitz and Doebeln where the Brandler faction

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[66] ibid, p89 and note 178.

[67] Staatsarchiv Bremen (Sta.B.) Sig. 4,65-1727, Monatsbericht ueber die politische und wirtschaftliche Lage im Freistaat Sachsen (Januar 1925) (henceforth: Monatesbericht).

[68] H.Sta.D., MdI,Nr.11125, Bl.61., Halbwochenbericht (henceforth: HWB), Nr.1, Dresden am 6.1.1925.

[69] SAPMO I 3/9/67, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 24.11.1924, Bl.237.

[70] SAPMO I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 19.1.1924, Bl.7-8. In the Ruhr there was opposition to any such purge on the grounds that it would make the KPD a sect and would involve the loss of prominent leaders such as Zetkin, Pieck, Eberlein and Radek, Herlemann, *Kommunalpolitik*, pp61-2.

[71] Watlin, *Die Komintern*, p74.

continued to have strong support.[72] The main political speeches, somewhat ironically, attacked Trotsky's "unacceptable role in the Comintern."[73] Leading functionaries, such as Ernst Schneller, made speeches concerning the world political situation and the "party debate" which associated Trotsky with policies which would "always" lead to failures like in October 1923.[74] Where district conferences, such as in Doebeln, continued to show strong resistance to the *Zentrale's* position, the BL sent representatives into membership meetings to eliminate the base of support for "Trotskyism".[75] In the Chemnitz sub-district the *Zentrale* set up special courses to create an "elite of functionaries" to represent the party line at public meetings: a strategy which clearly reflected the difficulties experienced carrying out the policy.[76]

The main immediate impact of the campaign against "Trotskyism" was a membership exodus which received considerable attention in the middle class and SPD press. However, the KPD presented the defection of Communist local councillors to the SPD as a "welcome purification" of the party.[77] The long-term impact of exploiting the power struggle in the CPSU to reinforce factional domination in the KPD had a twist of bitter irony: Ruth Fischer had unintentionally contributed to the sidelining of Trotsky throughout the Comintern and narrowed the basis of opposition to Stalin's policy of "socialism in one country" in the second half of the 1920s.[78]

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[72] SAPMO I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 19.1.1925, Bl.17-18.,

[73] SAPMO I 3/9/67, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 24.11.1924, Bl.237.

[74] SAPMO I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 19.1.1925, Bl.17-18.

[75] ibid.

[76] St.Ha.D., MdI,Nr.11125, HWB, Nr.4, Dresden am 16.1.1925, Bl.70.

[77] Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1727, Monatsbericht (January 1925).

[78] Weber, *Wandlung*, pp96-8. Weber stresses the KPD's struggle against its own traditions. However, this overstates the currency of an identifiable Luxemburgist opposition to the dominant ideological position on the role of a Leninist party.

3.3 Ultra-Leftism on the Streets of Saxony.

The Workers' Block?

The first thread pulled by the Comintern in the tapestry of German left-Communism, which would finally unravel Ruth Fischer's policy objectives, was the Left's agreement to carry out the policies of the 5th Comintern Congress. The 5th Comintern Congress, despite it radical rhetoric, wanted a *de facto* return to the united front policy, which ran parallel to the Soviet Union's New Economic Policy.[79] The new *Zentrale*, and its policy of Bolshevisation, however, were committed to a headlong dash to re-mold the KPD as an ultra-Leftist revolutionary party in strict isolation from the "reformist influences" of the social democratic workers' movement. To make any concession to the policies carried out by the "old regime" in the KPD was regarded as sowing the seeds which could grow into a challenge to the new leadership in the party. In the areas of Saxony which had continued to carry out a policy of contact with the wider workers' movement, above all in Erzgebirge-Vogtland, the party leadership was involved in efforts to oust those responsible.[80]

In October 1924 the BL in Erzgebirge-Vogtland met to discuss the *Zentrale's* directives on party policy. While making verbal concessions to the Comintern Congress' policy for its national sections, the KPD leadership continued its policy of confrontation and strict demarcation from the Saxon SPD. The KPD's extra-parliamentary tactic went under the slogan of "The Workers' Block", which was published in the party press in mid October

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[79] Claudin, F., *The Communist Movement from Comintern to Cominform* (London, 1975), pp145f.

[80] For details of the Right's factional organisation, SAPMO, I 3/9/67, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 20.10.1924, Bl.198-9; For continued support for Brandler's policies among functionaries, SAPMO, I 3/3/9/67, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 24.9.1924, Bl.183.

1924.[81] The "Workers' Block" slogan called for a united front under communist leadership to "take up struggle against Social Democracy and the bourgeoisie."[82] The debate in the BL initially focused on defining what policy would mean in practice and the implications of the return of the term "united front". Consensus was eventually reached around Heine's position that: "The united front meant co-operation only with the workers in the factories against the SPD- *Buergerblock* government in Saxony, under communist leadership."[83] The organ (ie organisational form) of the united front policy, the transmission belt to communism, was less easily resolved. One section of the BL believed that the policy of a "Workers' Block" came from an unnecessary feeling of weakness and overshadowed the central strategy of destroying the SPD. Agreement, however, finally crystalised around the concept that the organ of the united front would be "born in struggle" and that the emphasis should be placed on a united front under the KPD's leadership without concession to the SPD.[84] The BL had in practice continued the "social fascist" line of organisational separation from the SPD to the point of disregarding even the so-called communist "Unity Committees", which had played such an important role in 1923, while issuing a slogan for non-Communists to come to the party. Left-wing communists remained hostile to contact with the SPD's left-wing activists out of concerns that this would dilute the ideological predilections of the district party still further to the "right". Instead of bringing the KPD's membership into direct contact with left-wing Social Democrats, the BL preferred to use only the so-called "Red Days" and delegations to

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[81] Herlemann, *Kommunalpolitik*, p59ff. Herlemann details a functionaries' meeting which concurred with the Comintern's position that the time was no longer ripe for revolution. In The Erzgebirge-Vogtland BL the "Workers' Block" was an adaptation of Comintern policy to the *Zentrale's* ideological position.

[82] SAPMO, I 3/9/59, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 6.10.1924, Bl.192.

[83] ibid, Bl.193.

[84] SAPMO, I 3/9/59, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 6.10.1924.,Bl.193-4(Debate: esp. Heine and Benzel).

communist congresses using the name "workers' congresses".[85] Although the "Workers' Block" was merely a platform for agitation and propaganda, the Left in the BL followed up any "move to the right" with the clear message that the policies of 1923 would not be permitted and that those attempting to establish a rapprochement with the SPD and treat it "like a workers' party" would be disciplined.[86]

Under the Fischer leadership the communist movement's concept of "revolutionary discipline" (ie subordination to decisions made by higher party authorities) was being exploited in the interests of the Left's domination of the party.[87] To serve this purpose Scholem (head of the Orgburo) and Ruth Fischer compiled detailed reports on the factions in the RKP, Comintern and KPD.[88] In Erzgebirge-Vogtland, even before the adoption of the "Workers' Block" policy, the Right were reconstituting their faction locally. At an Extra-Ordinary Functionaries' Conference in Chemnitz on the 11th of September Bertz reported that the Right were not only organised and active in Doebeln, but that Brandler supporters had re-taken the leadership of Chemnitz and the sub-district had consequently lost the confidence of the *Zentrale*. Bertz's proposed action in Erzgebirge-Vogtland to remove the remaining two Right members of the BL. The ostensible issue was the so-called "Case of Basil and Borowsky": two prominent regional functionaries who were corresponding with Brandler, who had been called to Moscow, on the situation in the

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[85] For Northern Bavaria see, Neuhaeusser-Wespy, U., *Die KPD in Nordbayern 1919-1933. Ein Beitrag zur Regional und Lokalgeschichte des deutschen Kommunismus* (Nuernberg, 1981), pp133-5.

[86] SAPMO, I 3/9/59, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 6.10.1924, Bl.193. For BL members, such as Benzel, even this was an unnecessary admission of weakness. Benzel stated that the KPD was "strong enough to use the slogan, 'destroy the SPD'".

[87] Weber, *Wandlung*, pp78-9.

[88] SAPMO, I 3/9/67, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 6.10.1924, Bl.198-9.

KPD by couriers in the Comintern apparatus.[89] The affair in fact illustrates the limits on the BL's ability to purge prominent regional dissidents for "private opinions" so long as they represented the party line in public. Although a significant minority of the BL voted to remove Borowsky from his post as editor of the district party paper, *der Kaempfer*, the motion was rejected by 10 votes to 8 on the grounds that Borowsky had always "faithfully represented the party line" and had not acted to organise factional activity. However, Basil in his capacity as a trades union functionary, had represented the Right's factional position instead of the official party line at a district conference on union policy. This resulted in a unanimous vote to relieve Basil of his party functions. The only remaining prominent right-wing functionaries used by the district apparatus were now Siewert and Borowsky.[90] The Left's constant complaints that right-wing activists were making a difficult situation worse, was also shown in a key stronghold of the Right: in the factories almost all functionaries remained loyal to Brandler and new reliable functionaries, who would carry out the Left's policies, were almost non-existent among grass roots party activists.[91] Local Communist activists in this part of Saxony continued to respond to the local rank-and-file SPD on the basis of what would serve the interests of radical workers best, rather than ultra-Leftist ideological proscriptions. Where contact for immediate communist objectives was possible, local militants continued to exploit such opportunities. One such example was in Limbach, a communist stronghold in the early 1920s. In May 1924 the KPD and SPD voted together in the Town Hall in order to supply striking miners with food at the expense of the municipal budget. This was viewed as more productive than the Left's

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[89] H.Sta.D., MdI, Nr.11124, Staatspolizieververvaltung (henceforth: SPV) den 18.9.1924, Bl.94; SAPMO, I 3/9/66, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 21.7.1924, Bl.88ff.

[90] Details of the "Case of Borowsky and Bassile" in, SAPMO, I 3/9/67, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 8.9.1924, Bl.141-152.

[91] SAPMO, I 3/9/67, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 24.9.1924, Bl.183.

policy that all co-operation with the SPD in local parliaments misled workers' about the SPD's "true" role.[92]

Kommunalpolitik: A Stronghold of the Saxon Right.

At the beginning of 1924 all political policy was determined by the "social Fascist" thesis, which rejected any co-operation with the SPD under the slogan "we do not do parliamentary 'work', but only use it for agitation and the disorganisation of the bourgeois state."[93] During the "ultra-Left" phase of parliamentary obstruction, from the Reichstag to Town Halls, all issues were used only to reinforce the "social fascist" thesis.[94] Initially, the disappointments experienced by workers after the hyper-inflation and mass unemployment of 1923, increasing short-time employment and the loss of the eight hours day by the law of 21st December 1923, translated into a significant protest vote for the KPD at local level. Although the KPD continued to be proscribed between the 23rd of November 1923 and the 1st of March 1924, in the tradition of the electoral laws of the Kaiserreich, the party was permitted to continue parliamentary work and to participate in election campaigns.[95] In early 1924 the KPD became the strongest party in the city councils of the Ruhr cities of Gelsenkirchen, Herne and Muelheim.[96] In Saxony the communal elections of 13th January produced a significant upswing for the KPD on this protest wave. The KPD's vote reached 16.5 per cent for Saxony as a whole, the SPD's share of the vote contracted to 27 per cent. Across the administrative districts the KPD's number of local

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[92] H.Sta.D., MdI, Nr.11131, Tatigkeitsbericht Nr.11, Limbach den 30.5.1924, Bl.110.

[93] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p407.

[94] Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1727, Monatsbericht (Oktober 1924).

[95] Neuhaeusser-Wespe, *Nordbayern*, pp153-4.

[96] Herlemann, *Kommunalpolitik*, p28.

councillors in relation to that of the SPD was: in Bautzen 113 to 801; in Dresden 256 to 1,580; in Leipzig 499 to 1,116; in Chemnitz 553 to 842; and in Zwickau 388 to 700.[97] The KPD presented this in its party press as a "strong political revival in the work force". However, with characteristic ambiguity and contradiction, subsequent sentences in the same press articles and internal party circulars described how the "failed October" and the period of illegality had paralysed party activity.[98] In reality the municipal elections indicated the change in the direction of political affiliations during the Weimar Republic: the political left (SPD-KPD) lost its post-1918/19 electoral majority, and for the first time since the birth of the Republic the city councils in Leipzig, Dresden and Zwickau had a *buergerlich* majority.[99] The impact of the events of 1923 on the Saxon political direction was also indicated by the *Reichstag* elections of May and December 1924, when the parties of the middle classes took absolute electoral majorities in the three Saxon electoral districts.[100]

In Saxony the "social fascist" propaganda also continued to come up against the reality of an often entrenched SPD, with local party organisations which were dominated by the party's left-wing. Where the border between left-wing SPD and KPD local groups was eroded by every day contact, the BLs found greatest difficulty in avoiding organised co-operation between the two parties. This took the form of Communist councillors electing socialist *Buergermeister* and "left presidiums", which sanctioned tactical voting

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[97] *Statistisches Jahrbuch fuer den Freistaat Sachsen* (henceforth: StJFS), Nr.46, p458; B.a.P. (Bundesarchiv Potsdam) RKO 15.07, Nr. 243/1,Bl.60ff.

[98] SAPMO, I 2/2/5, Protokoll der Sitzung der Zentrale mit den Vertretern den drei saechsischen Bezirken am 25.2.1925, Bl.34,38,44.

[99] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p173.

[100] Falter, J., et. al. *Wahlen und Abstimmungen in der Weimarer Republik: Materialen zum Wahlverhalten, 1919-1933* (Munich, 1986), pp69-70.

agreements between the local SPD and KPD. In the party district Erzgebirge-Vogtland this centred on Doebeln and Oelsnitz, in the district of West Saxony this took place in Borna and in East Saxony in Freiberg, in the areas which were part of Erzgebirge.[101] In Freiberg the extent of opposition to the official party line had become so pronounced that a *Kommissar* was appointed to supervise work in the locality.[102] The *Zentrale*, which received detailed reports on all areas of party work, tried to tighten its grip on communist activities in the municipal councils through the BL. The latter obliged UBLs to control the political line in the Town Halls using the "organisational method" of holding Local Group and Working Group meetings, which all deputies had to attend. The system was based on drowning out the communal deputies at meetings flooded with local leftists.[103]

The centres of resistance to the new *Zentrale* were Erzgebirge-Vogtland and the corner of East Saxony which belonged to Erzgebirge. In East Saxony the impact of 1923 had decimated the functionary core causing concern about the district party's ability to reverse the abrupt decline in the KPD's influence.[104] In Erzgebirge-Vogtland, however, the Left leadership, which had been imposed on the district by the *Zentrale*, faced a well organised and active Right faction which continued to dominate the party's work in the local parliaments.[105] Even in the Left's Saxon stronghold of West Saxony, the Right faction's campaign against the political line of the new *Zentrale* did gain considerable support

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[101] SAPMO, I 2/2/5, Protokoll der Sitzung der Zentrale mit den Vertretern den drei saechsischen Bezirken am 25.2.1925, Bl.34-44.

[102] SAPMO, I 2/2/5, Besprechung der Zentrale mit den Pol. und Gewerkschafts-Sekretaeren vom 25.2.1925, Bl.118.

[103] This process is detailed in, SAPMO, I 3/8/33, Bericht vom Unterbezirktag der Oberlausitz, Ostsachsen am 18.1.1925, Bl.58-9.

[104] SAPMO, I 3/8/33, Bericht ueber die Bezirkskonferenz des Bezirks Ostsachsen am 11.1.1925, Bl.60f.

[105] Details on the factional organisation of the Right, see, SAPMO, I 3/9/67, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 20.10.1924, Bl.198-9.

among activists at grass roots level, for example at membership meetings in Leipzig.[106] However, the documentation shows that in northwestern Saxony the Right were unable to cause widespread difficulties for the BL. In communal politics this was due to the BL's ability not only to pack the Communal Advisory Councils with Leftists, but also to reconstitute the district apparatus with factional appointees.[107]

After Left BLs were imposed on Erzgebirge-Vogtland and East Saxony during the course of the summer there was a renewed drive to end all local parliamentary contact with the SPD.[108] Party schooling courses aimed at the UBLs failed to regulate local policy,[109] not least because of a lack of functionaries prepared to carry the leadership's policy.[110] The BL made further efforts to impose its communal policy by having meetings of the Right communal deputies factions attended by members of the district party apparatus and chairmen of local party groups.[111] As these organisational measures failed to end resistance from local functionaries, and the disappointing results of the December

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[106] SAPMO, I 3/10/117, Bericht ueber die Unterbezirk Mitgliederversammlung vom Gross Leipzig. Betr. die Angelegenheit Harry Kuehn und Paul Boettcher, vom 24.11.1924, Bl.40-42. Until a representative for the *Zentrale* used party discipline to enforce the party line a vote for the independent activity of Right communists was accepted by 112 votes to 85.

[107] SAPMO, I 3/8/16, Bericht der Vertreter Westsachsens. Bezirksparteitag am 4-5.4.1925. Ostasachsen, Bl.30.

[108] SAPMO, I 3/9/58, Bericht vom Bezirksparteitag 23-24.8.1924 Erzgebirge-Vogtland. Mitteilungsblatt an die Ortsgruppen und Betriebszellen der KPD im Erzgebirge-Vogtland,ende August 1924, Bl.11f; SAPMO, I 3/8/15, Bezirksparteitag am 21-2.6.1924. Ostsachsen, Bl.9.

[109] H.Sta.D., MdI,Nr.11125, Bl.146-7., HWB, Dresden, den 8.4.1925.

[110] SAPMO, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 30.3.1925, Bl.96.

[111] H.Sta.D., MdI, Nr.11131, Mitteilungsblatt an die Ortsgruppen und Betreibszellen der KPD in Erzgebirge-Vogtland, Nr.3. Anfang August 1924, Bl.84; SAPMO, I 3/8/27, KPD Ostsachsen. An die Zentrale der KPD. Politischer Bericht fuer die Zeit vom 16.9.1924 bis 1.10.1924, Bl.315.

Reichstag elections gave further impetus to an increasingly well organised Right faction, the leadership acted more vigorously to oust its opponents.[112]

In a whole range of city councils throughout southwestern and central Saxony, including Chemnitz, Doebeln, Freiberg, Freital, Babenau, Hartha, Kirchberg, Oelnitz i.V. and Oelsnitz i.E. and Heidenau, local KPD factions continued to elect "left presidiums" and SPD *Buergermeister* into 1925.[113] The BL now set out to use sub-district conferences and meetings of local groups to impose the official party policy. In Freiberg, in East Saxony, this process was complemented by articles in the local press lambasting the "false" policy in local councils. The KPD's four deputies finally went over to the SPD parliamentary faction, which was controlled by a left-wing local party. The former Communist deputies' own statement stressed that, although the SPD's right-wing should be fought against, it was possible to go "part of the way" with the party's left-wing. The KPD followed up the defection with public meetings which insisted that outright hostility towards the SPD was the only revolutionary policy.[114] In the smaller town halls of Soernewitz and Brockwitz, in the Meissen area, the BL was able to impose its position of strict opposition to the SPD. The area's domination by the right wing of the SPD made the process of imposing central control easier.[115] At a Sub-District Congress in mid January, which dealt with "deviation" in Pirna, the newly appointed local leadership stated that the KPD was not an "appendage of the SPD", the "left presidiums" should consequently be broken up and that Communists should not be "duped" by leftist phraseology from the so-called left-wing Socialists.[116]

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[112] Weber, *Wandlung*, p79; For the Ruhr, Herlemann, *Kommunalpolitik*, pp60-1.

[113] Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1727, Monatsbericht (Februar 1925).

[114] SAPMO, I 3/8/27, Politischer Bericht fuer Januar 1925, Bl.329.

[115] ibid.

[116] SAPMO, I 3/8/33, Bericht vom Unterbezirktag der Oberlausitz. Ostsachsen am 18.1.1925, Bl.58.

The strength of the Right in Erzgibirge-Vogtland, however, made this area the focus of resistance in Saxony. In Doebeln the city deputies' faction decided to use a "United Front" policy with the SPD and in January 1925 elected a "left presidium". The pro-*Zentrale* functionary, Birnbaum, was then called to a meeting of the BL to report on events. Consequently, a sub-district conference was held and followed up in the smaller localities with membership meetings.[117] Significantly, delegation to the sub-district conference included many hand picked delegates who supported the *Zentrale's* line.[118] This ensured that, despite strong resistance from the Doebeln local party leadership, which had the majority of the local party organisation behind it, the upper leadership was able to prevent speakers presenting oppositional views. These methods of organisational control enabled the BL to gain a majority resolution against the city deputies' faction by 54 votes to 16.[119] Importantly, the main speech, made by Ernst Schneller, concentrated on world political events and connected these to the allegedly harmful role of Trotsky in the Comintern, the RKP and in the KPD itself.[120] At the following membership meeting, organised by Heine, the BL used "worker comrades" (ie its own appointees) to impose a vote in favour of the *Zentrale's* political line by 35 votes to 14.[121] In the more outlying local groups, such as Geringswalde, where the Right had openly spoken against the party line, the BL sent functionaries into membership meetings to ensure compliance with the upper-leadership.[122]

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[117] SAPMO, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 12.1.1925, Bl.10.

[118] ibid, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 19.1.1925, Bl.17-18.

[119] ibid, Bl.18.

[120] ibid, Bl.16-17. Schneller was the *Zentrale* secretary and responsible for communication between the uppermost leadership and the district. His role here indicates how seriously the issue was taken in the KPD.

[121] SAPMO, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 9.2.1925, Bl.39.

[122] ibid, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 12.1.1925, Bl.10.

In Oelsnitz i.V. a Working Area (Arbeitsgebiet) conference was used in January 1925 to break up a "left presidium" of nine Communists and four Social Democrats. The district functionary, Mueller, presided over a vociferous dispute which was conducted as part of the party's "Leninism or Trotskyism" feud. The final resolutions then showed support for the BL, the *Zentrale* and the Comintern, while rejecting "Trotskyism" (ie opposition to the Zentrale's line).[123] Following the leadership's prescribed path the "left presidium" was to be broken up using a parliamentary motion relating to the conditions of the unemployed to "unmask" the SPD and give occasion for withdrawing from the presidium. This was then to be complemented by meetings in factories to explain the KPD's actions.[124] The apparatus was being used to ensure that the KPD remained isolated from the influence of Social Democrats, in particular the SPD's left-wing which was defined as the KPD's "most dangerous enemy". In the first quarter of 1925, 57 communal deputies in Saxony left the KPD, almost all of them defected to the SPD.[125] To maintain its factional domination of the Saxon party the BL's had expelled the activists who knew the local conditions best and had enthusiastically represented the KPD until 1924.[126] The *Zentrale's* policy of ideological uniformity at any price, however, meant that the "functionary flight" was treated as a welcome "purification".[127]

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[123] ibid, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 9.2.1925, Bl.40-1.

[124] ibid, Bl.41. The voting was 11 to 9 in favour of the BL's motion.

[125] Weber, *Wandlung*, pp79-80; Details on individual town halls in, H.Sta.D., MdI,Nr.11125, HWB, Dresden am 8.4.1925, Bl.146-7.; Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1727, (Monatsbericht Februar 1925).

[126] ibid.

[127] ibid.

During 1924 the Fischer *Zentrale* asserted that the leftist inflection on policy prior to 1924, in its strongholds in the industrial centres of the Ruhr, Wasserkante and Berlin, had advanced the party's influence.[128] However, the regional influence of the KPD in 1923 and 1924 contradicts the party leadership's assertions. In fact the correlation between the KPD's membership and electoral strength indicates that the eye of the storm in 1923 looked over southwestern Saxony and Halle-Merseburg: the former representing a dispersed light industrial structure and the latter a concentrated heavy industrial structure stamped by the rapid industrialisation of the First World War. Common to both regions was the relative weakness of social democratic organisational traditions which conditioned the breach through which communist sympathies could flood. The collapse of the vote in the Left's strongholds in Berlin, Waserkante and the Ruhr by the December 1924 Reichstag election, and the lower and more rapidly contracting membership figures, show a protest vote which ebbed as the economy stabilised.

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[128] Weber, *Wandlung*, p77.

_Table 1__: Relative Electoral Strength of KPD in the May and December Reichstag_
Elections and its Membership in Relation to the Population in Late 1923.

District	% Vote May 1924	Membership / Population Ratio (1923)	% Vote Dec 1924
Berlin-Brandenburg	15.2	1:144	13.0
Waserkannte	13.0	1:138	9.0
Ruhr	20.5	1:214	13.0
Lower- Rhine	22.0	1:218	16.0
Upper- Silesia	22.9	1:964*	12.2
Erzgebirge-Vogtland	19.8	1:55	14.8
West-Saxony	15.7	1:128	12.5
East-Saxony	8.4	1:329	6.5
Halle-Merseburg	25.7	1:46	22.6
Wuerttemberg	11.3	1:127	8.1
Thuringia	15.6	1:170	13.1

* Figures include all of Silesia. Source: Weber, _Wandlung_: 'Materialien zur Situation der KPD', pp359-394.

The Fischer era was, however, characterised by an ideologically motivated drive to infuse the KPD with Leftist ideology, rather than objective political analysis of regional developments. At all levels of parliament the KPD abandoned proposals for the improvement of workers' pay and conditions, instead focusing on the need for outright obstruction in a capitalist system which could not be humanised.[129] To the Left parliaments became a platform for often theatrical propaganda, which lampooned the existing social order. In the Saxon _Landtag_ the Minister President was insulted in the

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[129] Winkler, _Schein der Normalitaet_, p462; For KPD disruption in municipal councils in the Ruhr, Herlemann, _Kommunalpolitik_, p26ff.

KPD's opening address as a "completely wretched oaf".[130] During 1924 the Left-leadership viewed elections as a means of "laying down a periphery" of voters which the party would then set out to recruit for communism.[131] The results of elections were presented as a measure of "how many workers stood behind the KPD", while insisting that "with elections alone nothing can be achieved."[132] The KPD's method of winning the support of this "periphery" also involved recruitment campaigns for the party and press subscriptions, in which activists went throughout Saxony using issues like the impact of government tax and customs policies on the cost of living to attract support.[133] The party activists who carried out this party line, however, found that the workers' outside of the SPD's organisational enclosure, the so-called "indifferent" members of the factory workforce, remained equally unmotivated to become politicised communists. All communist factions venerated the factory as the richest seam of proletarian consciousness. However, in Saxony the KPD's post-1923 collapse and the new BLs' outright confrontation with the social democratic workers' movement only served to wear down party workers and marginalise the KPD in its self proclaimed decisive battleground.[134]

The KPD limited the use of parliament to enabling the party to reach a wider audience when announcing its extra-parliamentary campaigns. Propaganda statements were vociferously followed up in the KPD's press, which made wildly exaggerated claims of how the party, allegedly mobilised into its smallest cells, followed up these issues in meetings campaigns on specific issues among women, youths, rural workers, the white

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[130] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p462.

[131] *Saechsische Arbeiterzeitung (SAZ)*, 18.6.1925, "Die Diskussion auf dem Bezirksparteitag".

[132] *Kaempfer*, Nr.46, 26.4.1924, "Wir werden siegen".

[133] *SAZ*, 18.6.1925, "Die Diskussion auf dem Bezirksparteitag"; *Kaempfer*, Nr.46, 26.4.1924., "Wir werden siegen".

[134] Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1727, Monatsbericht (Dezember 1925).

collar and independent *Mittelstand*, in addition to factory workers.[135] However, these claims served only as external and internal party propaganda: the BLs, at least in closed discussions, acknowledged that the party's functionary core had collapsed, above all in the factories, and that at most one third of the already depleted membership was prepared to carry out party work. By December 1924, of the hundreds of factory councillors and functionaries who had worked for the KPD until 1923, the leadership now estimated that only around 10% of them remained in the party.[136]

The Left undertook to create the internal party architecture to channel their policies into the grass roots party organisations and to root out all opposition. The domination of the district party apparatus and the re-organisation of the KPD's membership into factory cells were conceived of as the flagstones on which the party's Bolshevisation should be built. Functionary conferences, which were convened to organise campaigns, were dominated by leading district functionaries, and the weight of the district apparatus was used against opposition to the party line. Local functionaries' warnings that the Bolshevisation of the party was unable to forcibly politicise and motivate the membership were ignored. The documentation indicates that the all consuming preoccupation of the *Zentrale* and the BLs had become the internal party factional feud: the actual developments in the Saxon political system had been relegated into an ideologically distorted poor second place. The *Zentrale's* ideological tunnel vision, however, made the upper party leadership impervious to the impact this had on the KPD's political influence. One leftist functionary stated: "I am not satisfied with re-organisation. It demands a lot of work but everything just stays

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[135] ibid, Monatsbericht (September 1924); ibid, Monatsbericht (November 1924).

[136] SAPMO, I 3/9/67, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 8.12.1924, Bl.240-1(Gustav).

the way it was before."[137] The demands that were placed on these party activists would have overwhelmed even the most highly motivated and well organised of parties. The focus of party work did, therefore, peak during electoral campaigns, with public meetings occupying the centre of activity.[138] The party leadership, however, never adapted ideological political concepts to the reality of the period and continued to conceive of an integrated strategy of communist campaigns relating to the current central propaganda themes.

In 1924 the clearest example of the KPD's conception of continuous political campaigning was its opposition to the Dawes Plan, a package of American financial aid to stabilise the German economy. The *voelkisch* Right in German politics saw the American loan as a national indignity, questioning the country's post-war sovereignty. The Comintern, however, saw it as an olive branch from the capitalist West, which wanted to re-integrate Germany into its economic system through a process of political rapprochement: a development which would isolate Soviet Russia in international relations. All factions in the KPD could agree that the defence of the Soviet state from another war of intervention was necessary: the question was what policy would best serve this objective by giving the KPD influence in German political life. The Fischer *Zentrale*, which throughout 1924 continued to insist that there was a revolutionary situation in Germany, were concerned by the Dawes Loan's ability to stabilise the economy and thereby suppress the working classes' support for revolution.[139] In political terms the

[137] H.Sta.D., MdI, Nr.11128, Am 17-18.5.1924 in Gasthaus "Zur Linde" in Chemnitz. Funktionaerkonferenz der KPD, Dresden, den 24.5.1924, Bl.516.

[138] SAPMO, I 3/9/73, Bl.174, Jahresbericht der KPD. Erzgebirge-Vogtland, pp5-6.

[139] SAPMO, I 3/9/67, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 1.9/1924, Bl.130-1; H.Sta.D., MdI,Nr.11126, Kaempfer, Nr.47, 28.4.1924, Bl.59-60; For the German workers experiencing "too many of the good effects of the Dawes Plan", SAPMO, I 3/9/67, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 30.3.1925, Bl.95.

KPD's propaganda focused on the alleged parliamentary "united front" in the Reichstag enabling the ratification of the Dawes Loan. The Act was passed spanning the votes of the DNVP, which split on the issue, to the SPD, whose leadership wanted a return to stability. The KPD's prosecution of the campaign against the Dawes Plan demonstrated, however, that left-wing communism, during a return to political and social stability, was pushing the party leadership away from the party membership as well as the wider electorate. Circulars called for convening factory meetings where the factory council was communist controlled: resolutions were be taken on the implications of the Dawes Loan and delegates elected to a Saxon Workers' Congress. Where this was not possible, factory cells were to invite sympathisers to "public factory meetings", which would follow a similar programme.[140] Local groups were instructed to hold public meetings which should detail how the Dawes Loan would effect local communities.[141] The campaign was also carried out among the unemployed. Prominent functionaries, such as Rudolf Renner, addressed meetings of the Committees of the Unemployed on the implications of the "Dawes Regime" for Saxony.[142] The Saxon KPD also held rallies against the *Diktat* of the Dawes Plan using prominent national Communist Party figures, such as Ernst Thaelmann.[143] The unemployed were then encouraged to demonstrate in front of factories to show solidarity with strikers and to participate in Explanation Squadrons to discourage strike-breaking. The presence of the unemployed was also used in front of Town Halls while communist motions to provide strikers with food at the expense of the local authority were being

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[140] SAPMO, I 3/8/27, An die Zentrale der KPD. Bericht ueber die Vorbereitung zur Kampagne gegen Londoner Pakt, Dresden, Mitte September 1924, Bl.318.

[141] SAPMO, I 3/8/31, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. An alle Ortsgruppen. Dresden, den 16.5.1924, Bl.9.

[142] Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1727, Monatsbericht (November 1924).

[143] St.Ha.D.,MdI, Nr.11124, SPV, den 21.8.1824. An das MdI, Dresden, Bl.32; SPV, den 26.8.1924. An das MdI, ibid, Bl.34.

discussed.[144] The KPD's press claimed that the Saxon Workers' Congresses had been a great success in winning the support of local Social Democrats, Anarchists and Syndicalists for the KPD's programme[145]; however, there is no corroborative documentary evidence.

The Presidential Elections of 1925: The Last Stand of Independent Left-Communism.

The death of President Ebert on the 28th of February 1925 led to the first election for a German president; due to the turbulence of political life in 1919 Ebert had received his mandate from the National Assembly at Weimar.[146] Juergen Falter recently stressed the significance of the election of Hindenburg to the presidency, writing that: "it was von Hindenburg who at least encouraged if not sustained the creeping deparliamentarisation after 1930, a process which finally brought Hitler to power."[147] During the presidential elections in Germany a division of political interpretations emerged in the CPSU and the Comintern following Zinoviev's split with Stalin. The period 1924/5 in the CPSU, Comintern and KPD was characterised by active faction building. In February 1925 Stalin had attempted to win over Arkady Maslow. However, Maslow saw Stalin's overtures as an attempt to isolate Zinoviev, who the German *Zentrale* believed to be the "last barrier preventing the complete Russification of the Comintern."[148] However, the presidential

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[144] St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.11128, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. An alle Unterbezirken, Arbeitsgebiete, Ortsgruppen und Betriebszellen, Dresden den 4.6.1924, Bl.528.

[145] ibid.

[146] Kolb, *Weimar Republic*, pp18-9.

[147] Falter, J.W., 'The Two Hindenburg Elections of 1925 and 1932: A Total Reversal of Voter Coalitions', in *Central European History (CEH)* 23 (2-3) (1990), p225.

[148] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p442; Stalin's letter to Maslov, Fischer, R., *Stalin and German Communism. A Study in the Origins of the State Party* (Cambridge, 1948), pp531-6; 'Stalin: Ueber die Prospektiven in der KPD und die Bolschevisierung', in Weber, *Voelker hoert die Signale*, p84.

elections in Germany showed that the KPD was only prepared to support Zinoviev if he supported their leftism, even if this subjected their closest ally in the CPSU to intense pressure.[149]

The debate in the communist movement centred on whether to field an independent communist candidate in the second ballot. Stalin held to the more formal and tested criteria of aiming to exploit German nationalism to maintain the wedge between the Western powers inserted by the Versailles Treaty: the election of Hindenburg was identified as the best chance of halting Germany's "Western-Orientation" under the Dawes Loan and reviving the Rapallo Treaty and the *status quo ante* in international relations. Zinoviev, while also paying close attention to Soviet security interests, put the emphasis on ending the KPD's isolation in Germany by sanctioning communist support for Otto Braun, the SPD's candidate, in the second ballot. Following the withdrawal of the SPD's candidate, Zinoviev favoured backing the candidate of the "Weimar Coalition", the Catholic Centre Party's Marx, against the monarchist Hindenburg. This policy squared more easily with the Comintern's central policy of International Trades Union Unity.[150] Division also ran through the KPD's Zentrale with Fischer, Katz and Thaelmann supporting an independent communist candidate. Maslow, however, advocated supporting

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[149] On the factional split between Zinoviev and Stalin, Weber, *Wandlung*, p108.

[150] Zinoviev's speech to the ECCI-Presidium in early April is discussed in, SAPMO, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 4.5.1925, Bl.142; Weber, *Wandlung*, p106f; Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, pp417-8; Geyer, D., 'Sowjet Russland und die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung 1918-32', in *Vierteljahrshefte fuer Zeitgeschichte (VfZ)* 4 (1) (1976), p25, states that Zinoviev wanted the KPD to vote for Marx in the second ballot; Claudin, *Communist Movement*, p155, states that Stalin saw Hindenburg's presidency as a symptom of Germany's will to resist the Versailles Treaty and presumes that foreign policy reasons explained this; Eisner, F., *Das Verhaltnis der KPD zu den Gewerkschaften in der Weimarer Republik* (Cologne, Frankfurt/M, 1977), p173, states that Moscow favoured Hindenburg's victory as this would force a change in the SPD's policy. The KPD's immediate use of an "open letter" to the SPD and ADGB national leaderships supports Eisner's thesis.

the "Republican" candidates to prevent a monarchist presidency.[151] These were the first significant splits in the groupings which made up the KPD's Left leadership, which led later in 1925 to the Comintern's successful deposition of Stalin's opponents.[152] Having taken the decision to uphold the KPD's independent presidential candidacy under all circumstances, the Fischer leadership then suppressed Zinoviev's speech to the ECCI-Presidium, which had cautioned against the party's lack of differentiation between Marx and Hindenburg, and passed its own policy directives to the BLs.

The KPD's internal circulars demonstrate that the party intended to make the factories the main forum in the presidential elections of 1925. However, the impact of trying to conduct the election campaign in parallel to the party's forced re-organisation into factory cells had an adverse effect on the ability to perform party work. Party reports on the presidential election campaign acknowledged that a lower vote in the city of Chemnitz than in the surrounding countryside was due to the vast energy expended on the KPD's re-organisation. The sub-district party organisations were in limbo between winding down the old structures and building up the new structures which would place factory cells at the centre of political campaigning. However, the factory cells which had already been constructed did not carry out party work which was unrelated to the factory, while the traditional use of party organisations in the residential districts was being neglected.[153] The resistance of the membership to the KPD's re-organisation on the basis of factory cells is illustrated by the fact that of 300 factory cells in the Erzgebirge-Vogtland district only some 10 to 20 actually issued factory papers dealing with the first ballot of the

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[151] Weber, *Wandlung*, p106-7; The KPD's presidential candidate would have been Zetkin but her position on the party's Right prevented this, see, *Voelker hoert die Signale*, pp104-5.

[152] Falter, 'Hindenburg Elections', p233.

[153] SAPMO, I 3/9/85, Bericht ueber die Reichspraesidentenwahl am 20.3.1925. Bezirk 9, Bl.79.

election.[154] In recognition of this problem, before the second ballot the district party targeted the 35 largest factory cells in an effort to ensure the publication of material: only 18 of these cells responded.[155] The inability to hold factory meetings dealing with the KPD's presidential election campaign also forced the party to address workers outside of the factories at closing time. The KPD organised this by printing 3,000 copies of the factory paper, *Betriebskaempfer*, to link conditions in the factories with the election campaign. However, even where workers were seen leaving the factory gates after their shifts carrying copies of *Der Betriebskaempfer* there was very limited interest in the KPD's meetings. The local leaderships noted that in some cases workers had little time in which to catch trains returning to outlying localities. The BLs criticised local activists for failing to conduct party propaganda in the manner in which they had been instructed, such as using the technique of gathering around speakers to begin a meeting.[156]

Despite the problems local groups had as a result of the re-organisation, all party members were expected to be actively involved in the campaign.[157] The KPD's work plans called for a campaign of public meetings and demonstrations beginning on the 15th of February which would be conducted in tandem with a recruitment drive to increase membership numbers and press sales. Again internal party directives lay plain the great difficulties experienced by the KPD in overcoming the membership's "passivity" and lack of interest in an election which they believed could not be won.[158] Among Right

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[154] ibid, Bericht ueber die Reichspraesidentenwahl am 20.3.1925. Bezirk 9, Bl.80; SAPMO, I 3/10/125, An die Zentrale. Bericht des Bezirks 10 ueber den zweiten Wahlgang zur Reichspraesidentenwahl 1925, Bl.151.

[155] ibid, Bericht des Bezirks 9 zum Reichspraesidentenwahl am 26.4.1925, Bl.97.

[156] ibid.

[157] ibid, Bl.98.

[158] ibid, Bl.97.

Communists there was also hostility to a party tactic which would split the vote and hand the election to a "monarchist".[159]

After the first ballot the KPD was able to improve work in the residential districts by using the Working Area apparatus to mobilise the local groups more effectively.[160] In Erzgebirge-Vogtland this was done after the BL realised the necessity of work in the residential districts. Gustav pointed out that the SPD was using traditional methods of agitation and propaganda on the streets to good effect.[161] The *Rotfrontkaempferbund* (RFB), the KPD's para-military organisation to rival those of the political Right and the SPD dominated *Reichsbanner*, made its first contribution to major political campaigning. Evening marches were held at which drummers attracted attention, a short speech was given and then literature was distributed.[162] The role of the RFB as an organisation of *Tatmenschen*, who preferred political work to discussion, was a crucial counterbalance to a party submerged in a paralysing factional feud.[163] The KPD also paid increasing attention to the content of propaganda literature, noting that too much text served less effectively than picture propaganda.[164] The RFB also took the KPD's campaign into the more remote areas: above all this meant going into localities which had registered a reasonable vote in the first ballot but party meetings and demonstrations had not been

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[159] SAPMO, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 6.4.1925.,Bl.99. The BL noted that this conditioned the Right's opposition to the party line in Zwickau.

[160] SAPMO, I 3/9/85, Bericht des Bezirks 9 zum Reichspraesidentenwahl am 26.4.1925, Bl.98.

[161] SAPMO, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 6.4.1925, Bl.99.

[162] SAPMO, I 3/9/85, Bericht ueber die Reichspraesidentenwahl am 20.3.1925. Bezirk 9, Bl.79.

[163] Reuter, G., *KPD-Politik in der Weimarer Republik. Politische Vorstellung und soziale Zusammensetzung der KPD in Hannover zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik* (Hannover, 1982), pp104ff.

[164]) ibid.

held.[165] The KPD's "Rural Sundays" were also included in the election campaign, in particular the last Sunday before the election. In West Saxony the cities of Wurzen, Grimma and parts of Meuselwitz were targeted after registering small vote increases in the first ballot.[166] Despite rural workers' lack of enthusiasm for communism, the KPD's activities were part of a general development of taking political events into the villages.

The KPD's regional apparatus was also used in an effort to mobilise the party membership. After poor results in the first ballot, conferences and membership meetings were organised which emphasised the need for the KPD's "leading role" in "revolutionary electoral activity". However, the main criticism of members who had been active in the campaign was the frequent late arrival of propaganda material.[167] Functionaries were brought together at Party Workers' Conferences at which sub-district leaders detailed party policy. The central role of these events was to mobilise the campaign for the second ballot.[168] Controllers, who worked on the BL's instruction, were also sent into smaller local groups in an attempt to ensure participation in the election campaign.[169]

In East Saxony the inability of the district party to motivate party members to carry out the campaign was dealt with at a District Party Congress at the beginning of April. This was a technique now integral to enforcing the party line. The Zentrale's representative, Scholem, gave an ideological justification for the Zentrale's political line which asserted that to support the candidate of the "Weimar Coalition" would be to yield to reformism,

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[165] SAPMO, I 3/10/125, An die Zentrale. Bericht des Bezirks 10 ueber den zweiten Wahlgang zur Reichspraesidentenwahl 1925, Bl.150.

[166] Sta.L., AH.Leipzig, Nr.2624, Bl.51, Leipzig den 20.3.1925; SAPMO, I 3/10/125, An die Zentrale. Bericht des Bezirks 10 ueber den zweiten Wahlgang zur Reichspraesidentenwahl 1925, Bl.150.

[167] SAPMO, I 3/9/85, Bericht des Bezirks 9 zum Reichspraesidentenwahl am 26.4.1925, Bl.97.

[168] ibid, Bl.97.

[169] ibid, Bl.98.

leading to the "liquidation" of the KPD and the strengthening of the counter-revolution. The membership was encouraged to view the presidential elections in a "positive revolutionary sense" as part of the party's role in "leading the masses".[170] Scholem's attack was especially directed against the Right, which in southern and southwestern Saxony, was issuing secret circulars to organise opposition to the *Zentrale's* political line.[171] In Erzgebirge-Vogtland the BL acted to curtail the Right's opposition in a range of local groups, most notably in Zwickau, by carrying out a series of sub-district conferences and local group and membership meetings.[172]

The KPD's campaigning continued to concentrate on a divisive tirade against the left-wing of the Saxon SPD. The BL in West Saxony reported that:

> In the forefront of the (presidential election) campaign was the struggle against the "left" SPD and its leftist phraseology...there is not a Communist left in West Saxony who does not see the "left" SPD as the most persistent and dangerous opponent.[173]

In the first ballot of the presidential election the KPD explained the SPD's electoral advantages with reference to two factors. Firstly, the SPD had already used the slogan "Republic or Monarchy" in the last election campaign for the Reichstag in a manner the KPD described as "exploiting the masses' instincts.[174] Secondly, the KPD was also aware that the SPD's "small daily work" in the trades unions, leading strikes over pay and

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[170] SAPMO, I 3/8/16, Protokoll vom Unterbezirksparteitag am 4 u. 5.4.1925 in Freital, Bl.21-4; ibid, Bezirksparteitag am 4 u.5.4.1925, Bl.19.

[171] ibid, Bl.21; SAPMO, I 3/8/16, Zeitung (unnamed and undated), 'Bezirksparteitag der KPD. Ostsachsen', Bl.62.

[172] SAPMO, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 6.4.1925, Bl.99.

[173] SAPMO, I 3/10/115, Bericht des Bezirks 10 (Westsachsen), Mai 1925, Bl.106; , SAPMO, I 3/10/107, 'Die Diskussion auf dem Bezirksparteitag', in Saechsische Arbeiterzeitung, den 18.6.1926.Bl.12.

[174] SAPMO, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 7.5.1925, Bl.137.

conditions, and in the co-operative movement, had brought strong support from workers. However, the KPD's *Zentrale* and BLs merely continued to assert that the SPD only aimed to "deceive and mislead" the workers.[175] One factor which did assist the KPD's campaign was the SPD Reich Executive's alienation of the Saxon left-wing by dropping the party's own candidate in favour of Wilhelm Marx in the second ballot. The KPD used this as a justification for fielding Thaelmann as an independent candidate in the second ballot against what was alleged to be the candidates of "large scale capital", in a united front of capitalists including the SPD.[176] The KPD now focused its attacks on Marx's role as Chancellor in 1923 and his part in the loss of the "November Gains," including the eight hour working day.[177] The SPD's internal struggle over the choice of Marx as the "Republican" candidate disillusioned many activists in the regional party and prevented them campaigning for an unpopular candidate. This, in particular, reduced the participation of the SPD's left-wing and the *Reichsbanner* in the second ballot.[178] At the national level the vote for Thaelmann fell in the second ballot: in Saxony it rose by 81,838 votes reaching 286,001.[179] The communist vote was strongest in the Chemnitz-Zwickau election district (138,647), followed by Leipzig (82,206) and then Dresden-Bauzen (65,148).[180] However, in a further confirmation of the political defection of supporters of the parties of the "Weimar Coalition", the monarchist von Hindenburg won an absolute majority of the vote in Saxony taking 1,333,565 votes to the 977,100 votes taken by

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[175] ibid, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 23.3.1925, Bl.94.

[176] SAPMO, I 3/8/16, Zeitung (unnamed and undated), 'Bezirksparteitag der KPD. Ostsachsen', Bl.62.

[177] SAPMO, I 3/9/68 BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 6.4.1925.,Bl.99; "Thaelmanns Praesidentschaftskandidat der KPD (1925). 'An dis Waerktaetigen Deutschlands!', in, Weber, *Voelker hoert die Signale*, pp104-5.

[178] SAPMO, I 3/9/85, Bericht des Bezirks 9 zum Reichspraesidentenwahl am 26.4.1925, Bl.99.

[179] StJFS, Nr.46 (Dresden, 1927), pp425-6.

[180] *ibid.*

Marx.[181] Not only did the left-wing of the Saxon SPD feel let down by their national leadership's support for a bourgeois political figure, but the overwhelmingly Protestant population appear to have been disinclined to vote for a candidate who was a leading figure in the Catholic Centre Party.[182] The KPD's press intended to promote this aversion to Marx's candidacy by publishing articles on his role in the Catholic "cultural reaction" which would lead young people away from the class war.[183] With some irony, the left-wing of the Saxon SPD appears to have voted for Thaelmann, a leader in a party intent on destroying German social democracy. However, when it became clear that the continued candidacy of Thaelmann in the second ballot had helped split the vote, allowing Hindenberg to win, there was not only hostility to the KPD within the social democratic work-force but also among many members of the party's own rank-and-file activists.[184]

3.4 Moscow's Intervention: Independence Ends.

The Leadership's Response

Divisions within the CPSU at the ECCI's 5th Plenum during March and April 1925 had allowed the Fischer *Zentrale* to continue its policy of total opposition to social democracy in the presidential elections. However, following the presidential elections a uniform drive from Moscow called for the "moderation" of the KPD's policy towards the SPD in the

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[181] *ibid.*

[182] Lapp, 'Political Extremes', pp187-8. The Catholic enclave of Zittau did, however, vote overwhelmingly for Marx. Lapp also explained this in terms of local good relations between the SPD and DDP.

[183] SAPMO, I 3/8/16, Zeitung (unnamed and undated) 'Bezirksparteitag der KPD. Ostsachsen', Bl.62.

[184] Weber, *Wandlung*, p107; Mayer-Levine, R., *Inside German Communism. Memoirs of Party Life in the Weimar Republic* (London, 1977), p76; If the nominally Republican BVP had not instructed its Catholic constituency to vote for the Protestant Hindenburg, against the wishes of the national Centre Party, the necessary vote swing of half a million would probably have seen a victory for the Catholic Centre's and SPD's candidate, Marx, see, Falter, 'Hindenburg Elections', pp233-4.

interests of increasing the KPD's influence. On her return from Moscow Fischer introduced the policy of "Manoeuvre and Compromise". The policy held that during the "partial stabilisation of capitalism" the KPD was to work for partial (ie economic) demands in the Trades Unions, to use the United Front policy, including the United Front From Above (ie to address the SPD leadership directly), and to use "iron discipline" to end all opposition to the Comintern's policy.[185] The KPD's policy change was made public in the "open letter" of 27 April to the national leaderships of the SPD and ADGB. The *"Volksblock"* tactic, which had been developed by Maslow, consisted of an offer to co-operate in the Prussian *Landtag* with the parties of the "Weimar coalition" (the Catholic Centre, DDP and the SPD) against the *"Reichsblock"* of monarchist and nationalist parties.[186] The new phase in the CPSU's power struggle, which was inevitably also played out between Stalin and Zinoviev in the Comintern, obliged Fischer to concern herself with heightening the KPD's political profile in Germany in order to keep the party leadership.[187] The Zentrale stated that in the "dominantly non-revolutionary situation" it was now "un-Bolshevik" to reject partial demands and every United Front tactic.[188] The other relevant thesis from the 5th ECCI plenum was to complete the KPD's Bolshevisation. This policy, decoded in the light of political practice, meant the sidelining of those Leftists who were unwilling to carry out any "moderation" of the party's tactics, and to complete the KPD's centralisation. In May 1925 prominent leaders of the ultra-Left were ousted from their positions. Arthur Rosenberg was removed from the Berlin BL, Scholem lost his highly

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[185] Weber, *Wandlung*, pp107-8; Herlemann, *Kommunalpolitik*, p63, states that Fischer herself pushed for this policy. In the light of newly available documentation this seems unlikely.

[186] Fowkes, *German Communism*, pp125f.

[187] Flechtheim, *Die KPD*, p174.

[188] Weber, *Wandlung*, p108.

influential position as head of the Organisational Department (Orgburo), and Korsch was replaced by Ernst Schneller as editor of *Die Rote Fahne*.[189]

None of the changes in the KPD's official policy declarations, however, meant that the Fischer *Zentrale* had abandoned its *raison d'etre*: to retain the party leadership and re-mould the KPD as a left-wing communist party. Furthermore, there remained definite limits on how far the KPD leadership would go in its tactical contact with the SPD. The ECCI's telegram to the KPD's Zentrale on 27th April was for the toleration of the SPD government in Prussia without conditions.[190] This represented not only a change in the tactic used to "unmask" the SPD's alleged "betrayal" of workers' interests, but was a strategic change: the KPD's unconditional support for a minority SPD-led administration would have removed the main plank of the KPD's propaganda. However, the KPD disregarded the ECCI's directive, and brought down the SPD-led Prussian government 24 hours after offering to give it a "reprieve". In order to keep the leadership of the KPD, Fischer was now forced to walk a political tight-rope between the Right faction which believed the party was returning to its political tactics, the "ultra-Left", who rejected Fischer's "right-turn", and a grouping within her own faction in Saxony, which saw the policy as a "return to Brandlerism".

The traditional interpretation of Fischer's response to the ECCI's 5th Plenum has been to show that her, at least nominal, acceptance of its policy statement for Germany broadened the leadership's basis in the ZA.[191] The Fischer Group did gain the support of Schlecht and Geschke, the earlier Centre Group members Remmele, Pieck, Heckert and Eberlein and, with the ECCI's assistance, the "Workers' Left" around Thaelmann. However, the

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[189] ibid, pp109-110; Fowkes, *German Communism*, pp126-8.

[190] SAPMO, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 31.8.1925, Bl.253(Schneller).

[191] Weber, *Wandlung*, p109f; Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p418.

resistance of the "ultra-Left" groupings (ie those opposing the "right-turn") continued to hold considerable support at regional level in the Left strongholds of the Ruhr, Wasserkante, Berlin, West Saxony, Lower Saxony and Pfalz among mid and lower level party functionaries.[192] More significantly, the extension of the Left's basis of support in the ZA was only possible because of the false belief that the Fischer Group would put the Comintern's policies into practice. To maintain this belief the KPD's press claimed that the party leadership was implementing the Comintern's policies.[193] The *Zentrale* itself was divided into three groupings on the party's left-wing. The first was the group around Korsch which was centred on Lower Saxony. This faction rejected the claim that there was a "monarchist danger" and refused to endorse a change of policy. Another group, led by Hans Weber, only accepted the new tactic when it affected trades union policy; a sister-faction under Arthur Vogt was dominant in West Saxony. In Erzgebirge-Vogtland the BL expressed concerns about the "dangers" inherent within a "Right-Turn", but did not vote against the *Zentrale* in the ZA for reasons of factional loyalty.[194] The BL's loyalty related to its dependence on Ruth Fischer's patronage to retain the leadership in the face of an increasingly well organised challenge from the party's right-wing, which centred organisationally on Chemnitz.[195]

The debate in the Erzgebirge-Vogtland BL on the new party tactics was punctuated by references to the "Failed October" of 1923. Spund insisted that the Saxon party should

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[192] For the Ruhr, Herlemann, *Kommunalpolitik*, p63; For Berlin, SAPMO, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 15.6.1925, Bl.179.

[193] SAPMO, I 3/10/107, SAZ, den 18.6.1925 which reported Ruth Fischer at the District Party Congress informing the delegates that Stalin and Zinoviev supported her policy, Bl.12.

[194] SAPMO, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 16.5.1925, Bl.153(Schneller).

[195] ibid, Bl.153.

not accept the new line because "we have the Saxon experience in front of our eyes."[196]

Mapitz described the policy as the abandonment of political principles under the slogan "mass party at any price".[197] The BL was above all concerned that the post-1923 tactics were being abandoned in favour of a return to "Brandlerism".[198] Before the ZA meeting of 9-10th May, which was to discuss recent political events, Schneller was sent into the BL to ensure its approval of the new line. Schneller stated that the KPD's tactics during the presidential elections had been based on a "false" analysis of the German political situation and that the new tactic was to address the danger of Germany's new "imperial monarchism" under Hindenburg. The policy change was presented as a tactical revolutionary response to the "monarchist danger" in Germany. However, repeated reference to Germany's "Western Orientation" in international relations, and the need for wider communist influence to arrest this development, laid bare the Comintern's cause for concern.[199]

With the change of tactic the KPD also paid greater attention to the nationalist minded lower middle classes, which it defined as part of communism's class constituency. The KPD, arbitrarily, proclaimed itself to be the "only party which gathers the opposition of workers, the petty bourgeoisie and peasants against the monarchist danger and organises them for struggle."[200] The Comintern's concerns about Germany's improved relations with the West brought with it an echo of the "Schlageter Line" from 1923, which aimed at

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[196] SAPMO, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 4.5.1925, Bl.128.

[197] ibid.

[198] ibid.

[199] ibid, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 7.5.1925, Bl.134.

[200] ibid, Bl.141.

stirring up the hornet's nest of ultra-nationalism to repel a capitalist rapprochement.[201] The KPD's definition of the SPD also responded to the Comintern's policy directive rather than any development in Germany. The SPD was re-defined as a "bourgeois workers' party" which "held the bugle for the imperialists."[202] Implicit in this statement was that the KPD was not the only workers' party and that Social Democrats should again be won over for communism. The *Zentrale's* post-1923 centralisation of the KPD, under the title Bolshevisation, had sidelined concessions to district parties relating to local conditions. After the 5th ECCI Plenum, however, the Saxon BLs' refusal to agree to tolerate a minority Saxon SPD administration, as had been party policy between 1921-23, forced a compromise on the party leadership. The *Zentrale* conceded that in the event of the KPD tolerating a SPD-led administration in Prussia, the Saxon KPD could continue its campaigns to dissolve the Saxon government coalition between the right-wing of the SPD, the DVP and the DDP.[203] Before these regional concessions were conceded, the district leaders under Bertz had called on joint resistance to the *Zentrale's* policy. This recalcitrance was part of the Left's fear that if another debate on policy went into the district membership, the BL would be unable to prevent the Right taking control of the party apparatus.[204] When the ZA voted on 10 May by 35 to 15 to accept Ruth Fischer's concessions to the Comintern, behind a seemingly strong majority lay several regional fractures: a factor undoubtedly influencing the decision to abolish the representation of

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[201] Daycock, D. W., 'The KPD and the NSDAP: A Study in the Relationship between the Political Extremes in Weimar Germany 1923-1933', Ph.D. thesis (London School of Economics, 1980), p126ff; SAPMO, I 3/9/58, Bezirksparteitag. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 16-17.5.1925, Bl.4.

[202] ibid, Bl.136.

[203] SAPMO, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 7.5.1925, Bl.140.

[204] ibid, Bl.143.

regional opinion on the ZA later that year and to replace it with a Soviet style ZK (Central Committee).[205]

During the important series of meeting in the KPD throughout the summer of 1925, meetings of the BLs took place after policy had already been decided: they represented a *fait accompli* rather than a forum for discussion. The BLs were also given the task of ensuring that the District Congresses, which informed party workers of policy changes, were stage managed by the district party apparatus. This process, however, also continued to rely on the attraction of a leftist political rhetoric to keep local supporters of the Left on board. At the District Party congress in Erzgebirge-Vogtland on 16-17 May, which dealt with the changes in party policy, it was stated that:

> The policy of the SPD and ADGB bureaucracies prepared the way for the monarchist danger and in every situation did not only hold the working class back from struggle but split, betrayed and actively helped to beat it down...(to achieve this) the SPD tried a seeming opposition against the increasing monarchist danger.[206]

The policy statement by the BL insisted that there would be no actual co-operation with the SPD because the party leadership would reject the KPD's demands. However, the new political conditions in Germany were said to require the KPD to "prove" that the SPD sided with capital against labour by "unmasking" it before the workforce.[207] The limits to which Ruth Fischer's Saxon factional supporters would move to the Right had been demarcated. The BL in Erzgebirge-Vogtland began to feel like a beleaguered left-wing communist garrison surrounded by the vastly superior troops of right-wing communism:

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[205] ibid, Bl.143.

[206] SAPMO, I 3/9/58, Bezirksparteitag. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 16-17.5.1925, Bl.4.

[207] ibid.

to agree to the "right-turn" felt like agreeing to abandon their territorial claim. However, the only road to "victory" in this fratricidal war was to co-operate with the Fischer-leadership in the *Zentrale*: if the intra-party conflict went into the district membership "defeat" for the BL was certain.

In East Saxony the District Party Congress finally met in mid June to resolve the policy issues arising from the ZA meeting of 9-10th of May. The weakness of the district membership enabled the BL to use the district apparatus to filter out any significant degree of opposition to the changes in the party line. However, the majority of delegates backed a resolution expressing the concerns about any concessions to the SPD, which in East Saxony stood as a district giant overshadowing the KPD. The District Congress spoke out against any policy of returning to tolerating a SPD regional government, as had become policy in Prussia. The East Saxon KPD maintained that the SPD continued to support the "monarchist danger" and the party's "seeming opposition and radical phrases" were to deceive the workers, in order to hold them back from communism.[208] However, despite these shots fired across the Reich leadership's bows, the East Saxon BL made a statement of factional loyalty, which went as far as accepting that the KPD should increase its influence by winning over "misled" workers who continued to support the SPD.[209]

In West Saxony the scale of the rebellion against the change of policy was widespread. This party district was the stronghold of the Saxon ultra-Left. In May the BL voted 12 to 10 against the ZA's resolutions of 9-10 May. Reports from the district apparatus also indicate that the "greatest part of the membership is against the ZA's resolution ...most of

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[208] SAPMO, I 3/8/17, Zeitung, den 30.6.1925 (unnamed and undated) 'Der Bezirksparteitag Ostsachsen zur Lage und zu den Aufgaben der Partei', Bl.8.

[209] ibid.

them want to hold to the decisions of the 9th Reich Party Congress."[210] To re-impose the authority of the Reich leadership Ruth Fischer initiated a process which culminated in the deposition of the recalcitrant members of the BL.[211] Fischer's appeal to party loyalty had called on the ultra-Left to accept the Comintern's policy. The ultra-Left, however, continued to place the need of the revolution in Germany, as they interpreted them, above the Soviet Union's foreign policy and need for trade with the capitalist West.[212] The refusal of the ultra-Left to yield continued despite the sending of an ECCI representative into the sub-district conferences and functionary conferences that preceded the District Congress.[213]

At the District Party Congress Ruth Fischer again tried to win support for the policy change by stressing that it derived from the Comintern's political analysis. Delegates were told that they must understand the threat to the Soviet state posed by the Locarno Treaty and that they: "enormously underestimated ...the importance of the Soviet state, which must be placed as the first factor for the existence of world revolution."[214] Of some 60 delegates a core of 14 continued to reject the thesis on capitalist stabilisation, and the ebbing of the revolutionary tide required a tactical change in communist policy. However, the ultra-Left refused to accept that Soviet foreign policy should force a "right-turn" on the KPD's policy in Germany.[215]

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[210] SAPMO, I 3/10/115, Monatesbericht fuer Mai 1925 der Bezirksleitung (Westsachsen), Bl.100.

[211] SAPMO, I 3/10/107, Bezirksparteitag Westsachsen am 13 u.14.6.1925, Bl.1.

[212] SAPMO, I 3/10/107, 'Zur Taktic und den Aufgaben der KPD. Rede der Genossin Ruth Fischer auf dem Parteitag', SAZ, den 16.6.1925, Bl.12.

[213] SAPMO, I 3/10/115, Bericht des Bezirks 10 (Westsachsen), Mai 1925, Bl.121.

[214] in SAPMO, I 3/10/107, 'Zur Taktik und den Aufgaben der KPD. Rede der Genossin Ruth Fischer auf dem Parteitag', SAZ, den 16.6.1925, Bl.12.

[215] SAPMO, I 3/10/107, 'Die Diskussion auf dem Bezirksparteitag', SAZ, den 18.6.1925, Bl.12.

The Political Secretary in West Saxony, Stroetzel, also appealed for acceptance of the ZA's position by calling on solidarity with the Comintern and stating that conditions in other German regions validated the need to modify party policy. Crucially, Stroetzel's position pointed out that, although the policy did have elements of the tactics used before the "Failed October", they would not be carried out by the "old Brandlerite leadership".[216] In other words the KPD's left-wing would carry out the "right-turn", so long as it retained the leadership and was assured that the policy was a temporary concession to circumstance. Eventual compliance with the *Zentrale's* policy was, however, only achieved by sidelining the original BL and reconstructing it using closed meetings and back-room deals between the inner BL and the Reich apparatus.[217] The methods used in other Left strongholds in Berlin, Waserkannte, the Ruhr and in Lower Saxony were the same form of bulldozing by the party apparatus.[218] Only the ultra-Left's solid control of the party district of the Palatinate allowed successful resistance to the *Zentrale*.[219]

The documentation of developments in the KPD at this point leave an Alice in Wonderland impression of internal party life: nothing was as it seemed. Ruth Fischer claimed to represent the Comintern's policies, while in fact her faction was playing for time, and, above all, trying to fend off direct Comintern intervention. In the Saxon KPD, BLs had been imposed by the party centre without regard to the actual political disposition of the local party organisations. In Erzgebirge-Vogtland the BL used the district apparatus to exclude Right-Communists from the party debate by informing membership meetings that only "responsible party workers" would be recognised as

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[216] ibid.

[217] ibid.

[218] Herlemann, *Kommunalpolitik*, p63; Weber, *Wandlung*, p110.

[219] Fowkes, *German Communism*, pp127-8.

delegates to the District Congress.[220] While the Saxon BLs accepted the "right-turn", at least on paper, they continued to purge the local level Right-Communists, who they feared could again be placed into influential positions in the party.[221] When the KPD's 10th Reich Party Congress was convened in July 1925, the seeming domination of the Left over the whole party was a veneer which papered over a road map of political disunity and division.

The 10th Reich Party Congress and Electoral Alchemy.

The Fischer leadership presented the 10th Party Congress, which was held in Berlin between the 12 and 17 July, as the "Congress of Bolshevisation", ending the post-1923 party crisis.[222] For the first time in the KPD's history the 10th Party Congress had packed the Congress Hall, using the district apparatus, to eliminate the leadership's factional opponents. The frequent use of the term "Bolshevik unity" at the Congress in reality meant the factional domination of the leadership and party machine.[223] This was the actual explanation for the incumbent party leadership being re-elected for the first time in the KPD's history. The 10th Congress, however, also broke with the previous regime of cohabitation between tendencies and used the party apparatus to obscure a high degree of regional disaffection.

Initially the ECCI sent a telegram congratulating the leadership on "consolidating" the party and having established a "nucleus" pursuing the "correct policy".[224] With the Congress packed with Fischer's supporters the KPD's conflict with the ECCI took place at

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[220] SAPMO, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 8.6.1925, Bl.171-2.

[221] ibid, Bl.172.

[222] Weber, *Wandlung*, p111.

[223] SAPMO, I 3/9/59, For example see, Kaempfer, Nr.113/8 Jg, 1 Beilage, den 18.5.1925, Bl.9.

[224] Weber, *Wandlung*, p112.

the secret sessions which parallelled the official Congress. When it became clear that Manuilsky, the ECCI's representative, wanted the tactics used in the Prussian *Landtag* extended to all areas of "mass work" (ie the united front and trades union policy), the Left went into open opposition to the Comintern. The conflict focused on two interrelated areas. Manuilsky wanted the ZK (which had replaced the ZA) to be enlarged and extended to include Zetkin, who was on the Right, and Schuhmann and Ulbricht, who had been in the Centre Group after 1923.[225] However, instead of appointing the Comintern's nominees onto the ZK, Fischer came to an agreement with the ultra-Left around Rosenberg, Scholem and Hans Weber. The latter were again included in a Reich leadership which was united in maintaining the KPD's independence to continue a left-wing policy in Germany. Above all, the KPD's leadership refused the Comintern's request for the construction of a large Trades Union Division affiliated to the new ZK, which would have given a leading role to right-wing Communists in the factories and unions. Knowing nothing of the conflict with the Comintern, the Congress's handpicked delegates endorsed the policies of the KPD leadership. This assertion of independence placed the Left in conflict not only with the Stalin faction but with their own patron in Moscow, Zinoviev, who had been substantially weakened by the KPD's undertakings.[226] The Fischer-gambit now reached its final stage.

The central reason that the Fischer Group could not accept the ECCI's conditions was that its *raison d'etre* was to preserve the leadership undiluted and to use this to recast the KPD in a leftist mold. The inclusion of the Right and Centre in the ZK, and even more the

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[225] The ZK replaced the ZA after the 10th Party Congress. It ended the regional representation of District Parties in the national leadership. The ZK was instead modeled on the CPSU organisational model.

[226] Weber, *Wandlung*, pp113-6; Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, pp419-20; Fowkes, *German Communism*, pp128ff; Flechtheim, *Die KPD*, pp178ff.

creation of a Trades Union Division, would be to concede defeat. However, Ruth Fischer had used a political rhetoric to integrate her own faction, particularly among mid-level regional functionaries, which had tied them to Moscow and the ECCI. The Saxon BLs, even those functionaries who advocated resistance to the Comintern's intervention, had no knowledge that the inner party leadership continued to assert the KPD's independence from the Comintern at closed meetings. The 10th Party Congress no longer served as a statement of the KPD's immediate revolutionary ambitions: instead the policy emphasis was placed on the party's solidarity with the Bolshevik Revolution.[227] However, the KPD's attempt to exploit the Bolshevik's own methods of internal party control, using the party's apparatus and organisational structure, could not survive a direct challenge from Moscow. To use Winkler's expression, the 10th Party Congress had been a "pyrrhic victory" for the KPD.[228] Events had now so weakened Zinoviev that he could no longer rely on the verbal agreements of "his German faction".[229]

The Saxon KPD and the Comintern's Intervention

After the return of the ECCI's delegation, under Manuilsky, from Berlin, the Comintern decided to assert its dominance. Initially, the KPD's Politburo voted by four (Fischer, Geschke, Schneller, Scholem) to three (Thaelmann, Dengel, Remmele) not to send a delegation to Moscow. However, when the Comintern threatened a complete break in relations, the KPD yielded.[230] Documentation in the former central party archive indicates how rapidly the ECCI was able to unravel the factional loyalties holding together the

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[227] Fowkes, *German Communism*, pp131-2.

[228] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p420(quote); Fowkes, *German Communism*, p129.

[229] Mayer-Levine, *Inside German Communism*, p85.

[230] Fowkes, *German Communism*, p133.

German Left once it was known that the Comintern would directly intervene in the KPD's affairs. The KPD sent two delegations to Moscow. The first delegation, led by Geschke, Schneller and Kuehn, signed a statement dated the 29th of July which accepted the ECCI's criticisms of the KPD since the 9th Party Congress and undertook to "struggle against" the leadership which had allowed the "system of opposition" to the ECCI to lead the KPD into a "crisis... in which the existence of the party and its relations with Bolshevism were at stake."[231] When the delegation returned to Berlin the ZK endorsed the resolution of support for the ECCI. The only dissenting voices were Hans Weber and Scholem, who voted against its acceptance. The ZK then sent a second delegation to Moscow with a mandate to comply with the ECCI.[232] The second delegation was largely concerned with the technical preparations in the KPD which would deal with the publication of another "open letter" from the Comintern, changing the party's policy and ousting a leadership, which had so recently been, at least ostensibly, re-elected by the membership.[233] The policy of the KPD in Germany could now be brought into line with the Comintern's General Line.

Gaining the Saxon Party's Acceptance of the "Open Letter"

The top down imposition of the Comintern's directives now used exactly the same channels in the party apparatus which Ruth Fischer had built over the preceding 20 months. The first stage in the party machine's reorientation of policy was the meeting on 1 September between the ZK and the political secretaries and editors from the districts.

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[231] SAPMO, I 2/2/6, Protokoll der Sitzung der Polsekretaere und Redakteure vom 1.9.1925, Bl.5(Thaelmann).

[232] ibid, Bl.7(Thaelmann).

[233] ibid.

After considerable discussion this meeting accepted the Comintern's terms by a margin of 42 votes to 7; opposition was largely confined to the ultra-Left and a small part of Fischer's own group.[234] Meetings of the BLs in early September were also reluctant to oppose the Comintern: only West Saxony, Hessen-Kassel, Pfalz and Berlin-Brandenburg did so. However, with some irony, the reason for the ZK's ability to enforce compliance with the new policy was a testament to how effectively Ruth Fischer had re-organised the party's channels of direction and control (ie organisational Bolshevisation). The BL in Pfalz was the only district which was able to continue in its dissent because the district party controlled the district apparatus.[235] West Saxony, as a district with a strong ultra-Left influence in the BL, lost faith in Ruth Fischer's leadership of the party because she now appeared to be capitulating to everything the Left had resisted for the last year-and-a-half. The BL finally voted by 11 to ten to accept the ZK's policy.[236] However, a strong minority in the BL, and a majority of active members, agreed with Arthur Rosenberg that the Comintern should be opposed because: "The Russians want to turn us [the KPD] into the tail of the SPD."[237] Fischer's policy of trying to hold the Left faction together by stating that in Germany policy would conform with the Comintern's European policy, to keep the "Workers' Left" around Thaelmann on board, while carrying out a policy of independent leftism, in accord with what the ultra-Left called for, now imploded. The majority of Ruth Fischer's own faction and the ultra-Left now abandoned her. The Political Secretary, Stroetzel, as well as the independent minded leftist, Arthur Vogt, agreed to Ernst Thaelmann's appointment as party leader. Their compliance, however, was

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[234] Weber, *Wandlung*, p126; Fowkes, *German Communism*, p134; SAPMO, I 2/2/6, Protokoll der Sitzung der Polsekretaere und Redakteure vom 1.9.1925, Bl.30.

[235] Weber, *Wandlung*, pp127-8; Fowkes, *German Communism*, pp134-5.

[236] SAPMO, I 3/10/112, Protokoll der BLS vom 6.9.1925, Bl.254-5(Remmele).

[237] ibid, Bl.255-6(Rosenberg).

base on the ill founded belief that Thaelmann aimed at uniting all the Left factions in the party through political consensus.[238]

In Erzgebirge-Vogtland the change of policy shattered the BL's unity between those, around Bertz and Spund, who rejected finding a *modus vivendi* with the new "Comintern-loyal" ZK, and those such as Ohr, Marga and Gustav, who saw this as a last chance to prevent the BL falling into the hands of the Right.[239] Ruth Fischer, who appeared in person in the BL, called for the district party to accept the Comintern's policies. It appears that Fischer's attempt to convince her own faction of the need to return to a policy of daily contact with the wider workers' movement, and to win over "oppositional" social democratic workers, was a last ditch attempt to retain some influence on the Comintern's policy in Germany.[240] To achieve the district party's compliance with the new policy the ZK again reconstituted the BL, giving the majority of positions to those prepared to abandon their reservations. Dissidents in the BL had no possibility of taking their grievances into the wider party: a split in the Left would only serve the campaigning of the right-wing local activists.[241] Schneller, who had abandoned Fischer in order to keep his position in the party, informed a meeting of the BL in Erzgebirge-Vogtland on the 31 August that a "world political matter", which had tarnished the KPD's relations with the Comintern, was about to be detailed in an "open letter" from the Comintern to the KPD's membership.[242] With the Left's final fracture along regional and ideological fault lines, the

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[238] SAPMO, I 3/10/112, Protokoll der BLS vom 6.9.1925, Bl.257(Stroetzel); ibid, Bl.258(Vogt).

[239] SAPMO, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 3.8.1925, Bl.214-5; SAPMO, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 31.8.1925, Bl.252f.

[240] SAPMO, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 3.8.1925, Bl.216-7.

[241] ibid, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 31.8.1925, Bl.251(Schneller).

[242] ibid.

party machine was able to sweep out the voices of principled dissent.[243] When *Die Rote Fahne* published the Comintern's "open letter" on 1 September 1925 the KPD's compliance with its criticisms was already a foregone conclusion.[244] The re-organisation of the KPD's internal architecture, under the title of the KPD's political and organisational Bolshevisation, had installed a roadway for the ZK juggernaut which reached into the district parties: opposition in the BLs was like a pedestrian crossing a motorway. At the First Reich Party Conference in Berlin from 31 October to 1 November only 33 delegates from a total of 249 opposed the new regime in the KPD.[245] Installing the Thaelmann-Dengel leadership was a formality, giving a semblance of "democratic" legitimation to what had in reality been the *de facto* constellation of political forces in the KPD leadership since 20 August.[246]

3.5 Conclusion: The Fischer Era and its Significance for the Saxon KPD

Disappointment within the KPD at the failure of the "German October" provided the context for the final rise into the leadership of the Left Opposition. The collapse of the KPD's internal party organisation in late 1923 and 1924 assisted the Left's reconstruction of the KPD as a strictly centralised party, which used the party machine to sideline party dissidents. Saxony, as the "launch pad" for the German revolution, became the centre of a dispute in the KPD over its relations with the socialist movement and the correct tactic for revolution. However, in Saxony the impact of the events of 1923 did not produce a

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[243] ibid, Bl.265; For the reconstruction of the BL, I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 12.12.1925, Bl.389.

[244] ibid, BLS am 31.8.1925, Bl.255.

[245] Weber, *Wandlung*, p133. Most oppositional delegates were from the "ultra-Left" plus some of Fischer's supporters.

[246] Fowkes, *German Communism*, p135.

uniform rejection of the united front tactic: the party's influence over political life had been increased and a mass membership organised in the Saxon KPD. Local political and organisational traditions combined with the pattern of socio-industrial development to produce a left-Communism in the more concentrated industrial setting of the Leipzig area where the SPD's deeply entrenched organisation offered few prospects for communist advancement. In the more dispersed industrial structure of southwestern Saxony, where the degree of organisation in the SPD was considerably weaker and Social Democrats were more disposed to co-operation with the KPD, local Communist activists remained advocates of the united front policy: local conditions outweighed ideological interpretations of the alleged role of contact with the SPD in causing the "Failed October". In East Saxony the KPD experienced a stunted development: already a weak link in Saxon Communism the party declined further between 1924 and 1925. One significant consequence of a weak membership was the early ability of the district apparatus to stage manage party "debates" more rapidly that in the other two Saxon party districts.

The Left's rise into the national leadership placed the party district of Erzgebirge-Vogtland in conflict with the new Left *Zentrale*. The response of the national leadership was to progressively erode the previous system of cohabitation between factions. The ZA, which had represented regional opinion at national level, was replaced by the ZK: regionalism *per se* was lost in the quest for ideological uniformity. The district party apparatus was used to rig the "election" of delegates to District Party Congresses, which appointed the BL. However, during the Fischer-era the ability to appoint *Kommissar* BLs did not translate into the ability to carry out a political tactic which local activists could not identify with. Instead, the ideology of "organising the revolution", by politicising the

membership and the wider workforce, only served to restrict communist political campaigning and absorb the membership in a paralysing factional feud on the correct tactics for the German revolution. The KPD discovered that workers who were not organised in the SPD were not Communists in the making, but were genuinely not inclined towards political activism.

The Left in the KPD did have a majority of support in the KPD nationally: Saxony was the most prominent exception. However, among the grass roots membership they tended not to be *activists,* unlike the Right Communists who were inclined to the united front policy of contact with the wider social democratic movement. In the period 1924/5 the Right continued to carry communist work in municipal councils and politics and in the factories. In the factories, the Left's self proclaimed area of priority, the refusal to accept that factory workers would only become involved in campaigns of direct relevance to the workplace pushed the party away from those it sought to win for revolution.

The Fischer *Zentrale's* calls for uniformity in organisation and ideology and the purge of opponents differed little from the CPSU's demands for a monolithic party: the policy amounted to Stalinisation in all but name, albeit with a contempt for the individual and his policy of "socialism in one country". The failure to address these issues is the central failure of Fischer's memoirs: they focus on her opposition to Stalin and omit her role in attempting to re-mold the KPD as a left-wing communist party using the process of Bolshevisation to serve her own factional interests. Fischer also failed to address her role in using the campaign against Trotsky, the most strongly internationalist of the

Bolsheviks, to purge the German Right and its later consequences for opposition to Stalin's "socialism in one country".[247]

In the figure of Ruth Fischer the Comintern had a rival who, for the first time, played Moscow at its own game: Fischer's skills in the art of deception and back-room deals held off the Comintern's direct and public intervention for 20 months. The achievement of this assertion of independence from Moscow should not be underestimated: it was, after all, what the Bolsheviks regarded as the ultimate breach of loyalty. Central to Fischer's gambit was to hold together a Left coalition in the KPD until Stalin's policy of "socialism in one country" was challenged in the CPSU. However, as all leading Bolsheviks, with the possible exception of Trotsky, agreed that the Comintern policy should be uniform for all member communist parties, the assertion of German independence met a wall of resistance. Once the Comintern felt able to publicly announce its intervention in Germany, the independent minded Left leaders were defenceless: the majority of left-wing rank-and-file Communists and the majority of functionaries in the party apparatus were Comintern loyalists drawn to support of the Bolshevik Revolution. It was a tragedy for German communism of Greek proportions and a sign of the times that the most significant challenge to the domination of policy making by the Comintern came from those who themselves wanted to construct a *Diktaturpartei*. The role of local conditions in determining the political behaviour of Communist militants, however, continued to limit

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[247] Fischer, *Stalin*, passim. For a new appraisal of Ruth Fischer's memoirs see, Wieland, K., "Totalitarismus' als Rache. Ruth Fischer und ihr Buch 'Stalin and German Communism", in Soellner, A.

the totalitarian claims of the KPD's Stalinisation in the mid 1920s. The investigation of the

limits of Stalinisation at local level is the subject of the following chapter.

(ed.), *Totalitarismus. Eine Ideengeschichte des 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1997), reviewed in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* Nr.245, 22.10.1997.

4. "Stalinisation" and its Limits in the Saxon KPD, 1925-1928.

4.1 Introduction

The Comintern's direct intervention in the KPD's political policy, by means of the "open letter" of September 1925, appointed the "Comintern-loyal" national leadership under Thaelmann.[1] This finally enabled the, at least formal, re-imposition of the united front policy. The "moderation" of the political line in Germany related to the new Stalin-Bukharin alliance in the CPSU. During the initial phase of Stalin's policy of "socialism in one country", Bukharin's policy prescriptions for the Comintern were employed. Bukharin's policy principally advocated contact with the wider workers' movement in countries where it was still a "significant factor".[2] The Comintern's policy drive was for its national sections to become mass parties, and significant political forces, by winning over Social Democratic workers through the creation of a "left-wing in the workers' movement".[3]

Comintern policy was also subordinated to the concerns of Soviet state policy. In 1925/6 it was still hoped that the Anglo-Russian Trade Union commission could influence British foreign policy in China: a central strategic concern for the Bolshevik government.[4] It was standard practice for the Comintern to set the national policy *for all Communist Parties*

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[1] See chapter 3.4 above.

[2] Bahne, S., "'Sozialfascismus" in Deutschland. Zur Geschichte eines politischen Begriffs', in *International Review of Social History (IRSH)* 10 (1965), pp227-8; Schapiro, L., *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (London, 1963), p290ff; Deutscher, I., *The Prophet Unarmed. Trotsky 1921-1929* (Oxford, 1959), p271ff.

[3] Bahne, 'Sozialfascismus', pp228-9; SAPMO (Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massen Organisationen der DDR) I 2/2/8, Resolution zur innerparteilichen Lage (Konference der Sekretaer und Redaktor am 16-17.4.1926), Bl.136-139.

[4] Winkler, H.A., *Der Schein der Normalitaet. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1924-1930* (Berlin,Bonn, 1985), pp437-8.

by referring to the world political and economic situation.[5] The actual constant in the equation was Soviet state policy. Germany's geo-political position ensured that it remained a linchpin in Soviet foreign policy in Europe. During the middle years of the Weimar Republic, Soviet Russia felt increasingly threatened by the direction of the German government in international relations. Under Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann, Germany appeared to be abandoning the German-Soviet alliance, enshrined in the Treat of Rapallo (1922), and becoming increasingly re-integrated in the system of Western nations through the Dawes Loan and the Locarno Treaty (1925).[6] It was hoped that the united front policy would help win support for the Soviet Union among rank-and-file Social Democrats and trade unionists in order to counteract the "Western Orientation" of German foreign policy with an "Eastern Orientation" supported by the German workers' movement. Defence of the Soviet Union became an increasingly explicit priority: to serve this objective communist campaigning was to take on a high political profile in Germany.[7]

However, in the years 1925-28 the KPD's development was not defined by political campaigning *per se*, but by the factional feud in the communist movement. In the CPSU the Stalin-Bukharin axis was entrenched in a power struggle with the Joint Opposition, led by Zinoviev and Trotsky. The factional feud in the CPSU was parallelled in the KPD,

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[5] For the impact of this in Germany 1925-28 see the document series in SAPMO of the ZK (I 2/2/8) and the Politburo (I 2/1/5).

[6] On the Comintern and KPD's assessment of developments, Daycock, D. W., 'The KPD and the NSDAP: A Study in the Relationship between the Political Extremes in Weimar Germany 1923-1933', Ph.D. thesis (London School of Economics, 1980), p28f.; For a summary of German foreign policy see, Kolb, E. *The Weimar Republic* (trans. P. S. Falla; London, 1988), pp51ff.

[7] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p429; Geyer, D., 'Sowjetrussland und die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung 1918-32', *Vierteljahrshefte fuer Zeitgeschichte (VfZ)* 24 (1976), pp27-8; Daycock, 'Political Extremes', p148.

which shattered into factions on the basis of particular interpretations of political policy in Germany and developments in the Soviet Union.[8] On the basis of the recently available documentation in the former central party archive in Berlin, this chapter will argue that the factions in Germany were often regionally much stronger than previously thought and that the political disposition of these factions related to the local conditions experienced by the KPD's membership. In the period 1925-28 the Comintern was able to intervene decisively in affairs of the national KPD. But the KPD's rearguard resistance to Moscow's leaders was strongest at grass roots level: as this was the front line of the KPD's "class war", its significance cannot be underestimated. The memory of the so-called "Failed October" of 1923 in Saxony ensured that the region was a centre of the factional feud.

This chapter sets out to answer questions arising from the existing literature in the light of the newly available documentation in the former central party archive in Berlin. Attention will be given to the view, originally presented in the memoirs of Rosa Meyer-Levine, that the split in the KPD, caused by the Comintern's "open letter", did not penetrate very deeply into the party because Ruth Fischer's supporters "jumped ship" and co-operated with the new Thaelmann ZK.[9] This avenue of investigation will be further pursued to establish the applicability to Saxony of Gert Reuter's thesis for Hannover that Thaelmann proved to be an "integration figure" capable of uniting the KPD's disparate factions.[10] Two further question will focus on the Saxon party membership's perception of the

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[8] Weber, H., *Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus. Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (Kekurzte Studentenausgabe; Frankfurt-am-Main, 1971), p126.

[9] Meyer-Levine, R., *Inside German Communism. Memoirs of Party Life in the Weimar Republic* (London, 1977), p93.

[10] Reuter, G., *KPD-politik in der Weimarer Republik. Politische Vorstellung und soziale Zusammensetzung der KPD der KPD in Hannover zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik* (Hannover, 1982), pp87,92f.

factional feud. Firstly, is Daycock correct in stating that the rank-and-file membership did not notice changes in the KPD's tactics during these years?[11] And secondly, to what extent is Reuter's observation, based on the recollections of party members, valid, that the membership frequently could not identify the factions, enabling switches of affiliation across the factional spectrum.[12]

Central to this investigation of the KPD's internal party life is the question of the extent to which Hermann Weber's "Stalinisation" thesis continues to be useful in explaining the party's political development.[13] Did the purges of independent-minded party leaders and recalcitrant members and the party's organisational Bolshevisation facilitate top down control of German communism at local as well as national level? The rival "sociological" explanation of the KPD's political developments will also be investigated. Did the KPD's "old socialist tendency" gain the upper hand in policy making in the mid 1920s, as Detlev Peukert asserts?[14] The availability of micro-level documentation detailing the Saxon KPD's activities in the mid 1920s, which was unavailable to earlier historians in the "West", allows the magnification of investigation to highlight the KPD at grass roots level.

4.2 The Saxon Left Resumes its Struggle

The Comintern's intervention in the KPD, using the "open letter" of September 1925, installed a national party leadership which would carry out Moscow's policy directives. Following its defeat the Left fragmented into its component groups. The Comintern-loyal

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[11] Daycock, 'Political Extremes', pp145-6.

[12] Reuter, *KPD-politik*, pp66-91.

[13] Weber, *Wandlung*, pp251ff, esp. pp260-1.

[14] Peukert,D., 'Zur Sozialgeschicht der KPD', in Kloenne, A. and Vack, K., *Zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, 4 (November 1978), p31.

"Workers' Left", under Thaelmann, remained in the leadership, while the Fischer-Maslow Group and the ultra-Left fell into factional opposition and discord. The ultra-Left, which had been the most vociferous in its resistance to Moscow's machinations, now sub-divided into smaller denominations with rival theories explaining developments in the communist movement.[15] The divisions within and between the ultra-Left factions allowed the KPD's national leadership to purge the weaker Groups around Katz and the Korsch-Schwarz Group, which became known as the "Intransigent Left" (Entschiedene Linke), in early 1926.[16] However, the two most significant factions remained within the KPD during 1926. The Fischer-Urbahns Group represented a revival of the Left Opposition. The faction comprised largely former leading functionaries from the Fischer leadership; its factional significance lay in strong personal connections with the Joint Opposition in the CPSU.[17] The other faction remaining in the KPD was the Wedding Opposition. The faction was led by Hans Weber in Pfalz, Willi Koetter in Berlin-Wedding and by Arthur Vogt in West Saxony. The faction's significance was in its support among workers in these party districts.[18]

In the course of the winter 1925/6 it became clear that behind the seemingly smooth transition to the new national leadership and political tactics lay a hornet's nest of regional discontent. In the Saxon KPD the reaction to the policy implications of the "open letter" varied in relation to conditions in the three party organisations. In Erzgebirge-Vogtland a

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[15] Weber, *Wandlung*, p 120; Bahne, S., 'Zwischen "Luxemburgismus" und "Stalinismus". Die "ultralinke" Opposition in der KPD', in *VfZ* 9 (1961), p363ff; Fowkes, B., *Communism in Germany Under the Weimar Republic* (London, 1984), p137.

[16] Bahne, 'Die "ultralinke" Opposition', p365; Weber, *Wandlung*, pp150-1; Herlemann, B., *Kommunalpolitik der KPD im Ruhrgebiet 1924-1933* (Wuppertal, 1977), p70. Most of the "Intransigent Left's" basis of support came from unemployed party members in the Ruhr.

[17] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p431.

[18] Weber, Wandlung, p156f.

feud began in the KPD between the Left in the BL and the Right, which, in addition to its strength among local activists, now had the ZK on its side. The "Chemnitz Left", around Paul Bertz and Heinz Wesche, which had refused to carry out the "right turn", continued to exert influence on the BL in Erzgebirge-Vogtland.[19] The "Chemnitz Left's" influence grew after the return of the "old leadership", which had carried out the policies leading to the events of 1923 and the so-called "Failed October", to leading positions in the Saxon KPD. Paul Boettcher was appointed to head the Saxon Regional Executive, which co-ordinated political campaigns in the region. These developments indicated that the ZK's political programme for Saxony, decided in November 1925, had already made concessions to the Brandler faction in its Saxon stronghold.[20] These concessions marked out a significant difference between Saxony and the Reich: while the Right continued to be excluded from the national leadership, in Saxony it rejoined the regional leadership. The price for the Comintern's removal of the Fischer Group from the ZK was a return to a wider coalition of factions in the national leadership and in the BLs.

At the District Party Congress in Erzgebirge-Vogtland during early December 1925, Boettcher was able to have the Comintern's political line unanimously endorsed.[21] However, a dispute emerged between the BL majority and the Right, which had the

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[19] SAPMO I 3/9/73, Der Fall Bertz. Polbuero Erzgebirge-Vogtland, Bl.53f.; SAPMO I 3/8-10/7 Ergaenzungen, Mappe 1, An die Unterbezirksleitung Chemnitz. Bezirksleitung, Chemnitz, den 28.7.1925, Bl.301.

[20] SAPMO I 3/9/68, Bezirksleitungsitzung (BLS) Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 31.8.1925, Bl.251ff.; SAPMO I 3/8-10/8, Landesvorstand Sachsens am 7.12.1925. Bl.79; For the ZK's policy in Saxony see, SAPMO I 3/9/60, Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 10-11.4.1926., Resolution zur Lage, Aufgaben und Taktik der Partei, Bl.25.

[21] SAPMO I 3/9/59, Bericht ueber den Bezirksparteitag in Erzgebirge-Vogtland (Sitzung des Polbueros vom 7.12.1925), Bl.16. The ZK, however, noted that, "many comrades have not openly expressed their views" and that private discussions had established that many functionaries were "horrified" by the return of Boettcher.

support of the ZK's representative. This centred on the party's attitude to the SPD's left-wing leaders, which were particularly prominent locally. The BL majority insisted that the SPD's left-wing continued to be the KPD's "main enemy" and rejected the position of the ZK's representative and the Right, which advocated winning them over, as a return to the "failed policies" of autumn 1923. The dispute ended with the district press's editor in chief, Schleibs, removal by the ZK. The Left in the BL now felt under siege by the Right, grouped around Siewert, Boettcher and Lorenz, which had been planning to take over the BL since its factional conference on the 27 September in Chemnitz.[22]

The "Chemnitz Left" now set out to use their influence in the BL to oppose the return of the Brandler faction to the Saxon party leadership. The Left, which still had a majority in the BL, initiated a second, unofficial, party debate on the implications of the return to a united front policy in Saxony. The continued control of the district party apparatus by the Left allowed the manipulation of the process of delegation to the District Party Congress, which had been called to debate the factional and policy changes following the Comintern's "open letter".[23] At the District Congress the "Chemnitz Left" was able to reconstitute its position as a Left leadership group.[24] Max Opitz remained Political Secretary and Wesche, although prevented from taking the influential position of Organisational Secretariat, was elected Agitprop Secretary, by 65 votes to 60. These developments were an expression of defiance towards the national leadership, whose

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[22] SAPMO I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 30.9.1925, Bl.278; SAPMO I 3/9/73, Politischer Bericht fuer den Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 10. Parteitag bis Oktober 1926, Bl.333.

[23] SAPMO I 3/9/73 Bericht vom Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland. Monat Januar 1926, Bl.261.

[24] This Grouping made a declaration at the District Congress in April, see SAPMO I 3/9/60, Erklaerung von Bertz, Opitz und Wesche, Bl.40.

express instructions to conform to the ZK's policy directives were ignored.[25] While the District Congress unanimously endorsed the 6th ECCI-Plenum's resolutions on the struggle against the ultra-Left, the "Declaration of the 61", which included the signatures of 15 members of the BL, drew attention to the Comintern's undertaking also to struggle against the Right.[26] The ease with which the "open letter" policy debate had been carried out nationally in the autumn of 1925 was proving more difficult to achieve at district level when the wider policy and factional implications became clear. The Left in the Erzgebirge-Vogtland BL, which had gone over to the Thaelmann leadership in order to keep their influence in the district, now united with the "Chemnitz Left" in opposing the ZK's policy in Saxony.[27]

In East Saxony the KPD's organisational weakness continued to make the factional feud easier for the party machine to control than in the party's strongholds.[28] During the party debate following the publication of the Comintern's "open letter", there was little factionally organised resistance in the cells, local groups and sub-districts.[29] In East

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[25] SAPMO I 3/9/60, Bericht vom Bezirksparteitag Erzgibirge-Vogtland am 10-11.4.1926, Bl.14. The ZK's representative was unable to have the well known Right functionary, Siewert, included in the BL, despite a call for a "stronger" leadership.

[26] SAPMO I 3/9/73, Politischer Bericht fuer den Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 10. Parteitag bis Oktober 1926, Bl.333.

[27] SAPMO I 3/9/60, Bericht vom Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 10-11.4.1926, Bl.12-3; SAPMO I 3/9/73, Politischer Bericht fuer den Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 10. Parteitag bis Oktober 1926, Bl.333.

[28] SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der BLS der KPD Ostsachsens am 24.4.1926, Bl.30(Schneider); SAPMO I 3/8/25, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. Protokoll der BLS. vom 25.2.1926, Bl.8(Boettcher); Also see, Arbeiterstimme, 23.4.1926, Nr.94 and 24.4.1926, Nr.95.

[29] For the "party debate" in the lower party organisations, SAPMO I 3/8/27, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. Bericht vom 1.11-15.12.1925, Bl.363-5; SAPMO I 3/8/33, Bericht vom Unterbezirkstag des Unterbezirks Ebersbach und Zittau (undated), Bl.14ff.; SAPMO I 3/8/33, Bericht ueber die Ekki-Brief Diskussion im Zellenblock "Universelle"(Betreibe der Zwickauer und Chemnitzer Strassen), Bl.42ff; For the discussion in the BL, SAPMO I 3/8/24, KPD. 8. Ostsachsen. Bericht von der BLS am 11.11.1925, Bl.148ff; At this

Saxony at the end of 1925 the problem appeared to be a pervasive lack of motivation to take part in party life at all. The leading apparatus functionary, Wilhelm Koenen, reporting to the ZK on developments in the BL in late December, complained that the role of the Political Secretary, Martin Schneider, and the Organisational Secretary, Gaebel, was so weak that:

> For months, especially after the Comintern's letter, hardly a BL Meeting has come to a fundamental political position or to a precise position on the political tasks...The comrades feel that the speech and position on the political tasks by the ZK made in the BL is *virtually a statement of utter rubbish.*[30]

In order to stimulate the district party into political activity Koenen suggested that Sigrid Raedel, another trusted apparatus functionary, be give political control in East Saxony.[31]

The process of organisational Bolshevisation, the KPD's re-organisation on the basis of cells and the centralisation of the channels of instruction, demonstrated its use in rigging the process of delegation to the District Party Congress.[32] The Narrower BL, the district party's Politburo, now included five "worker comrades" representing large factories, who had been appointed by the apparatus: their loyalty to the party line ensured a majority vote in favour of the ZK's directives. Koenen actually stated that this built-in compliant

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meeting only Martin Hoop (Bautzen) opposed the theory of "relative stabilisation" and its implications for the political line in Germany, see SAPMO I 3/8/24, Bericht ueber die BLS. vom 28.12.1925, Bl.184ff.

[30] SAPMO I 3/8/24, Bericht ueber die BLS. Ostsachsen vom 28.12.1925, Bl.184-5(Koenen).

[31] ibid.

[32] SAPMO I 3/8/24, Bericht ueber die BLS vom 28.12.1925, Bl.188; ibid, Organisationsbericht. Protokoll vom ostsaechsische Bezirksparteitag am 23-4.1.1926, Bl.17-18(Gaebel); In sub-district Zittau there were seven local groups and no party cells. In Ebersbach the figures were 161 local groups and nine cells. See, SAPMO I 3/8/33, Bericht vom Unterbezirkstag des Unterbezirks Ebersbach und Zittau.,(undated), Bl.14-5.

majority in the Narrower BL ensured a "majority over the District Secretaries."[33] The election of delegates to the District Congress, which was called to discuss party policy and factionally organised opposition to it, was easier to manipulate because of the district party's re-organisation.

Although the number of factory cells in East Saxony was extremely limited, a hugely disproportionate number of delegates were sent from them to the District Congress in late January. From 242 delegates, 95 were from the factory cells, 43 from the street cells, 88 from local groups and 16 from other residential organisations.[34] The ability to send party functionaries into smaller units, which broke up concentrations of party dissidents, allowed the possibility of hand picking a vastly disproportionate number of compliant delegates. In his report on the KPD's tasks in Saxony Rudolf Renner, a senior party functionary, was able to state: "Comrades! When we discuss the Saxon Question today we must say one thing, that Saxony can again be at the centre of the united front tactic."[35] After the lengthy debate on party policy after 1923, which blamed the united front for all the ills in the KPD, Renner had now made a complete U-turn on the policy prescriptions for a "healthy" communist party. At the District Congress only Martin Hoop, a sub-district secretary in Bautzen, called for a return to the policies decided at the 10th Reich Party Congress (ie only weeks before the Comintern's intervention) and reminded the Congress of the "failures" associated with the united front policy in Saxony.[36]

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[33] I 3/8/24, Bericht ueber die BLS vom 28.12.1925., Bl.188(Koenen).

[34] ibid, Bericht der Mandatspruefungskommisssion. Protokoll vom ostsaechsische Bezirksparteitag am 23-24.1.1926, Bl.22.

[35] SAPMO I 3/9/60, Aufgaben in Sachsen. Protokoll vom ostsaechsische Bezirksparteitag am 23-24.1.1926, Bl.7 (Renner). Boettcher had originally been asked to make this speach.

[36] Martin Hoop's opposition was not recorded in the Protokoll of the District Party Congress. Renner reported on the activities of the leadership in Bautzen in, SAPMO I 3/8/27, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. An das ZK der Partei. Dresden, den 9.6.1926, Bl.429-31.

In East Saxony, unlike in Erzgebirge-Vogtland, the "second debate" on the new party line presented the ZK with no significant difficulties. At the meeting of the Extended BL on 25 April, which discussed the policy resolutions of the 6th ECCI Plenum and the Conference of District Secretaries and Editors, the East Saxon KPD cooperated fully with the majority position of the national leadership.[37] The debate on the Russian Question in Saxony had penetrated the district party organisations so little that the District Committee (Bezirksausschuss) reported that:

> To some extent the comrades understood the resolution of the Executive on prohibiting a discussion on the question of the CPSU's 14th Party Congress in the Western European sections of the Comintern as a ban on discussing the Russian Question at all.[38]

When Rosa Meyer-Levine wrote that: "The split caused by the Comintern's "open letter" was on the whole negligible", it appears that this statement was probably based on the experience of Ernst Meyer's East Prussian stronghold rather that the wider party picture.[39] The Saxon example indicates that the intensity of the debate on the changes in the KPD's policy regionally depended on the strength of the district party organisations and the local political disposition of the membership.

At the Meeting of District Secretaries and Editors on 16 and 17 April in Berlin, it seemed on the surface that the KPD had been brought into line with Comintern policy.[40] The Conference voted by 65 votes to two to accept the policy decision of the 6th ECCI-

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[37] SAPMO I 3/8/23, An das ZK, Polbuero. Bericht ueber die Erweiterte Bezirksleitung Ostsachsens. Dresden, den 25.4.1926, Bl.51. The opposition around the UBL in Bautzen was not registered.

[38] ibid.

[39] Meyer-Levine, *Inside German Communism*, p93.

[40] For details of the final full introduction of democratic centralism in the KPD's organisational structure, Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, pp449ff.

Plenum and to condemn the left opposition factions as marginal groupings which intended only to weaken the KPD's ability to struggle.[41] However, at least in the district strongholds of the Left, it was still possible locally to jam the wheels of the party machine.[42] In West Saxony the Vogt Group's continued popularity among the rank-and-file membership, its remaining positions in the BL and among party functionaries, set the scene for a furious and enduring turf war.[43]

At national level this division of the Left into two factions did weaken resistance to the Reich leadership.[44] However, the situation in the Opposition's strongholds did not conform to this picture. The Vogt Group in West Saxony regarded the reformed Left Opposition, under Fischer, Maslow and Hugo Urbahns, as a sister faction, which at local level in Berlin and the Ruhr pushed for a leftist policy.[45] More important, however, for the factional struggle in Saxony, was the deeply entrenched support for the Vogt Group among district functionaries and the party membership. The central demands of the Vogt Group's factional platform were an open party discussion on the "Russian Question", in which it supported the "Joint Opposition's" criticisms of "socialism in one country"; ending the top down imposition of policy and the "return" to party democracy; and convening the 11th national party congress, which it was hoped would overturn the united

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[41] SAPMO, I 2/2/8, Resolution zur innerparteilichen Lage. Sekretaere und Redakteure Konferenz am 16-17.4.1926, Bl.136.

[42] For the Ruhr see, Herlemann, *Kommunalpolitik*, pp70-1; Bahne, 'Die "ultralinke" Opposition', p371. The expelled leaders, Korsch, Schwarz and Schlagewerth, formed the Reichstag faction called then "Group of Left Communists", it was the only group to vote against the Berlin Treaty.

[43] Note: the West Saxon faction within the Wedding Opposition will be refered to as the Vogt Group. Not only was this the term used in Saxony but it emphasises that the Wedding Opposition was an umbrella faction nationally for a left tendency among party members.

[44] Weber, *Wandlung*, p156; Bahne, 'Die "ultralinke" Opposition', pp362,365.

[45] SAPMO, I 3/10/112, Resolution II (der Gruppe Vogt), Bl.402.

front policy.[46] The return of the Right faction into the Saxon leadership and the re-introduction of the policies of "1923" produced an ardent defence of leftist policies. The Vogt Group insisted that the district membership did not trust the "old leadership" from 1923, which had made such significant "mistakes" and the new party line had achieved little except the illusion that we in Saxony would again have a government with the left SPD leaders.[47] The ZK's previous assurances that the "open letter's" political line could only be carried out with a strong left-wing party leadership, without ideological and organisational concessions to the Brandler faction, were seen by the turn of 1925/6 as empty rhetoric.[48]

In what amounted to an intra-party fratricidal war the ZK set out to mobilise the full force of the party apparatus against the Opposition throughout Germany. In Pfalz the ZK continued to come up against the barrier of solid and well organised factional resistance from the Wedding Opposition, despite an attempt to dilute it by merging Pfalz with the neighbouring party district of Baden.[49] In Berlin, however, the ability of the apparatus to rig the process of delegation to the District Party Congress in July had enabled the ZK to

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[46] SAPMO, I 3/10/115, Bericht ueber die Taetigkeiten des Bezirks Westsachsen der KPD vom 1.4.1925 bis 31.3.1926, (Leipzig, 1926), pp6-7, Bl.169; SAPMO, I 3/10/112, Resolution II (der Gruppe Vogt), Bl.402.

[47] SAPMO, I 3/10/112, Protokoll der BLS am 28.4.1928. Diskussion ueber den Bericht der weiterten Exekutive, Bl.411(Lau).

[48] The Vogt Group in the BLS of 1.12.1925 continued to submit to party discipline despite a rejection of the political line and the condemnation of all opposition to it as "ultra-Left and anti-Bolshevik" because this would give the Right the ability to purge their opponents, SAPMO I 3/10/112, BLS. West Sachsen am 1.12.1925, Bl.341; For the reversal of this submission to party discipline at BL level and the intervention to restore the decision making process to the membership, ibid, Resolution II (der Gruppe Vogt), Bl.402; For opposition to the use of re-organisation in the purge of leading figures in the Opposition in West Saxony and Berlin in early 1926, ibid, Protokoll der BLS am 28.4.1928. Diskussion der Diskussion ueber den Bericht der weiterten Exekutive, Bl.409(Vogt).

[49] Weber, *Wandlung*, p165.

appoint Wilhelm Pieck, who was already part of the inner core of staunch Comintern-loyalists, as Political Secretary.[50] In West Saxony the ZK intended to eliminate the Vogt Group's hold over the district party by organising a further party debate, culminating in a District Party Congress, in a campaign to discredit the Opposition as a "betrayal" of the Bolshevik Revolution and the Comintern and harmful to party policy in Germany.[51] The ZK's intention to win over as many rank-and-file leftists as possible was indicated by Koenen, the ZK's district *Kommissar*, who insisted that a "left-turn" would be introduced at any moment if conditions changed.[52] The Political Secretary, Max Stroetzel, a former member of the Fischer Group who had gone over to Thaelmann's faction, also insisted that the KPD needed the ordinary rank-and-file leftist members.[53]

The party machine again geared up for the mobilisation of party opinion against the Opposition in a process of meetings beginning with an "Information Evening" for Greater Leipzig on 30 April.[54] Following this meeting apparatus functionaries were sent into the cells and local groups throughout the district to make a speech on the 6th ECCI-Plenum's political resolutions and elect delegates to the district congress on the basis of support for or rejection of the Comintern's political pronouncements. The process of delegation from cells and local groups to Working Area, City District and Sub-District Conferences, before the final election of delegates to the District Congress, ensured that support for the

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[50] ibid, pp157-8, Pieck received 106 votes against the Left opposition's candidate, Urbahns, who received 26 votes; Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, p141, showing the strong support for the Opposition among ordinary party members.

[51] SAPMO I 3/10/112, Bezirksleitung Westsachsen. Polbuero. An der ZK. Polbuero, Leipzig den 24.4.1926, Bl.404.

[52] ibid, Protokoll der BLS am 28.4.1928. Diskussion ueber den Bericht der weiterten Exekutive., SAPMO, Bl.412-3(Koenen).

[53] ibid, Bl.411(Stroetzel).

[54] ibid, BL Westsachsen. Polbuero. An der ZK. Polbuero. Leipzig den 24.4.1926, Bl.404.

Opposition had to be rock solid locally to get through the ever tighter mesh.[55] The

election of delegates also gave disproportionate representation to members organised in

factory cells, which were in smaller units allowing a tighter control over the meeting's

agenda.[56] The mode of delegation was also used to filter out the Opposition. In Leipzig,

the centre of the Opposition, one delegate was to be elected on the basis of ten paid up

members, in the outlying sub-districts the ratio was reduced to one delegate for every five

members.[57] Despite all of these organisational advantages in the hands of the ZK, the

District Party Congress, which had already been delayed since the publication of the "open

letter" in September, was postponed for a month because of the continued strength of

resistance.[58] During the debate in the West Saxon party organisations the strength of

support for the Vogt Group, shown at a factional meeting on 18 May, forced the District

Politburo to warn the Opposition that: "continued factional work is insufferable in a

democratic centralist party."[59]

Preparations for the District Congress in West Saxony indicated the depth of the split in

the KPD caused by the "open letter" of September 1925. While the fragmentation at Reich

level was limited by the defection of many of Fischer's functionaries to the Thaelmann

leadership, the impact at district level and below was very different.[60] At least in the

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[55] ibib, Beschluss der BL ueber die Durchfuerung der Diskussion ueber den Bericht der erweiterten
Exekutive, Bl.426.

[56] ibid, Bl.426.

[57] ibid, Protokoll der BLS am 28.4.1928. Diskussion der Diskussion ueber den Bericht der weiterten
Exekutive. Bl.411(Stroetzel).

[58] ibid, Beschluss der BL ueber die Durchfuerung der Diskussion ueber den Bericht der erweiterten
Exekutive, Bl.426.

[59] ibid, BL Westsachsen. An der ZK (Information). Leipzig, den 1.6.1926, Bl.437.

[60] Weber, *Wandlung*, p156f; Meyer-Levine, *Inside German Communism*, p93, goes as far as stating that
the split caused by the "Open Letter" was "negligible" because Fischer's supporters defected to the new
ZK and were allowed to keep their positions.

Wedding Opposition's strongholds in Pfalz, Berlin and West Saxony the feud in the party went into the lowest party units, paralysing party work.[61] The organisational strength of the Vogt Group in West Saxony also owed something to the role of Arthur Vogt who tried to balance differences *within* the Opposition using what the BL called a "middle course" capable of integrating many functionaries who did not want to risk expulsion.[62]

At the District Party Congress, held between 9-10 July 1926 the BL majority was able to endorse the ZK's political line, its position on the factional struggle and to have a resolution endorsing the CPSU's policy of "socialism in one country". The latter was presented to the wider membership as the positive possibility of "independent socialist construction" in Soviet Russia as opposed to an abandonment of world revolution.[63] However, the strength of the Opposition throughout the district party was reflected in its ability to secure 57 of the 123 delegates elected to the Congress, despite the organisational manipulation which was intended to marginalise it as a force at the congress.[64] With this degree of support for the Opposition it remained necessary to hand nine of the 27 positions as BL Secretaries to the Vogt Group. The feared split off of a very significant number of party workers was avoided at the cost of leaving the Opposition with its positions from the lowest cells to the BL itself.[65] Koetter, the leader of the Wedding Opposition in Berlin, was able to make the co-speech at the Congress. Furthermore, a lengthy 'no confidence' motion in the ZK's policies was submitted for

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[61] SAPMO I 3/10/107, Bezirksparteitag Westsachsen am 10-11.7.1926. Stand der Organisation, Bl.34.

[62] ibid, Bl.33.

[63] ibid, Beschluss der Bezirksparteitag. Westsachsen am 9-10.7.1926, Bl.32.

[64] ibid, Bezirksparteitag Westsachsen am 10-11.7.1926, Bl.15.

[65] ibid, Beschluss der Bezirksparteitag. Westsachsen am 9-10.7.1926, Bl.32.

discussion.[66] The Opposition's motion rejected the political line set by the 6th-ECCI Plenum and its justification on the basis of a "relative stabilisation" of political and economic life in Germany. The Comintern's policy statement was dismissed as "un-Marxist and unsuitable for a revolutionary policy in the Comintern's national parties."[67] The Opposition also expressed sympathy for the expelled Korsch, Schwarz and Schagewerth grouping in the Reichstag, which had voted against the German-Soviet Trade Treaty. The Vogt Group agreed that the Treaty placed Soviet foreign policy above the demands of the German Revolution.[68] In a show of solidarity with the "Leningrad Opposition" the motion blamed:

> The suppression of debate on the 14th CPSU Congress for the "false" application of the united front policy, factionalism, the re-organisation of the ZK and the rape of internal party democracy.[69]

The platform of the Opposition concluded that: "This District Party Congress supports the Leningrad Opposition from the honest conviction that the KPD can only take on its historic tasks if, in the place of the present opportunist course, a clear revolutionary line is adopted."[70]

The District Congress, however, did mark a turning point in the Opposition's tactics. The issue of support for all expelled factions and individual leaders, including Ruth Fischer's removal from the ZK and Comintern, split the Vogt Group's vote. Thirty delegates

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[66] ibid, Bezirksparteitag Westsachsen am 10-11.7.1926., Resolution an der Bericht der Bezirksleitung, Bl.19ff.

[67] ibid, Bl.21-2.

[68] ibid, Bezirksparteitag Westsachsen am 10-11.7.1926. Resolution an der Bericht der Bezirksleitung, Bl.27.

[69] ibid, Bl.25.

[70] ibid, Bl.28.

belonging to the Vogt Group voted with the BL on the specific question of support for

expelled factions; their motivation was a fear of expulsion.[71] The BL majority now hoped

that the Opposition had at last divided into "open anti-Bolshevik elements" and "worker

elements who were essentially loyal to the Party."[72] However, the term "worker elements"

can only be regarded as an weapon in the leadership's propaganda arsenal: the whole

Opposition was overwhelmingly composed of workers. A demarcation line had been

drawn in the Opposition, but the faction was far from fragmenting in its resistance to the

re-introduction of the united front policy and the Right faction's return to political

influence in Saxony. It did, admittedly, signal the need for a more cautious approach by

the Opposition.[73] The Opposition continued to hold the support of the ordinary

membership and district party workers, restricting the united front policy being translated

into active campaigning. The continued ability of the Vogt Group to organise its factional

opposition to the ZK's policies also indicates that, where resistance to a policy was

sufficiently pronounced, it could continue. The local membership was also in large

measure able to resiste the atomisation of the party into cells, which were to replace the

larger and more vibrant residential group meetings.[74]

4.3 Saxony and the "Letter of the 700": German Communism Watches the International Purge its Internationalists.

In July 1926 Ruth Fischer's unauthorised return from Moscow and Maslow's release from

jail generated a surge in the Left Opposition's agitation on the "Russian Question". The

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[71] ibid, Beschluss der Bezirksparteitag. Westsachsen am 9-10.7.1926, Bl.32.

[72] ibid, Bl.33.

[73] ibid.

[74] ibid, Bezirksparteitag Westsachsen am 10-11.7.1926., Stand der Organisation, Bl.34-5; SAPMO I 3/10/115, Bericht vom Bezirk Westsachsen, den 19.11.1926, Bl.158.

Left Opposition's campaign centred on opposition to the policy of "socialism in one country", which was seen as a threat to the Comintern's stimulation of world revolution, and support for the Joint Opposition in the CPSU. In early August the leaders of the Left Opposition co-operated with the groupings comprising the Wedding Opposition and the Korsch-faction within the Intransigent Left, which had already been expelled, to arrive at a joint declaration. The immediate response of the ZK was to expel Fischer and Maslow on 19 August, using the pretext of their contact with Korsch, and to accuse them of propagating the slogan "Against Moscow". The public statement of the Opposition groups took the form of the "Letter of the 700", whose signatories were still party functionaries. The Letter challenged the development of Stalin's personal dictatorship, presenting it as a "falsification" of Leninism.[75] However, the case of the Left in the KPD was not helped by developments in the CPSU: on 16 October Zinoviev and Trotsky admitted they had broken party discipline and withdrew their support for the Left throughout the Comintern. Their last ditch attempt to retain their positions of influence in the CPSU, however, was unsuccessful: at the end of October Trotsky was ousted from the Politburo and Zinoviev was replaced by Bukharin as chairman of the Comintern.[76] In Germany the KPD leadership also acted against the Opposition. The ZK condemned the "Letter of the 700" as a "criminal attempt to split" the KPD and began a purge of those who would not submit to party discipline. On 5 September the KPD purged further Left Opposition activists. The purge of leading figures was followed up by a "loyalty

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[75] Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, p141. For the division of the Intransigent Left into a radical wing, under Schwarz, and a relatively moderate wing, under Korsch, see, Bahne, 'Die "ultra-linke" Opposition', p371.

[76] Schapiro, *Communist Party*, pp290ff.

declaration", according to which those refusing to submit to party discipline would be expelled from the party.[77]

The expulsion of the leaders of the Left Opposition, and the sidelining of the Joint Opposition in the CPSU, dominated internal party life between August and November 1926.[78] In Erzgebirge-Vogtland the Left in the BL was not factionally connected to the Joint Opposition in the CPSU, sheltering it from the full force of the factional feud. Only a handful of members of the Narrower BL initially refused to condemn Trotsky's and Zinoviev's political activities outright.[79] The debate on the "Russian Question" was then forced through the district party from the cells and local groups to Sub-District, City District and Workers' Delegate Conferences, which culminated in a District Party Congress on 26 September.[80] The district membership's support for Right-communism ensured that there would be little objection to party policy. Almost all of the meetings in the KPD's lower organisational units accepted the ZK's policy statement unanimously. However, efforts to eliminate even the limited dissent of abstaining in the vote further charted the development of the KPD's self-image as the party *nemine contradicente*.[81]

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[77] Weber, *Wandlung*, p158f; Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, pp432-3; Fischer, R., *Stalin and German Communism. The Origins of the State Party* (Cambridge, 1948) pp537ff.

[78] For District Party Meetings dealing with carrying out the actual party campaigns see, SAPMO I 3/9/69, Protokoll der Sitzung der Engeren Bezirksleitung Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 16.8.1926, Bl.241ff; ibid, Protokoll der Sitzung der Engeren Bezirksleitung Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 13.9.1926, Bl.267ff; SAPMO I 3/9/73, Politischer Bericht fuer den Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 10. Parteitag bis Oktober 1926, Bl.333ff.

[79] SAPMO I 3/9/73, Politischer Bericht. Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland Juli-August 1926, Bl.320-1. The same document is in, Ergaenzungen. I 3/8-10/7, Mappe 1, Bl.13ff; SAPMO I 3/9/69, Protokoll der Sitzung der Engeren Bezirksleitung Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 16.8.1926, Bl.241-2.

[80] SAPMO I 3/9/73, Politischer Bericht. Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland Juli-August 1926, Bl.320-1.

[81] ibid, Politischer Bericht fuer den Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 10. Parteitag bis Oktober 1926, Bl.334.

The three localities with any significant dissent, Plauen, Doebeln and the local group in Hartha, all had structural features helping to explain the conflict with the leadership since the return of the united front policy. In the case of Plauen, high levels of unemployment in the textile industry gave a sociological basis to support for the Left. In the autumn of 1926 12,000 textile workers were unemployed.[82] The sub-district of Doebeln had an economic structure and pattern of strong organisation in the SPD and trades union more similar to the West Saxon party district. The local group in Hartha also used its close geographical proximity to the Leipzig KPD to develop organisational contacts with the Wedding Opposition.[83]

The party debate at this point had an unexpected turn in Erzgebirge-Vogtland. Although the "Chemnitz Left" could accept the ZK's position against support for the Joint Opposition in the CPSU, this did not mean that the development of political policy *per se* was disregarded. Initially Max Opitz and Heinz Wesche were actively involved in preserving the unity of their faction: not least because of the strength of support for the Right among the district membership.[84] However, when the District Party Congress, which was held on 26 September, failed to take equal measures against the "Right Groupings" as against the "Left Groupings", Opitz and Wesche resigned. The district's political leadership at the beginning of October then passed to Ernst Schneller, a senior functionary in the party apparatus.[85] Schneller's first task was to ensure support for the

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[82] ibid, Bl.326.

[83] ibid, Politischer Bericht. Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland Juli-August 1926, Bl.320.

[84] Paul Bertz also opposed the role of Katz in areas such as Limbach, were there were efforts to set up the Spartakus Bund Nr.2. See, ibid, Bl.319-21.

[85] ibid, Bl.334-5; SAPMO I 3/9/69, Protokoll der Sitzung der Engeren Bezirksleitung Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 11.10.1926, Bl.285.

German and Russian leaderships' position against the Joint Opposition and the signatories of the "Letter of the 700" in Germany.[86]

In East Saxony it was not the Russian Question and the German factional feud which were restricting the KPD's political activities, but chronic organisational and financial weaknesses.[87] During the first half on 1926 Martin Schreiter, the Political Secretary, complained that because the ZK had not adequately informed him about internal party matters he had first learned about them in the SPD's press.[88] While the other Saxon party districts were immersed in the factional infighting in the summer and autumn of 1926, the East Saxon District Congress did not put the issue on the official agenda.[89] The protocol of the District Congress only registered a complaint from the delegate of the cell group *Sachsenwerke* that: "The BL has placed too little value on conducting the party discussion in the cells."[90] In East Saxony only the leadership of the sub-district Bautzen actively opposed the party line and the expulsion of Ruth Fischer and Maslow.[91] Siegrid Raedel, the functionary sent to Bautzen to assess the situation in the wider party membership, concluded that: "The intellectual *spiritus rektor* is Hoop...(but) he has as

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[86] SAPMO I 3/9/69, Protokoll der Engeren Bezirksleitung Erzgebirge-vogtland vom 1.11.1926, Bl.300.

[87] Organisational weakness refers to both the organisation of the party itself and the number of members and functionaries. These complaints were made constantly at BL level, see, for example, SAPMO I 3/8/27, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. An das ZK. Dresden, den 9.6.1926, Bl.431; A shortage of money restricted the prosecution of several campaigns at the one time and led to a system of prioritising certain issues. To overcome financial problems "*Aufbaumarken*" at 1,50M were proposed at the District Congress in September see, SAPMO I 3/8/19, Antraege zum Bezirksparteitag, Bl.4.

[88] SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der BLS. Ostsachsen vom 10.7.1926, Bl.100.

[89] SAPMO I 3/8/19, Einberfuung der Bezirksparteitag zum 11-12.9.1926, Bl.8. The official agenda reads: The Political Situation and Our Tasks; The Tasks in Saxony; The Forthcoming Elections.

[90] SAPMO I 3/8/19, Antraege zum Bezirksparteitag, Bl.4.

[91] SAPMO I 3/8/27, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. An das ZK. Dresden, den 9.6.1926, Bl.429-30.

good as no support behind him."[92] The high point of Bautzen's opposition to the party line took the form of a resolution sent directly to the ZK and the ECCI: the BL's main concern was that it would give a distorted impression of the situation in the district.[93] The demotion of Schreiter from Political Secretary to Leader of the Department for Communal Policies and Gaebel from Organisation Secretary to BL *Kommissar* in the sub-district Zittau, reflected more their disbelief in the political possibilities offered in East Saxony than the pretext of their excessive caution on developments in Soviet power struggle.[94] The appointment of Melcher as Political Secretary and Renner as editor in chief, both of whom were apparatus functionaries, was a symptom of the district's Bolshevisation. Melcher, who had no background in Saxony either politically or personally, was appointed through the party apparatus as a compliant pair of hands. This development was also reflected in the ZK's directive that Schwarze should take part in an eight week schooling course in Berlin to enable him to take over the BL's Organisational Department, which, as the dynamic of the KPD's Bolshevisation in the districts, was the most important BL department.[95]

The eye of the factional storm in Saxony looked over West Saxony. At Reich level the crucial contributory factor in the eventual demise of the Wedding Opposition has been

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[92] ibid, Bl.429.

[93] SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der BLS. Ostsachsen vom 10.7.1926, Bl.101(Renner).

[94] The "event" in Russia is a reference to the removal of Zinoviev from his position as chairman of the Comintern. Zinoviev's name during this period in East Saxony is conspicuous by its absence from all documents. For Schreiter's and Gaebel's position during the discussion on the expulsion of Fischer and Maslow, see SAPMO I 3/8/25, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. Sitzung der engeren Bezirksleitung vom 19.8.1926, Bl.124-5. For the changes made in the BL, as "recommended" by the ZK, see KPD.8.Ostsachsen. BLS am 15.8.1926., SAPMO I 3/8/25,Bl.129-32.

[95] SAPMO I 3/8/25, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. BLS am 15.8.1926, Bl.132. The new Political Secretary told district functionaries that as he did not know the political conditions in the district he would consult with a commission comprising local district secretaries.

regarded as its fragmentation into signatories and non-signatories of the "Letter of the 700".[96] In West Saxony the Vogt Group refused to sign the "Letter of the 700". This did not represent a capitulation to the ZK: it was a tactic to maintain the unity of the Vogt Group as a faction within the KPD.[97] Strong resistance to the ZK's political line continued at a Party Workers' Conference on 30 November, which dealt with the party's political tasks. The Opposition denounced any communist statement of support for an SPD-led regional government or voting with the SPD on matters relating to unemployment benefits and opposed the use of the united front policy to win over non-communist workers in the preparations for the Congress of Working People, a campaign of meetings organised by the KPD which was to culminate in a conference in Berlin in December 1926.[98] The ZK's use of the "loyalty declaration" against the signatories of the "Letter of the 700" was roundly condemned and a resolution was adopted calling for the return of all those expelled on the 5 November for refusing to capitulate. Hans Weber, who had signed the Letter, was called on to "oppose the ruinous party course still more strongly...and to struggle for the revolutionary Leninist party line."[99] That this was no isolated case is illustrated in a report sent to the Politburo on the 19 November which stated that:

> It must not be overlooked that they (the Opposition) have the support of the leading party workers and of the factory and street cells. Opposition cell leaders are distrustful of the present leadership.[100]

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[96] Weber, *Wandlung*, pp164-5.

[97] SAPMO I 3/10/107, Bezirksparteitag Westsachsen am 10-11.7.1926. Weitere Entwicklungen des Bezirks, Bl.33.

[98] SAPMO, I 3/10/110, Bezirksleitung Westsachsen. Polbuero. An das ZK. Polbuero. Leipzig, den 30.11.1926, Bl.9-10.

[99] SAPMO I 3/10/112, Resolution. Mitgliederversammlung von Gross-Leipzig. (Ueber den Ausschuss Urbahns und Genossen), Bl.515.

[100] SAPMO I 3/10/115, Bericht vom Bezirk Westsachsen. Leipzig, den 19.11.1926, Bl.158-9.

The report further informs the Reich leadership that eliminating the Opposition's activities would not be possible until the process of re-organisation was completed.[101] The report also details how the Vogt Group had been able to paralyse the district party's political work from the BL into the local party organisations.[102] It was the latter factor which demonstrated the actual hold of the Opposition in West Saxony. The factional struggle had resulted in the collapse of the BL as the party's district nerve centre: there were no discussions between the Secretaries and no weekly co-ordinating meetings; the Organisational Division, from which Vogt had admittedly been removed, was unable to carry out the reorganisation of the party's infrastructure; the channels for issuing instructions and directives on party work were almost completely closed down; there was "defective contact" between party cells and no staff of Instructors in the sub-districts; in the factories there was a chronic lack of propaganda material.[103] The Opposition at grass roots level was also continually asserting its right to "proportional representation" in the election of delegates to party conferences.[104] These developments illustrate the extent of the disruption to party work in the manner threatened by Vogt and Burke in July.[105] If the ZK was able to get majority support in all BLs for its policies by the end of October then this, at least in the Opposition's strongholds, only reflected the "yes" votes of the national leadership's placemen.[106] The case of West Saxony demonstrates that the Opposition's ability to function within the KPD was much stronger than traditionally thought.

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[101] ibid, Bl.159.

[102] ibid.

[103] ibid, Bl.158-9.

[104] ibid.

[105] SAPMO I 3/10/107, Beschluss der Bezirksparteitag. Westsachsen am 9-10.7.1926, Bl.32.

[106] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p433.

4.4 The 7th ECCI-Plenum and the 11th Reich Party Congress: Changing Demands on the Saxon KPD.

At 7th ECCI-Plenum in November 1926 only one delegate represented the views of the Wedding Opposition.[107] With this national picture in mind, Hermann Weber wrote that when the 7th ECCI-Plenum met the Left Opposition was as good as beaten: factions around Katz, Korsch and Schwan had been expelled, the Wedding Opposition had been split and the Left Opposition's main leaders, Fischer, Maslow and Urbahns, had been expelled.[108] Control over "international" factional developments and the KPD's national leadership were, however, considerably tighter than in the German party districts. The ECCI-Plenum was able to confirm Zinoviev's replacement as chairman of the Comintern by Bukharin, bringing the Comintern into line with the constellation of forces in the CPSU.[109] The purge of Fischer, Maslow and Urbahns was also confirmed after their refusal to submit to "self-criticism" and to accept unconditionally the Comintern's policy decisions.[110] The decisive event for the internal development of the KPD was the entry of the Meyer Group, known as the Reconcilers, into the ZK and therefore also the BLs. The Meyer Group's strong endorsement of the united front policy made it essentially the respectable face of the Right in the national leadership. The Brandler faction, grouped around Boettcher and Froehlich, however, remained outside of the national leadership and continued criticism of national party policy. With the Right faction divided, and Meyer in the national leadership, the ZK scene was set for a final confrontation with the remaining

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[107] Geyer, 'Sowjet Russland', p27.

[108] Weber, *Wandlung*, p166.

[109] ibid.

[110] ibid, p167; Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p435. The pretext for the expulsion of Fischer and Maslow on the 19 August was their cooperation with Korsch in the drafting of the "Letter of the 700", see Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, p141.

dissidents on the Left.[111] The Soviet leadership, however, felt no indebtedness to Meyer, who was immediately discredited in the Soviet press for his previous "right errors".[112] Of equal significance was Thaelmann's retention of the dominant role in the ZK and ability to prevent the return of Brandler and Thalheimer to do party work in Germany.[113] During the negotiations between the KPD's delegation and the CPSU at the 7th ECCI-Plenum on the 22 and 24 December Thaelmann had been in favour of the dissolution of all factional groups represented in the ZK. However, because Meyer would not join the leadership under these conditions, preventing the so-called policy of "concentration", Stalin imposed on Thaelmann the compromise that Bukharin had been unable to achieve; Meyer joined the new leadership on the basis of concessions to a political platform which more strongly emphasised winning over the left-wing of the SPD for communism.[114] Although the 7th ECCI-Plenum continued to facilitate the removal of those leftists who organised opposition to the Comintern's policy in Germany, Moscow began to adopt a more leftist political language.[115] The conclusion of the factional struggle against the Left, and the slow beginnings of a more left-wing Comintern policy, gave 1927 its character as a year of

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[111] Weber, *Wandlung*, p166; Meyer-Levine, *Inside German Communism*, pp108-9; Fowkes, *German Communism*, p142, citing a conference of party workers on 13-14.1.1926 in *Die Rote Fahne*, 16 and 20.1.1926; Tjaden, K.J., *Struktur und Funktion der KPD-Opposition* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1964, p100.

[112] Weber, H., 'Dokumentation. Zu den Beziehungen Zwischen der KPD und der Kommunistischen International', *VfZ* 2 (1968) (pp177-208), p205.

[113] SAPMO, I 2/1/52, Beschluss des Polbueros in der Fragen der Genossen Brandler und Thalheimer. Berlin, den 7.1.1927, Bl.18. The Politburo meeting accepted the 7th ECCI-Plenum's resolutions but "chose" not to permit the return of Brandler and Thalheimer on the grounds this would "not be advisable for the KPD".

[114] Watlin, A., *Die Komintern 1919-1929* (Mainz, 1993), p76; For Meyer's declaration, Meyer-Levine, *Inside German Communism*, pp111-2.

[115] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p435; Daycock, 'Political Extremes', pp145-6, using the report by the Special Commission into the "errors" of the Fischer-Maslow leadership. Thaelmann's own inclination for

transition. This did not go unnoticed in the KPD. Paul Schlecht, W. Bartels and A. Grylewicz made a declaration to the ZK that there had been "a revision of socialism in one country...(which) makes the crusade against all of the Left, especially in the CPSU and KPD, hypocritical."[116]

The reason for delaying the 11th Reich Party Congress had two causes. Firstly, it was to enable the party apparatus to prevent any significant delegation from the Opposition on the Left.[117] Secondly, it was symptomatic of the top down imposition of policy that the KPD was unable to set an agenda in preparation for a Reich Congress, which dealt with party policy, until the ECCI had set the political line for Germany. A ZK circular to the BLs stated that until the 7th ECCI-Plenum had dealt with policy in Germany "no preparations for the Reich Congress could be undertaken."[118] In January 1927 the KPD began its internal discussion on party policy leading to the 11th Reich Congress. In East Saxony no District Congress was held due to the district's financial weakness; instead it was proposed that delegates to the Reich Congress would come from the sub-district conferences.[119] In the district party itself there was little factional infighting. However, ultra-Leftism had become submerged in the RFB, the KPD's paramilitary organisation, which went into open rebellion against the RFB's national leadership and the BL when a party functionary, Koenig, was imposed on the *Gau* leadership without consultation with

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a return to a "left" political line is made clear in the ZK meeting of early August 1926 see, SAPMO, I 2/2/9, Bl.310-15.

[116] SAPMO I 2/1/52, Sitzung der Politburo am 7.1.1927, Bl.26.

[117] Weber, *Wandlung*, pp169-70. During January and February an "exact check" on the membership was used to assist the expulsion of the Opposition.

[118] SAPMO I 3/8/31, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. Rundschreiben zum Januar-Arbeitsplan 1927. Dresden, den 21.12.1926, Bl.157.

[119] ibid, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. An das ZK. Sekretariat. Dresden, den 1.10.1926, Bl.134. Already in September 1926 the district party leaderships were expecting the annual party congress.

the membership. The incident paralysed all party work during January and led to the disciplining of the seven member *Gau* leadership, which was led by Bernard Koch. The affair, however, was most significant for the party's ability to inform its members that "iron proletarian discipline" in a Leninist party did not permit "democratic" discussion.[120]

In Erzgebirge-Vogtland the situation was very different. The city of Chemnitz continued to be a stronghold of the KPD's right-wing and represented the centre-point of the Brandler faction.[121] The continued strength of support for the Brandler faction in the factories, particularly in the metal-working suburbs, can at least in part be explained by the ability of Communist union functionaries to win positions in the factory councils using a policy of contact and limited co-operation with colleagues in the SPD on issues specifically relating to the factories.[122] The KPD also had its deepest penetration of local politics in the electoral district Chemnitz-Zwickau, taking almost half the number of

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[120] ibid, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. An das ZK der KPD. Dresden, den 8.2.1927, Bl.3-10; After the BL imposed its authority on the *Gau*, RFB the Reich RFB leadership suddenly removed the apparatus functionary Koenig whose imposition on Dresden had caused all the trouble. See, ibid, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. An das ZK. Polbuero. Dresden, den 9.3.1927, Bl.10f.

[121] From the 245 local groups in Chemnitz 143 were stated to have been "too small" for re-organisation; this left 2,169 members or 16 per cent of the total organised into neither factory nor street cells. Of the 102 local groups which were re-organised into cells there were 181 factory cells, with 2,562 members or 19 per cent of the total membership. The number of street cells was 259, which amounted to 8,235 members or 65 per cent of the total membership. The process of delegation to the District Congress included 42 per cent of the membership. However, 52 per cent of the discussion was registered as having taken place in the factory cells see, SAPMO I 3/9/61, Bericht der Bezirksleitung. Stand und Entwicklung der Organisation im Bezirk. Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 12-13.2.1927, Bl.4-7.

[122] Although the sub-district trades union divisions were described by the BL as "existing only on paper", where communist functionaries were active they did get positive results: in 137 Chemnitz factories which informed the leadership of the results of the factory council elections from a total of 724 works councillors the KPD had 279, the SPD 259, 149 were non aligned, with the remainder made up of Christian and right-wing appointees see, SAPMO I 3/9/61, Bericht der Bezirksleitung. Abteilung Gewerkschaften, Bl.17-18.

councillors won by the SPD.[123] Here too the policy was for achieving improvements in workers' living and working conditions by voting with the SPD where necessary. The extent of the local party organisations' co-operation on specific issues with the local SPD in town halls, rather using contact only to "unmask" the SPD's alleged alienation from workers' interests, brought accusation of "right deviations" even in the mid 1920s.[124]

At national level the focus of the factional debate was the return of Ernst Meyer into the leadership.[125] At the District Party Congress in Erzgebirge-Vogtland, however, the agenda was dominated by the issue of whether Brandler and Thalheimer should be allowed to return to do active party work in Germany.[126] The two most prominent supporters of Brandler in the Saxon KPD, Boettcher and Siewert, called for his return to Germany to do party work. Supported by 43 of the 147 delegates at the District Congress they insisted that , "We must give Brandler the possibility of justifying himself and to eliminate the ultra-Left falsification of history (ie Brandler's responsibility for the "failure" of 1923)".[127]

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[123] *Statistisches Jahrbuch fuer den Freistaat Sachsen* (StJFS) Nr.46, (Dresden, 1927), pp458-9. In 1926 the ration of SPD to KPD councillors was 1:2.2. The KPD's internal report states that the KPD had almost parity of communal representation with the SPD see, SAPMO I 3/9/61, Bericht der Kompolabteilung. Bezirksparteitag. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 12-13.2.1927, Bl.22.

[124] SAPMO I 3/9/61, Bericht der Kompolabteilung. Bezirksparteitag. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 12-13.2.1927, Bl.22ff.

[125] Weber, *Wandlung*, p171. Weber tends to over-emphasise the debate on Meyer's return into the leadership in Erzgebirge-Vogtland.

[126] Thaelmann's speech on the second day of the Congress stressed that Meyer's return to the national leadership was in accordance with the policy of the "concentration of forces" since the Comintern's "open letter" and Meyer had rejected "Brandler's policy, the policy of 1923" see, SAPMO I 3/9/61, 'Die politische Diskussion auf dem Bezirksparteitag der KPD', in *Kaempfer*,1 Beilage, Nr.41, 18.2.1927, Bl.54.

[127] SAPMO I 3/9/61, 'Die Entscheidung des Bezirksparteitages. Vorbehaltlos auf der Linie des ZKs', in *Kaempfer*, 14.2.1927, Bl.46; ibid, 'Politische Lage und die Aufgaben der Partei. Resolution des Bezirksparteitages der KPD Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland'; ibid, 'Die politische Diskussion auf dem Bezirksparteitag der KPD', in *Kampfer*, 1 Beilage, Nr.41, 18.2.1927, Bl.54.

The motion was opposed by the Left in the BL who were against the re-introduction of a party debate on "Brandlerism", fearing that this could lead to a renewed "right-turn".[128] In Erzgebirge-Vogtland the use of the KPD's re-organisation on the basis of factory cells to enforce the political line came up against the obstacle of factory cells being overwhelmingly the domain of Right Communists. Furthermore, while the ZK continued to prioritise completing the purge of the independent minded leftists in the party, the criticisms of the Right were again able to express themselves in the party press: a development of considerable concern to the BL.[129]

In Berlin and the Ruhr, which had been centres of the Left Opposition, the party apparatus had been able to impose compliant BLs under Pieck and Florin.[130] In West Saxony, however, there was continued strong resistance to the imposition of party policy from above. This was made evident when 14 members of the street cell "Leipzig-Centre 5" left the party because of the party apparatus's refusal to accept the adoption of a majority resolution supporting the Opposition's position.[131] A report sent to the Politburo also indicated that this means of eliminating the Opposition did not win the trust of the

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[128] SAPMO I 3/9/61, 'Die Entscheidung des Bezirksparteitages. Vorbehaltlos auf der Linie des ZKs', in *Kaempfer*, 14.2.1927, Bl.46. The BL also noted that Doebeln was the only district centre of ultra-Leftism. Doebeln, however, was upheld as an example for good party work in the communal councils, see, SAPMO I 3/9/61, Bericht der Kompolabteilung. Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 12-13.2.1927, Bl.22.

[129] SAPMO I 3/9/61, 'Politische Lage und die Aufgaben der Partei. Resolution des Bezirksparteitages der KPD Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland', in *Kaempfer*, 14.2.1927, Bl.46; ibid, "Erfolge, Maengel und neue Wege unserer Partei Arbeit", in *Kaempfer*,1 Beilage, Nr.41, 18.2.1927, Bl.54; The vote on the political resolution at the District Congress was: 84 for the position of the BL majority, 22 for the Right Opposition and 11 abstentions. No account of why this does not total 147 delegates is given.

[130] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p436; Herlemann, *Kommunalpolitik*, p69ff.

[131] SAPMO I 3/10/112, Protokoll der BLS. West Sachsen am 26.11.1926, Bl.511(Dasecke).

ordinary party membership, whom the ZK wanted to win over.[132] When the District Party

Congresses met immediately prior to the Essen Congress the only district to elect a new

BL with a majority for the Wedding Opposition was Pfalz. To this can be added the very

strong support for the Vogt Group in West Saxony.[133]

In West Saxony the pro-ZK majority had been increased in relation to the last Congress

in July 1926 from 11 to 19. However, the Opposition was still able to have Koetter make

a speech on behalf of the Wedding Opposition.[134] The return of Meyer into the Reich

leadership fractured the BL into four factions: a Left faction around Stroetzel emerged in

addition to the Vogt Group and the pro-ZK majority, which comprised the Right under

Boettcher and Meyer's factional adherent Georg Schumann, who was appointed Political

Secretary.[135] During the Congress Burke made a direct appeal to Stroetzel to "reject the

7th ECCI-Plenum's position on the return of Brandler and Thalheimer...(and) to struggle

against Schumann, Boettcher and company with the Wedding Opposition."[136] The District

Congress was essentially an exercise in bringing the KPD into line with the resolutions on

political tactics adopted by the Comintern and excluding the Opposition from influence. In

West Saxony the majority resolution in support of the national leadership's policies was a

facade which barely concealed the popularity of the Opposition among the membership: it

had only been achieved by using the force of the apparatus to weight the process of

delegation against the Vogt Group.[137] At the District Party Congress the language used in

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[132] SAPMO I 3/10/115, Bericht vom Bezirk Westsachsen, den 19.11.1926, Bl.158-9.

[133] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p436.

[134] SAPMO I 3/10/108, 'Die politische Resolution des Bezirksparteitages', *SAZ*, 1.3.1927, Bl.3.

[135] Schumann had joined the leadership with Meyer see, SAPMO I 3/10/108, 'Der Verlauf des Bezirksparteitages', in *SAZ*, 2.3.1927, Bl.4.

[136] ibid.

[137] SAPMO 3/10/108, Bezirksparteitag Westsachsen am 28.2.1927, Bl.1-2.

the official resolutions began to place a more leftist inflection on the united policy. This tactic was not only an attempt to win over those in the Opposition who did not want to risk expulsion, it also reflected the ZK's directives on policy.[138]

Winkler has detailed how at the Essen Congress there were constant interruptions during the speeches of those who spoke against the position of the ZK majority. Importantly, party policy was now characterised by a "left isolationist" interpretation of the united front tactic and the SPD's leadership was lambasted for their "support of imperialism" against the Soviet Union.[139] The Thaelmann Group's control of the proceedings at the Reich Congress was so tight and the beginnings of a more antagonistic policy towards the SPD so marked, that Meyer later wrote he felt like he was "going to the slaughter" when he presented a minority resolution on policy.[140]

Again Soviet foreign policy concerns had influenced the KPD's policy in Germany. The collapse of the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee, which no longer seemed willing or able to influence British foreign policy in China, brought with it a more open attack on the social democratic workers' movement throughout the Comintern's national section.[141] The main thrust of the Reich Congress, however, was the elimination of factionalism in the KPD under the slogan of an "internal party consolidation".[142] The ZK's intention of eliminating all factions within the party was made clear when the warning statement was fired across the dissident's bows that:

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[138] SAPMO I 3/10/108, 'Die politische Resolution des Bezirksparteitages', in *SAZ* 1.3.1927, Bl.3; ibid, 'Der Verlauf des Bezirksparteitages', in *SAZ*, 2.3.1927.

[139] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, pp436-7.

[140] Meyer-Levine, *Inside German Communism*, p119.

[141] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p438; These foreign policy issues are detailed in, SAPMO I 2/1/54, Protokoll der Sitzung des ZKs am 1.4.1927, Bl.94.

[142] *Bericht.11.Parteitag*, quoted in Weber, *Wandlung*, p173.

The party has been tolerant of the Opposition but a Communist Party can only exist when it is united, when it recognises the leadership elected at the Party Congress. The opposition prevents party work from being done.[143]

However, the Thaelmann Group, which continued to be the dominant faction, was aware that the newly elected ZK was still far from united: it also included the Meyer Group, an assortment of leftists who were discontented with the direction of party policy and even a new Left Opposition around Bertz, Gerbig and Paul Maslowski.[144] Furthermore, at district level the central importance of the factional struggle had placed senior supporters of Meyer and the Right into the BL's. With this in mind a Control Commission was set up with the primary function of using the re-organisation of the party, on the basis of factory cells and the imposition of "revolutionary party discipline", to serve the further elimination of opposition from the Left factions.[145]

4.5 The Year of Comintern Transition and the Saxon KPD.

In West Saxony Georg Schumann, a member of Meyer's faction, was appointed as Political Secretary. The BL also included Boettcher, who had been transferred from Erzgebirge-Vogtland, and Arthur Lieberasch, who were on the party's Right. Boettcher took up the influential position as editor in chief of the *Saechsische Arbeiter Zeitung* (SAZ), the district KPD's daily paper.[146] The role of these appointments to the BL was clear: to suppress the Vogt Group's factional activities. However, the collision of factions

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[143] ibid.

[144] Weber, *Wandlung*, p177.

[145] ibid, pp176-7.

[146] On the inclusion of Boettcher and other prominent members of the Brandler faction in the BL see, Weber, ibid, p186.

in the BL, and the continued support for the Vogt Group among the membership, jammed the wheels of the district party. The District Party Congress in December 1927 admitted that the ZK's appointments to the BL that spring had been rejected by the membership and as a consequence the BL had been unable to carry out party work.[147]

The first stage in setting the wheels of the district party's political work in motion again was the reconstruction of functioning departments in the BL. This began with the Organisation Department, which gradually restored co-operation between the various departments.[148] However, it did not achieve the mobilisation of the wider membership for work on the basis of the official party line in the cells or residential organisation: for example only 105 party members from Greater Leipzig were involved in the October recruitment campaign.[149] Even more significantly the Vogt Group continued to dominate the implementation of party campaigns, such as the campaign against the Saxon *Buergerblock* government in early August. In West Saxony the Vogt Group was using a parallel party apparatus to instruct its supporters on the basis of support for the policies adopted during the Fischer leadership of 1924/5.[150]

Resistance to the official party line continued throughout 1927 on a massive scale. BL reports complained that in Greater Leipzig the party line had been "sabotaged" in several City District Leaderships and local groups.[151] Sub-District conferences, uniting delegates

[147] SAPMO I 3/10/108, Bericht der Bezirksleitung Westsachsen der KPD an der Bezirksparteitag am 10-11.12.1927, Bl.64.

[148] SAPMO I 3/10/108, Bericht der Bezirksleitung Westsachsen der KPD an der Bezirksparteitag am 10-11.12.1927, Bl.64ff.

[149] On "passivity" in the factory cells see, SAPMO I 3/10/116, Taetigkeitsbericht fuer den Monat Oktober 1927. KPD Bezirk Westsachsen. Leipzig, den 24.11.1927, Bl.106; For the recruitment campaign, ibid, Bl.112.

[150] ibid, Organisationsbericht vom 1.7.1927 bis 15.8.1927, Bl.38-9.

[151] ibid, Bl.40.

from the grass roots party organisations, were able to paper over dissent in Meuschelwitz, Riesa and Grimma, but in the centres of the opposition in Wurzen and Borna the district apparatus was unable to enforce the leadership's position.[152] The widespread "passive resistance" to the party's re-organisation on the basis of factory cells was reflected in the continuation of membership meetings as the main forum for delegation to the sub-district conferences.[153] The predominance of oppositional functionaries also caused the collapse of the courier system which functioned as the main artery between the BL and the lower organisations.[154]

The BL majority set out to use the party apparatus to bring the membership into line with official party policy. The apparatus functionary, Baumgaertel, was given the task of instructing local party leaderships on the use of "organisational means" (ie manipulating the delegation to conferences on party policy) to "overcome differences" with the membership on party policy. These "organisational measures" also detailed how to include new functionaries in party work, especially from the large factories, and to offer "formerly oppositional comrades" the opportunity of returning to the party fold.[155] At this point in the KPD's development there appeared to be a divergence from the instructions of the BL majority, which comprised leaders who were strongly disposed to the united front policy, and the role of the district apparatus, which was encouraging local members of the

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[152] ibid.

[153] ibid.

[154] ibid, Taetigkeitsbericht fuer Monat August 1927, Bl.63.

[155] ibid, Bericht von der Sitzung der Stadtteilleitung "F" am 23.9.1927, Bl.97. The call for functionaries from the large cells was related to the ability of the leadership to hand pick delegates. The number of factory cells in the industrial groups with larger factories in West Saxony were: metal: 44 factory cells; transport: 12 factory cells; chemical works: 1 factory cell see, ibid, Taetigkeitsbericht fuer den Monat Oktober 1927. KPD Bezirk Westsachsen. Leipzig, den 24.11.1927, Bl.103.

Opposition in the belief that their day was about to dawn again in the KPD.[156] One example of these overtures to the Vogt Group was the ZK sanctioned re-admittance of Lauschke and Henning, who were expelled in March 1926 for their refusal to abandon the independent communist transport workers' union.[157]

In West Saxony the opposition also continued at local level to express solidarity with the Joint Opposition in the CPSU. At a membership meeting in Wurzen on the 16 November a resolution supporting Trotsky and Zinoviev and opposing any move to expel them from the Comintern and CPSU was adopted by 11 votes to 4.[158] The chairman of the local RFB, Munkelt, stated that: "It would be outrageous to expel Trotsky and Zinoviev...(because) there would also be expulsions in the KPD for representing a different point of view."[159] The Opposition also drew considerable attention to the BL's refusal to discuss the failure of Comintern policy in the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee, which the Opposition had consistently interpreted as a main cause of the "false united front tactic...and a return to Brandlerism."[160] The Vogt Group's criticisms of party policy again became acute with the news that the ZK had adopted Brandler's "Action Programme".[161] There is no documentation explaining why Meyer was able to push the ZK to the right in July 1927, so soon after the KPD's Reich Congress. However, the most likely explanation is that the Comintern, under Bukharin, was able to intervene at the highest level in the KPD. Meyer's minority resolution at the 11th Congress was now

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[156] SAPMO I 3/10/108, Rundschreiben Nr.15. KPD Bezirk Westsachsen. Leipzig, den 25.10.1927, Bl.11-14.

[157] SAPMO I 3/10/116, Bericht der Betriebszelle Engelsdorf, den 27.9.1927, Bl.96.

[158] ibid, Bericht ueber die Mitgliederversammlung in Wurzen am 16.11.1927, Bl.186. Of 68 members entitled to vote only 17 turned up, with 2 abstaining.

[159] ibid, Bericht ueber die Mitgliederversammlung in Wurzen am 16.11.1927, Bl.186(Munkelt).

[160] ibid.

[161] Details in, Watlin, *Die Komintern*, p76.

suddenly adopted by the national leadership.[162] During 1927 it appears that the KPD's inner core of senior party leaders was gaining and losing the upper hand in policy decisions in relation to developments in the CPSU, and that this was sending conflicting ripples throughout the district parties and local groups.

When the District Party Congress met in December 1927, the agenda continued to concentrate on ending the factional feud; restructuring the party's organisation on the basis of smaller, more malleable cells; and imposing compliance with the official party line: in the KPD's *Parteisprache* this was political and organisational Bolshevisation.[163] The ZK's domination of the agenda was demonstrated by the constant modifications made to the BL's speeches and resolutions, made under the aegis of Walter Ulbricht, which necessitated repeated U-turns at the meetings in lower party organisations held in preparation for the District Congress.[164] In the meetings campaign which discussed party policy and elected delegates to the District Congress, the BL majority was able to send a functionary into almost all of the lower organisations to represent the official party line. The hands on approach in coordinating the party "debate" was intended to allow the BL majority to "guarantee the frictionless development of the discussion."[165] The emphasis was also more strongly placed on the election of delegates from the factory cells: even weak cells brought together to discuss the party course were to elect delegates separately.[166] It must be noted, however, that the atomisation of the party membership

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[162] Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, pp143-4.

[163] SAPMO I 3/10/108, Material zum Bezirksparteitag der KPD Westsachsen. Sekretariat. [Nur fuer Mitglieder der KPD]. Leipzig, den 3.11.1927, Bl.28-30.

[164] ibid, KPD Bezirk Westsachsen. An das ZK der Partei, Polbuero. Leipzig, den 26.11.1927, Bl.54.

[165] ibid, Rundschreiben Nr.15. KPD Bezirk Westsachsen. Leipzig, den 25.10.1927, Bl.11-14.

[166] ibid. The KPD's figures for the participation in the preparations for the District Congress were: almost 70 per cent of members of factory cells and 17.5 per cent of members in residential organisations. The membership organised in factory cells was estimated at between 10-15 per cent in West Saxony, statistical

into small units was not a foolproof method of eliminating support for the Vogt Group: there was also resistance to the party line among members organised in the factory. One such example was the role of the Opposition in the *Heiterblick* tram workshop in Leipzig. Otto Vogt was elected cell Organisation Leader and candidate for the 1928 factory council elections against explicit instructions to the contrary from the BL.[167] District party records detail three factory cells in Leipzig which adopted the Opposition's political platform and requested that Arthur Vogt give the Opposition's speech at the District Congress.[168] However, the atomisation of the membership into smaller organisational units did increasingly overextend the Opposition's ability to organise resistance to the ZK. Well known leading activists in the Vogt Group, such as Otto Vogt and Fritz Gerbig, were placed under the intense pressure of going from one cell to another to present the Opposition's policies.[169] Outside the Opposition's strongholds in the city of Leipzig, only one City District in Wurzen remained solidly behind it.[170] The district apparatus was also able to limit the distribution of the Opposition's policy statements by sequestrating leaflets and factional circulars.[171] The BL also used the mode of delegation to exclude the Vogt Group from the District Congress: in the Opposition's Leipzig stronghold one delegate represented 30 paid up members, in the other West Saxon party

details in, SAPMO I 3/10/116, Taetigkeitsbericht fuer den Monat December 1927. Organisationsbericht. KPD Bezirk Westsachsen, Bl.193.

[167] SAPMO I 3/10/116, Taetigkeitsbericht der Bezirksleitung Westsachsen fuer January 1928, Bl.241.

[168] SAPMO I 3/10/108, KPD Bezirk Westsachsen. An das ZK der Partei, Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 23.11.1927, Bl.49.

[169] ibid, KPD Bezirk Westsachsen. An das ZK der Partei, Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 23.11.1927, Bl.49.

[170] ibid, KPD Bezirk Westsachsen. An das ZK der Partei, Polbuero Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 19.11.1927, Bl.43.

[171] ibid, Bericht der gemeinsamen Arbeitsgebiete Konferenz am 19.11.1927 der Arbeitsgebiet Boehlitz-Ehrenberg und Weideritzsch, Bl.46.

sub-districts the ratio was one to ten.[172] In addition to bulldozing by the district apparatus, some members of the Vogt Group went over to the more "moderate" BL Left-faction under Max Stroetzel, known as the "Leipzig Left", which was not aligned to the Joint Opposition in the CPSU. The same process took place among supporters of the Right in West Saxony, who transferred their support from Boettcher to Georg Schumann, in the belief that this would give a louder voice to their concerns.[173]

Before the District Party Congress the Opposition extended the factional struggle into the so-called "mass organisations", the RH (Rote Hilfe) and RFB. The use of these organisations as bases from which to continue the factional struggle was a response to the party apparatus's ability to close down so many of the channels of opposition within the KPD. The RH is usually identified with the KPD's right wing in that it undertook work to gain the party broad sympathy using campaigns ranging from collections for homes for workers' children to amnesties for political prisoners.[174] However, in West Saxony the Vogt Group was able to win the support of the overwhelming majority of RH members.[175] During the summer the BL was unable to re-assert its control over the RH at a series of meetings with the District Executive because of the solid support enjoyed by the Vogt Group.[176] The report made to the District Congress in December stated that in the first half of 1927:

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[172] ibid, Rundschreiben Nr.15. KPD Bezirk Westsachsen. Leipzig, den 25.10.1927, Bl.12.

[173] Both the Schumann and Boettcher Groups comprised the committee preparing for the District Congress but remained separately organised see, ibid, KPD Bezirk Westsachsen. An das ZK der Partei, Polbuero, Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 30.11.1927, Bl.55.

[174] Wunderer, H., *Arbeitervereine und Arbeiterparteien. Kultur und Massenorganisationen in der Arbeiterbewegung 1890-1933* (Frankfurt/M, 1980), pp130ff.

[175] SAPMO I 3/10/116, Taetigkeitsbericht fuer den Monat Juni 1927, Bl.2-3.

[176] ibid, Bericht fuer den Monat Juli 1927, Leipzig, den 22.8.1927, Bl.35.

authorities and the Bavarian State government have not been entirely co-operative. In fact, a former Bavarian local authority spokesperson described relations between the Bavarian State government and local authorities as 'stiefmütterlich'.[65] This relationship has been worsened by economic and financial pressures following German unification, the recession and economic targets associated with the EMU.[66] The Bavarian State government has responded to these pressures by shifting a number of 'expensive' responsibilities to lower government levels.[67] Bavarian local authorities in turn have had to cope with public criticism over unpopular and stringent economic decisions. As a result, communication between the Bavarian State government and local authorities has deteriorated further.[68]

Apart from disputes between the Bavarian State government and Bavarian local authorities over competencies, both levels have pursued different objectives. The Bavarian State government have focused on the formulation of legal texts for Bavaria, while Bavarian local authorities have been occupied with the subsequent practicalities of policy obligations. While this sharing of tasks makes sense, the difference in perceived objectives has constituted a psychological gap between 'instructors' and 'implementors' which does not facilitate the policy process in Bavaria.

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[65] 'Stiefmütterlich' - behaving like a 'stepmother'. Comment made by a former official of the Europabüro der Bayerischen Kommunen, interview, 6. March 1997, Brussels.

[66] For details on EMU convergence criteria see Chapter 4, footnote 43.

[67] For instance, some social security provisions and environmental policy tasks were shifted to local authorities.

[68] Official of the Europabüro der Bayerischen Kommunen, interview, 4. March 1997, Brussels.

organisation for *Tatmenschen* on the party's left wing. Rather than become involved in a

paralysing factional struggle these militants "hibernated" in the RFB to avoid disrupting a

party regarded as their *Heimat*.[181] In the Ruhr and Berlin the RFB conforms to the

generalisation of an organisation which prioritised pro-Soviet propaganda, in particular

communist campaigns against "imperialist war" (ie defence of the Soviet Union). Activists

in these cases broke up meetings of the Opposition groups in a bid to enforce internal

party *Ruhe und Ordnung*.[182] West Saxony, however, was one of the party districts where

a Left opposition did emerge, which became active in the factional struggle.

In August 1927 the BL's internal reports described the situation in the RFB as having

become "critical": this triggered an unsuccessful attempt to oust the Left from the *Gau*

leadership.[183] After a meeting in September 1927 between the Narrower BL and the RFB

leadership around Hoffmann, Franz Albrecht and Schubert, Schumann complained that the

organisation "lacked discipline and had received insufficient political schooling."[184] Unlike

in the case of the RH, the RFB was the central vehicle for carrying out party agitation and

propaganda while the party proper dissipated its energy in the factional struggle: without

severely impairing the party's wider political work the BL was in no position to

temporarily close down the RFB's District Executive. Despite repeated efforts Schumann

was unable to replace the leftist RFB district leader, Arthur Hoffmann, with the more

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[181] Reuter, *KPD-Politik*, p104f.

[182] For Berlin, Winker, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p445; For the Ruhr, Herlemann, *Kommunalpolitik*, p 71; For the RFB's role in campaigns against "imperialist war" (ie defence of the Soviet Union) see, Finker, K., *Geschichte der RFB* (Berlin(Ost), 1976), pp16ff.

[183] SAPMO I 3/10/116, Bericht fuer den Monat Juli 1927. Leipzig, den 22.8.1927, Bl.37.

[184] ibid, Protokoll der gemeinsamen Sitzung der engeren Bezirksleitung mit der Gaufuehrung des RFBs am 5.9.1927, Bl.86-7.

compliant Hans Puetz.[185] In West Saxony the RFB did not merely re-emerge to carry out the "ultra-Left" political line after its gradual introduction during 1928, but had carried out a leftist political line throughout the period when the "moderate" united front was official party policy.[186] The leftists in the West Saxon RFB were able to remain in the KPD and continue their policies in 1928 when the official party line made a fresh declaration of leftism.[187]

When the District Party Congress met on 10-11 December 1927, 132 delegates voted with the BL majority and only 18 supported the Opposition. This, however, was not an accurate reflection of the situation in the membership, but a facade constructed by the machinations of the party machine.[188] However, the BL's final ability to marginalise the representation of the Vogt Group using the party machine coincided with the early signals of a "left turn" in party policy.[189] The complex of conflicting developments in the KPD during 1927 and early 1928 helps explain the fragmentation of the factions comprising the so-called Wedding Opposition in Pfalz, Berlin and West Saxony. In Berlin, Koetter abandoned factional activity, for the security of a position in the district party in

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[185] SAPMO I 3/10/108, Bericht der Bezirksleitung Westsachsen der KPD an der Bezirksparteitag am 10-11.12.1927, Bl.83-4; For the 1928 Reichstag election see, SAPMO I 3/10/116, Bericht ueber die Wahlbewegung zur Reichstagwahl 1928 der Bezirksleitung West Sachsen der KPD. Leipzig, den 21.6.1928, Bl.413.

[186] SAPMO I 3/10/108, Bericht der Bezirksleitung Westsachsen der KPD an der Bezirksparteitag am 10-11.12.1927, Bl.84-7.

[187] SAPMO I 3/10/116, Taetigkeitsbericht fuer die monate April und Mai 1928. KPD Bezirk Westsachsen. Leipzig, den 16.6.1928, Bl.360ff.

[188] ibid, Taetigkeitsbericht fuer den Monat Dezember 1927, Bezirk Westsachsen. Leipzig, den 5.1.1928, Bl.192.

[189] For the political line presented by Schumann at the District Congress in December 1927 see, SAPMO, I 3/10/108, Bericht der Bezirksleitung Westsachsen der KPD an der Bezirksparteitag am 10-11.12.1927,Bl.58ff.

Bielefeld.[190] However, in West Saxony, despite Vogt's physical removal from the district, the so-called Vogt Group survived in the West Saxon KPD until the return to an ultra-Left isolationist policy in the course of 1928. Weber's account of the dissolution of the Vogt Group in December 1927 due to a lack of support among the membership must now be revised in the light of new documentary evidence.[191] The Vogt Group continued to exercise *de facto* control of the lower party organisations, at least in Leipzig, which carried the party line at grass roots level.

The ability of the Vogt Group to remain in the KPD as an organised faction helps to explain the failure of the *Lenin Bund*, the consolidation of the former Left Opposition as an independent communist party led by Ruth Fischer and Hugo Urbahns, to attract left-wing activists in West Saxony. There were meetings between Urbahns and members of the Vogt Group in West Saxony. However, despite considerable sympathy for the plight of their former party comrades, there was no mood to join the *Lenin Bund's* campaign outside the KPD; all the more so as the party had begun a new "left-turn".[192] A dislike of political life outside the KPD also characterised the *Lenin Bund's* membership: the majority of them accepted an olive branch from the ZK in early 1928 allowing them to return to the KPD on condition that they desisted from oppositional activities for six months.[193] It appears that the *Lenin Bund's*, and indeed the Vogt Group's, motivation to

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[190] Weber, *Wandlung*, p180.

[191] *ibid.*

[192] On the meetings between the Vogt Group and the *Lenin Bund* see, SAPMO I 3/10/117, Bericht von der Urbahnsversammlung in Leipzig am Deinstag, den 29.11.1927, Bl.69ff. From the perspective of the BL see, ibid, 'Urbahns in Leipzig', in *SAZ*, 6.11.1927, Bl.68.

[193] Zimmermann, R., *Der Leninbund. Linke Kommunisten in der Weimarer Republik* (Dusseldorf, 1978), pp107ff.

take up the factional struggle lay less in a contempt for Stalin, "socialism in one country", and the process of the KPD's "Stalinisation", than a commitment to left-wing communism.

4.6 Conclusion: "Stalinisation" and the Saxon KPD.

The depth of political division in the KPD after the Comintern's "open letter" of September 1925 varied across the three Saxon party districts. In Saxony at least, Rosa Meyer-Levine's belief that a major rift in the party was avoided, by Ruth Fischer's supporters "jumping ship" into the new vessel of Leftism, the Thaelmann leadership, is too generalised.[194] The debate on the party's political line was far from over at the First Reich Conference at the end of October 1925. Throughout 1926 the feud on party policy and developments in the Soviet Union continued to dominate internal party life. The overthrow of the Fischer leadership, and the subsequent purge of the ultra-Left factions (ie those who could not be reconciled to the Comintern's policies), had necessitated a return to the cohabitation of factions in the ZK and the BLs. Saxony distinguished itself from national developments in that the Right, under Brandler's factional supporters, rejoined the Saxon Regional Executive and the BLs, producing a sharp backlash from their opponents.

The strength of the Saxon Left's political conviction was not so weak that they simply abandoned ship in favour of flowing into the new prevailing current in the national leadership. Indeed, the Left had a powerful regional argument: the "old leadership", and their united front policy, had been held responsible for the "Failed October" of 1923, providing the ideological basis for the policy of outright rejection of cooperation between

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[194] Meyer-Levine, *Inside German Communism*, p93.

Social Democrats and Communists at local as well as national level.[195] In Erzgebirge-Vogtland the BL initially split over the "right-turn" in party policy and question of support for or rejection of the Thaelmann leadership. However, after the Thaelmann leadership sanctioned the return of the "old leadership" to senior positions in the Saxon leadership, the earlier BL dissidents, grouped around Bertz and Wesche, returned to prominence in a campaign against the ZK's "concessions to the Right". In 1926 Berzt and Wesche again resigned their positions as district secretaries in protest at party policy. The ability of the district secretaries in the Erzgebirge-Vogtland BL to gain concessions was, however, curtailed by their lack of support in the district membership, which remained a centre of right-wing communism.

In West Saxony the "right-turn" in policy had also fractured the BL. A small group of functionaries, around the Political Secretary Max Stroetzel, initially went over to the new party leadership in autumn 1925. However, by 1927 this BL-faction began to oppose the direction of party policy as an organised faction. In West Saxony the most important faction was a so-called ultra-Left group, the Vogt Group, which was part of the factional alliance known as the Wedding Opposition. The Vogt Group had such ingrained support among the district party membership that it remained represented in the BL throughout the mid twenties. The KPD leadership's inability to eliminate this faction had two causes. Firstly, to have expelled all recalcitrant members would have meant the loss of almost all district party workers. And secondly, the further into the year 1927 the Vogt Group survived, the more its leaders realised that a fresh appeal would be made to the party's "left tradition". By December 1927, when the party machine had finally marginalised the Vogt Group's representation at the District Congress, its leaders had been recruited for

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[195] See chapter three above, esp. section 3.2.

work in the party apparatus. West Saxony illustrates that, although the Comintern could set the national party's policy and determine the leadership in Germany to implement it, at grass roots level, where campaigning came into contact with local politics, the political parameters of German Communism's "Stalinisation" were more limited.

In East Saxony the KPD's weak support translated into a weaker development of the factional struggle. The district party came more rapidly under the direction of the party apparatus than in the other Saxony party districts. The leading figures in the BL, Schreiter and Gaebel, did not blame the factional struggle for impeding party work, but the KPD's inability to gain significant footholds in an area dominated by the right-wing of the SPD.

In the local organisations of the KPD political tendencies and factional loyalties were not, in the first instance, determined by the ideological debate which absorbed much of the leadership. Instead, local "communisms" grew out of local conditions and local possibilities for communists policies. In Erzgibirge-Vogtland the KPD derived benefits from the united front tactic. On-going, day-to-day work in the trade unions and in local politics, when necessary in limited cooperation with the SPD, brought tangible results via improvement in workers' pay and living and working conditions The KPD's roots in the workers' movement enabled the district party to remain a stronghold of German communism during the mid twenties. It was in this Saxon party district that the KPD was most firmly anchored in local politics, the factories and the trade unions. The local SPD's independent left-wing position, and belief in the need for cooperation with the KPD, contributed to producing a right-Communist political tendency.

The reverse of these factors applies in West Saxony where a left-isolationist political trend dominated the district party. Unable to penetrate the barriers of solid and stable SPD organisation and loyalty to the official party line, the KPD was politically repelled. Instead

of a policy of cooperation on joint socio-political aims in local politics and the trade unions to win over recruits for communism, the local party activists looked to an assertion of independence from and opposition to the SPD. In East Saxony the main expression of the inability to penetrate the SPD organisational citadel was the attraction of the RFB to local leftists. The district party, to generalise somewhat, felt shut out of workers' politics by the domination of the SPD.

These results for Saxony do not confirm Reuter's thesis, constructed from interviews with contemporary party members, that Thaelmann functioned as an "integration figure" in the KPD, capable of bridging supporters across the factional divide.[196] The recollections of party militants can be seen as a form of communist Munchhausen syndrome by proxy: Thaelmann was actively pursuing the factional struggle but those interviewed by Reuter believed him to be "restoring order". It is possible that, as those interviewed remained Communists in the early 1980s, internal party propaganda over the years "re-wrote" their historical recollections. In Saxony, when Thaelmann seemed to abandon the aims of the Left, the Left abandoned him. Saxony also differed from Reuter's findings in terms of the membership's strength of factional and political conviction. While it is correct that some members did change their factional loyalties, there is no evidence that they switched across the factional spectrum from Right to Left and *vice versa.*[197] Party members' incentive to embark on a factional flit appear to have been motivated by a strong desire to avoid any sanction against them by the leadership and took the form of accepting an olive branch, in the form of the programme of the most similar ZK-loyal faction. The only enclaves in the KPD which could have remained oblivious to the factional feud and the

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[196] Reuter, *KPD-Politik*, p91.

[197] ibid, pp66-91.

changes of official policy in the mid twenties, as Daycock details did happen, were in areas like East Saxony where the party itself was weak.[198] However, it is correct that party militants did ignore the leadership's policy directives if they conflicted with the reality of local conditions.

The new documentation conclusively disproves Peukert's "sociological" explanation for the changes in party policy, and its acceptance by the membership, during the mid twenties.[199] It was not changes in the KPD's sociological composition which determined the KPD's policy, but directives from above, ultimately located in Moscow, which did so. In this regard Weber is correct that the "Stalinisation" of the KPD (ie the political purges and the re-organisation of the channels of instruction and control) characterised the party's political developments. However, in the mid twenties this too had its limits. The Politburo's Secretariat controlled the instruction of the district party organisations using an increasingly well developed party machine. Despite a facade of internal party democracy it was the party centre, and not the membership, which appointed the BLs and instructed the district apparatus. But at local level few members could be involved in party work which appeared meaningless. Where a faction was strongly enough implanted in the local environment, as the example of West Saxon illustrates, the density of the local communist undergrowth held back the advocates of the official party line as *persona non grata*.

The power struggle in the KPD had burned up the political oxygen in the KPD which was necessary to conduct the constant political campaigning demanded by the leadership. The activists who were involved in the factional feud were precisely those most likely to have been active in local communist campaigns. The KPD's prioritisation of publicising its

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[198] Daycock, 'Political Extremes', pp145-6.

political face, rather than anchoring the party's constituency through *Sozialpolitik*, loosened the party's ties to the German political scene as the decade progressed. The KPD's increasingly totalitarian structure refused to yield to influences on the membership produced by local conditions: the failure to account for local differences in the party in turn limited party activism. The Saxon KPD's membership, in any significant numbers, therefore, only became involved in specific campaigns. The KPD's political campaigning in Saxony during the mid twenties is the subject of the following chapter.

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[199] Peukert, 'Sozialgeschichte', p35-6.

5. The Saxon KPD's "Unity Campaigns" in the Context of the Fragmentation of the Saxon Political System.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the ability of the KPD to function within the Saxon political system and to influence public opinion. The Weimar Republic's middle years (1924-1928) have been described by historians as the period of "relative stability": "relative" to the socio-economic crisis and political turmoil of the Republic's first five years and the early thirties .[1] In Saxony the need to emphasise the "relative" nature of the region's stability in the mid twenties led B. Lapp to question the suitability of adopting the term.[2] Lapp re-focuses the emphasis on conditions in Saxony to stress the region's early political fragmentation, whereby the traditional parties of the middle classes lost out to "particular interest" parties, in a process driven by structural economic and social tensions.[3]

The Comintern and the KPD's leadership also justified the united front policy in terms of a "relative stabilisation" of the political and economic system in the capitalist world. The KPD's political tactic, at least on paper, returned to a policy of practical work in the trade unions and local councils, as well as agitation among the unemployed, to increase the party's appeal.[4] So-called "Unity Committees" were set up to draw non-communists into communist-led campaigns, which would use topics of popular appeal, such as the

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[1] Kolb, E., *The Weimar Republic* (trans: P. S. Falla; London, 1988), p66f, for a historiographical discusion of social and econonic developments, pp157ff.

[2] Lapp, B., 'Political Polarisation in Weimar Germany: The Saxon *Buergertum* and the Left, 1918/19-1930', PhD Dissertation (University of California, 1991), p9.

[3] ibid, pp204ff.

[4] Wuenderlich, V., *Arbeiterbewegung und Selbstverwaltung. KPD und Kommunalpolitik in der Weimarer Republik. Mit dem Beispiel Solingen* (Wuppertal,1980), pp163ff; Herlemann, B., *Die Kommunalpolitik der KPD im Ruhrgebiet* (Wuppertal,1977), pp90ff.

expropriation of the former German Princely Houses, as a conveyor belt to communism.[5] The KPD's campaigning was intended to create what the Comintern called a pro-Soviet "left-wing in the workers' movement", as a counterbalance to the SPD leadership's support for Gustav Stresemann's "Western Orientation" of German foreign policy.[6]

Continuity in the investigation of this thesis into the political development of the Saxon KPD during the middle years of the Weimar Republic will be provided by the following core questions. Firstly, at the national level the KPD's *Stalinisation* explained the changes of party policy and political leadership.[7] However, at local level could the centralising pull from Moscow overcome the centrifugal forces of every-day political experience? Secondly, did the KPD's adoption of democratic centralism and the forced re-organisation of members into factory cells create compliance with the leadership's directives in the party's lower organisations? Thirdly, to what extent could the KPD realise its objective of mobilising the whole membership in all areas of communist agitation and propaganda? And finally, to what extent did the local party membership limit their political activism to campaigns with achievable ends, rather than carrying out the leadership's permanent campaigning?

The core questions are complemented by questions particular to this chapter. Firstly, the role of the tactic itself will be examined. Saxony's domination by the left-wing of the SPD

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[5] *Jahrbuch fuer Wirtschaft, Politik und Arbeiterbewegung*, 1925/6, p766 (P. Dietrich);Flechtheim, O.K., *Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (3rd Edition, Hamburg, 1986), pp186; Bahne, S., *Sozialfaschismus in Deutschland. Zur Geschichte eines politischen Begriffes*, in *International Review of Social History (IRSH)* 10 (2) (1965), pp228-9.

[6] Text of the "Open Letter" in, Weber, H., *Voelker hoert die Signale. Eine Dokumentation* (Munich, Cologne,Berlin, 1967), pp86-90; Geyer, D., *Sowjetrussland und die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung 1918-1932*, in *Vierteljahrshefte fuer Zeitgeschichte (VfZ)* 24 (1976), pp27-8.

[7] Weber, H., *Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus. Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (Gekurtzte Studentenausgabe; Frankfurt/M, 1971), passim.

gives a regional dimension to an area of study long neglected in comparison to historians' treatment of the KPD's role at the end of the Weimar Republic. At national level the KPD's united front from above (ie offers of co-operation in Communist-led campaigns made to the SPD leadership) was intended to "unmask" the SPD's right-wing in order to win the party's social basis for communism (ie the united front from below). In Saxony the same tactic was applied to the SPD's left-wing, which controlled the regional party. The limitations of communist policy in Saxony will be evaluated. Did the subterfuge, relating to radical left-wing reforms of the Weimar system, lead to the tactic working in reverse: the co-operation of rank-and-file Communists with Social Democrats to attain specific objectives, rather than bringing Social Democrats under communist political leadership? The chapter also sets out to identify the extent of any "left prolitarian milieu" in Saxony, in which local militants of the SPD and KPD worked together to achieve issues of joint interest, as detailed for the Reich KPD in recent research by K-H. Mallmann.[8] The KPD's own claim, to be able to extend beyond the working classes into the downwardly mobile layers of the peasantry, white collar employees and the artisanal middle classes, will also be examined. Could the KPD attract these social groups by appealing to their material interests?[9] Is the research by Conan Fischer correct that the KPD's policy of winning over a "potential" communist constituency among the lower middle classes grew out of "the objective conditions in which Germany found itself after the war?"[10] This chapter aims to

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[8] Mallmann, K-H., *Milieu, Radikalismus und lokale Gesellschaft. Zur Sozialgeschichte einer revolutionaeren Bewegung*, in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* (GuG) 21 (1) (1995), pp23-4; Id. *Kommunisten in der Weimarer Republik: Sozialgeschichte einer revolutionaeren Bewegung* (Darmstadt, 1996), pp44-5,385-6.

[9] Daycock, D. W., 'The KPD and the NSDAP: A Study in the Relationship between the Political Extremes in Weimar Germany 1923-1933', PhD Dissertation (London School of Economics, 1980), pp134-39.

[10] Fischer, C., *The German Communists and the Rise of Nazism* (London, 1991), p39.

establish what the KPD's actual relationship with its own membership and the wider political system was and to contrast this relationship with the KPD's ideological claims.

In assessing the influences acting on the KPD's ability to function within the Saxon political system the chapter will initially set out the differences between the Saxon and Reich contexts which effected the campaign to expropriate the former Princely Houses. The party line will then be explored with reference to the campaign to expropriate the Princely Houses in 1926, in which communist policy was conducted in the context of a significant popular political mobilisation. The KPD's attempt to maintain its political presence will then be assessed in a period without a popular topic of political reform to exploit. The Congress of the Working People will be used to illustrate the limitations of communist tactics. These examples are to enable an assessment of the Saxon KPD's ability to realise the objective of the party line: to increase communist influence in the factories and among the unemployed, the peasantry and the urban *Mittelschichten*, and to use the Unity Committees to create a pro-Soviet "left-wing" in the workers' movement. The chapter will conclude with an evaluation of how successful the communist tactics were in widening the party's influence.

5.2 Flying a Communist Kite: The High Point of the United Front Policy in Saxony.

The Expropriation Campaign in a Communist Context

During the first half of 1926 the issue dominating the political debate was the unresolved question of how to deal with the wealth and property of the former ruling Princely Houses throughout Germany. In 1918/19, following the collapse of the German monarchies, no national solution had been attempted. The consequence of this early omission was its

reappearance in 1925 as a protracted political debate in the *Reichstag*. An impasse was created by disagreement on whether the "princes question" should be settled by the law courts, which by 1925 were known to be sympathetic to the former monarchies' case, or a parliamentary solution. The latter means of resolving the debate came up against the parliamentary arithmetic in the *Reichstag*: the DNVP blocked the parliamentary channels and the SPD objected to the lenient treatment which the courts were likely to give the former Princely Houses.[11] In an effort to break the deadlock the DDP forwarded a bill on the 23 November 1925 which envisaged the regional parliaments dealing with the former monarchies, without providing the possibility of "recourse to legal action".[12] The SPD leadership was in broad agreement with the DDP's bill. However, two days later the KPD exploited the issue as a means of providing the united front policy with a popular campaign. On the 4 December the KPD made a statement in the Reichstag, which was followed up by the publication of an "open letter" to the national leaderships of the SPD, the ADGB and the Reichsbanner, proposing co-operation in bringing about a campaign for a referendum to expropriate the former monarchies without compensation.[13]

The KPD's political tactic coincided with a cyclical down-turn in the German economy. In Saxony the economic down-turn amounted to a short period of economic crisis, with unemployment approaching the levels reached in 1923 as a result of Saxon enterprises

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[11] Winkler, H. A., *Der Schein der Normalitaet. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik, 1924-1920* (Berlin, Bonn, 1988), pp270-71; Schueren, U., *Der Volksentscheid zur Fuerstenenteignung 1926. Die Vermoegensauseinandersetzung mit den depossedierten Landesherren als Problem der deutschen Innenpolitik unter besonderen Beruecksichtigung der Verhaeltnisse in Preussen.*, Dusseldorf,1978., pp 21-26, 283-98.

[12] Schueren, ibid, p49.

[13] Fowkes, B., *Communism in Germany under the Weimar Republic* (London, 1984), p137; Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p271; Schueren, *Volksentscheid*, p48f.

being liquidated in the post-inflationary stabilisation crisis.[14] These economic conditions gave greater political weight in the workers' movement to the KPD's calls for the redistribution of the princes' property among peasants and tenant farmers, the use of palaces to alleviate the housing shortage and their liquid assets being transferred to those injured in the war, widows and orphans.[15] Although the SPD's national leadership was hostile to being drawn into a communist inspired campaign, the popularity of the KPD's proposal among rank-and-file Social Democrats forced the Reich Executive's hand.[16] On the 16 January 1926 the SPD's National Executive finally met with representatives of the KPD, and its front organisation the "Kuczinski Committee", to deal with the necessary parliamentary and organisational technicalities. It was at this point that official contact between the two parties ended: the SPD and ADGB leaderships forbade contact with the Communists in carrying out the campaign for a referendum.[17]

The objectives of the Saxon KPD's political line during the campaign to expropriate the former princes were defined by party-political concerns: the expropriation campaign *per se* provided only a favourable opportunity with which to "win the broad masses for

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[14] Adler, H., 'Wirtschaftskrise im Spiegel der saechsischen Konkursstatistik', in *Zeitschrift des Saechsischen Statistischen Landesamptes*, 78/79 (1932-33), pp305-310. Bankruptcies in Saxony accounted for the disproportionately high figure of 13 per cent of all German liquidation between 1926-1933.

[15] The text is given in full in, *Dokumenten und Materialien zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* [henceforth: *DuM*] Series II, vol.8, pp271f.

[16] On the local organisations of the SPD see, Schueren, *Volksentscheid*, pp75-82. On the concerns expressed by Scheidemann about the dangers inherent in allowing another "communist signal" see, Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p272.

[17] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, pp273-4.

communism".[18] This was made clear by Paul Boettcher, the leading figure in the Regional Executive, which co-ordinated the campaign in Saxony:

> The Expropriation Campaign is not a question of expropriating the former princes but a class question. It will increase class conflicts and help organise the sympathetic layers in the party. Unity means communist influence in the SPD and therefore requires the sharpest struggle against the SPD leadership. Unity Committees will be used to build up a left-wing in the workers' movement...(this) is the point of departure for the great struggles of the future.[19]

The KPD leadership believed that mobilising the SPD's membership "from below", in a communist inspired campaign, would "free" the party's left-wing members from their leaders, so that they would abandon reformism and its use of parliamentary channels, in favour of a mass mobilisation led by the KPD.[20] However, in Saxony the SPD had a prominent left-wing which actively embraced issues of radical socialist reform. The campaign to expropriate the former German Princes was regarded as precisely the type of reform the bourgeois Republic required if it was to move towards socialism.[21] The KPD's response to this was to emphasise the role of the 23 dissident SPD *Landtag* deputies,

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[18] Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR (SAPMO) I 3/10/115, Bericht ueber die Kampagne zum Volksentscheid im Bezirk West Sachsen, Bl.140.

[19] SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der BLS. vom 25.2.1926, Bl.7(Boettcher).

[20] This position was expressed by the leading Right communists Arthur Ewert and Paul Froehlich, see Bahne, 'Sozialfaschismus', p228 and note 1; Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet,* pp271,275; Daycock, 'Political Extremes', pp146-7.

[21] Seydewitz, M., Es hat sich gelohnt zu leben (Berlin, 1976), p151. On the SPD's internal party debate, see, Winkler, H. A., 'Klassenbewegung oder Volkspartei? Zur Programmdiskussion in der Weimarer SPD 1920-1925', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 8 (1982), pp9-54.

who, against their national leadership's instructions, were in coalition with the DDP and DVP, in the hope of winning over radicalised Social Democrats.[22]

The united front tactic also directed considerable attention to presenting the KPD as the party of "all exploited people": the *Werktaetigen*, which included the urban *Mittelstand*, intellectuals, peasants and rural workers, whose political "awakening" was deemed necessary for the success of a communist revolution in Germany.[23] The political reality in Saxony, however, was an early right-ward gravitation of politics. The events of 1923 in Saxony, when an SPD-KPD coalition placed the burden of the crisis on middle-class shoulders, had accelerated and intensified a political drive among the broad spectrum of the middle classes to prevent another SPD-led regional government.[24] In Saxony the predominance of the Protestant church, which was politically close to the DNVP, deprived the region of any force for political consensus with substantial cross-class support, on the model of the Catholic Centre Party.[25] In the Reich as a whole the strongest support for the expropriation of the former Princely Houses outside of SPD-KPD strongholds came from the West German centres of political Catholicism.[26] In Saxony, however, the socio-political system inhibited support for a "communist" inspired campaign. In Hamburg, Potsdam and Berlin, a significant number of lower middle-class supporters of the parties of the Right made a protest vote against the monarchist DNVP,

[22] SAPMO I 3/8/27, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. Bericht vom Monat Februar, Bl.393.

[23] SAPMO I 3/9/60, Bezirksparteitag in Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 10-11.4.1926. Resolution zur Lage, Aufgaben und Taktik der Partei, Bl.24-5.

[24] Details in Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', pp204-40.

[25] Bramke, W., (verantwortlicher Autor) und Hess. U., unter Mitarbeit von Kretschmer, K., Roth, H., Rudloff, M., und Dietrich, G., *Sachsens Wirtschaft im Wechsel politischer Systeme im 20. Jahrhundert. Strukturelle Entwicklung und soziale Probleme vom Ausgang des Ersten Weltkrieges bis in die frueheren 60er Jahre* [hereafter: Arbeitsgruppe Sachsen], (Leipzig, 1992), p3.

[26] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, pp276-7.

which they felt had abandoned their economic interests during the post-inflationary re-evaluation under pressure from large-scale industrial and agrarian interests.[27] In Saxony, however, the statistical data indicates that the pre-war protest vote of the lower middle classes, which the pre-war SPD had been able to attract, had abandoned any form of alliance with the Left.[28]

The campaign for the expropriation of the former princes was no different from the KPD's other united front campaigns, for example the campaign to have Sacco and Vanzetti, the American trade unionists, released from prison, or solidarity rallies and meetings for the General Strike in Britain.[29] The objective was to increase the party's political profile, using a language of subterfuge which called for improvements in the conditions of the working population. This was typified by the slogan: "Not a penny to the Princes! Work and bread for the needy people!"[30] The following discussion places the campaign to expropriate the former German Princes in the context of the KPD's ability to pursue the united front policy in the factories and trade unions, among the unemployed and the non-proletarian "working people", whom the KPD leadership continued to define as part of the communists' "potential" constituency.

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[27] Schuren, *Volksentscheid*, pp228-34; Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p282.

[28] Details in Walter, F., 'Sachsen - ein Stammland der Sozialdemokratie?', in *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 32 (2) (1991), pp218ff.

[29] For examples of these campaigns in the Frankfurt-am-Main area see, Wickham, J., 'The Working-Class Movement in Frankfurt-am-Main during the Weimar Republic', Ph.D. thesis (University of Sussex, 1979), pp185-6.

[30] Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, pp137-8; Flechtheim, *KPD in der Weimarer Republik*, p186.

Expropriation from the Factories?

The KPD's Regional Executive introduced the "Princes Campaign" in mid December 1925. The BL's directives on carrying out the campaign in the factories prioritised setting up Unity Committees, as a means of bringing Social Democrats and the so-called "non-party" workers under communist leadership.[31] The initial practical steps in organising the campaign were a series of meetings in the factory and street cells to discuss party tactics.[32] The campaign to expropriate the former princes was the first campaign of national significance since 1923 which involved a mobilisation of the SPD and KPD with the same ostensible objectives. The KPD's internal circulars indicate that for this reason the first stage in the campaign would be schooling courses, which aimed to avoid any misconception of the campaign as an issue of socialist reform. Only after party workers were made clear about the KPD's actual objectives, to generate class tensions and to proselytise rank-and-file Social Democrats, was instruction of the wider membership to concentrate directly on organising the campaign itself.[33]

During December and January the KPD's initial objective was to ensure that the SPD accepted the offer of "joint negotiations" on a draft bill, which would expropriate the former princes without compensation. Until mid January 1926 it was by no means certain that the SPD's Reich Executive would abandon all hope of a parliamentary solution. Winkler indicates that the SPD's Reich Executive was even prepared to join a Great

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[31] SAPMO I 3/8-10/6, Bericht ueber die Stellungnahme zum Volksentscheid. Landesvorstand Sachsen. An das ZK, Polbuero. Dresden, den 26.2.1926, Bl.30-1.

[32] SAPMO I 3/10/112, Bericht "Volksbegehren". Bezirksleitung West Sachsen. An das ZK der Partei, Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 13.3.1926, Bl.129.

[33] SAPMO I 3/8-10/8, Landesvorstand Sachsen. An die Zentrale der KPD. Dresden, den 1.12.1925, Bl.74.

Coalition cabinet.[34] To force the SPD leadership's hand the KPD concentrated its efforts on holding joint meetings and demonstrations of factory workers and the unemployed, which the communist press exaggerated as displays of widespread support for the campaign under the KPD's leadership.[35] However, in Saxony there is no evidence that the KPD's local campaigning had brought Social Democrats under communist leadership.[36] The KPD's Regional Executive stated that:

> Top level negotiations are nothing without creating the necessary basis within the factories in order to mobilise the party membership and free the socialist workers from their leadership.[37]

The ability to conduct the campaign in the factories was regarded by the KPD's leadership as the litmus test of the party's re-organisation on the basis of factory cells.[38] However, even during the two peaks in the campaign, the collection of signatures for the petition to enable a referendum and the voting day itself on the 20th of June, there is no evidence of any widespread increase in communist activity in the factories. During the first half of 1926 the Saxon KPD's district trade-union divisions continued to be absorbed in rebuilding the organisational framework, after their collapse in 1924/5, to enable co-

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[34] On the 12th of January the SPD's Reichstag faction rejected participation in a Great Coalition for the second time in a month. This led to the formation of the second Luther cabinet see, Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p273. For the SPD's demands during discussions on coalition government see, *Schulthess' Europaeischer Geschichtskalender* (Munich ,*1925*), p189.

[35] *Die Rote Fahne* during January and February 1926 gave this conciderable attention see, Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p272; Ruediger, B., 'Der Freistaat in der Weimarer Republik', in *Saechsische Heimatsblaetter* 30 (3) (1984), p148. SAPMO I 3/10/115, Bl.169, Bericht ueber die Taetigkeiten des Bezirkes West Sachsen der KPD vom 1.4.1925 bis 31.3.1926 (Leipzig, 1926), p5.

[36] The SPD's Reich leadership did of course *believe* that they had been out flanked to the left by the Communists. Details of the "pressure from below" in the SPD see, Schueren, *Volksentscheid*, pp75-82.

[37] SAPMO I 3/9/68, BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 12.12.1925, Bl.380.

[38] SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der BLS. vom 25.2.1926, Bl.7(Boetcher).

ordinated communist work in the factories and trade unions. The KPD's ability to mobilise even its own members to conduct a political campaign in the factories was distinctly limited.[39]

The formation of Unity Committees including dissident socialists, the so-called SPD "Workers' Opposition", was regarded by the KPD leadership as the flagstone on which the whole campaign was to be built: they were, in theory, to function as active partisan organisations carrying out *all communist campaigns* in the factories.[40] In reality there is no hard evidence that any factory-based Unity Committees existed in Saxony. Various factors contributed to this. In a labour market with high levels of unemployment, industrial militancy was tempered by a desire to remain in employment: workers did not want to be identified by employers as politically active in case this hastened their journey to the dole queue.[41] The minority of KPD members who were organised in factory cells saw the "princes campaign", which was a political campaign, as more suited to the role of the street cells.[42] In large factories, such as the *Sachsenwerk* in Niedersedlitz, where the KPD had an absolute majority on the factory council, a continued dislike of the united front tactic made union functionaries reluctant to implement the party line. In this case the factory functionaries stated that: "The Unity Committees must come after the SPD leaders go against the referendum": in other words how could the SPD be "unmasked" if it too

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[39] SAPMO I 3/8-10/10, Bericht fuer die Zeit vom 27.4 bis 31.5.1926, Bl.47(Siewert).

[40] SAPMO I 3/10/115, Bl.169, Bericht ueber die Taetigkeiten des Bezirkes West Sachsen der KPD vom 1.4.1925 bis 31.3.1926, ibid, p5.

[41] SAPMO I 3/8-10/6, Bericht ueber die Stellungnahme zum Volksentscheid. Landesvorstand Sachsen. An das ZK, Polbuero. Dresden, den 26.2.1926, Bl.30; SAPMO I 3/9/60, Resolution zur Lage, Aufgabe und Taktik der Partei. Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 10-11.4.1926, Bl.24-5.

[42] SAPMO I 3/10/112, Bericht "Volksbegehren". Bezirksleitung West Sachsen. An das ZK der Partei, Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 13.3.1926, Bl.132.

was conducting the expropriation campaign?[43] Instead of increasing the activity of Communists in the factories and winning sympathisers, the Regional Executive concluded that the membership was "passive".[44] There is some evidence of district variations in the Saxon factories: most discussion was recorded in Erzgebirge-Vogtland and least in the centre of opposition to the united front tactic in West Saxony.[45] However, it can only be concluded that, with some exceptions in individual factories, Communists in the factories would not carry out a party line which was seen to be unhelpful or unrelated to trade-union work. The KPD could forcefully re-organise the membership, albeit with limited results, into factory cells but social and economic aims remained uppermost in these Communists' minds. During the expropriation campaign communist trade unionists in the metal working factories of Limbach, Annaberg and Werdau focused their activities only on matters of direct relevance to the workforce.[46] The limited number of Unity Committees which did include, at least temporarily, official representation from the local trade-union cartels were not factory based, but were organised in residential districts.[47]

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[43] SAPMO I 3/8-10/6, Bericht ueber die Stellungnahme zum Volksentscheid. Landesvorstand Sachsen. An das ZK, Polbuero. Dresden, den 26.2.1926, Bl.31.

[44] ibid.

[45] ibid, Bl.30.

[46] SAPMO I 3/8-10/10, Bericht ueber die Sitzung der Landesleitung Metall Sachsens am 29.5.1926 in Chemnitz, Bl.66-7.

[47] SAPMO I 3/8/27, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. Bericht vom Monat Februar, Bl.392. Both the Reich leadership and the Saxon leadership of the ABGB strictly forbaded co-operation in the KPD's Unity Committees and were normally able to enforce their position on the local memberships see, 'Es gibt keine Einheitsfront mit der KPD', in *Gewerkschaftszeitung*, Nr.6, 6.2.1926, quoted in Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p277. The KPD's response is published in, 'Verhindert die Sprengung der Einheit', in *DuM*, series II, vol.8, pp313f. Stoeschek, H. and Zeidler, E., 'Zum Kampf der KPD um den Saechsischen Landtag gegen Militarismus und Faschismus in Deutschland', Dissertation (Potsdam, 1976), p442.

The KPD's tactics, during the campaign to gain legal sanction for a referendum, also failed to act as a springboard to establishing a communist-led pro-Soviet "left-wing" in the trade unions. The KPD's efforts to link the campaign to expropriate the princes to other areas of party agitation and propaganda were without significant result. Few workers attended communist convened factory meetings to discuss the British miners' strike along side the expropriation campaign. The campaign to have the right-wing of the SPD expelled from the unions with the co-operation of the left-wing of the SPD also came to nothing. Exceptions did occur, but never became more than limited events specific to the factory they were held in.[48] In the Dresden-Bautzen area the KPD leadership had to concede that not only was the SPD very strong in the unions, but it was the party's right-wing which was dominant. The BL's repeated calls to "harness all strength" in order to create a "left-wing movement" could not surmount the barrier of entrenched SPD control.[49] Indeed, when the ASPD stood electorally as an independent party in the 1926 municipal elections, in the ASPD centre of Dresden-Bautzen at least, it is likely that it was able to win over more anti-communist right-wing Social Democrats that the KPD could win over left-wing SPD militants.[50] In Saxony there were no political strikes as part of the "Princes Campaign". The KPD had certainly put a popular political issue on the tip of working-class tongues, but it had not fostered a breach between the SPD leadership in

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[48] SAPMO I 3/9/60, Resolution zur Lage, Aufgabe und Taktik der Partei. Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 10-11.4.1926, Bl.24-25. Reference is made to a meeting in an unspecified large factory in Dresden and seven mid sized factories where "joint" meetings took place with the SPD.

[49] SAPMO I 3/8-10/6, Bericht ueber die Sitzung mit dem Pol. und Gewerkschaftsleitern der dreien saechsischen Bezirke am 31.3.1926 in Dresden, Bl.39; SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der BLS. vom 25.2.1926, Bl.7-8.

[50] *Statistisches Jahrbuch fuer den Freistaat Sachsen* (StJFS) Nr.46, (Dresden, 1927), p459. In Saxony 18 ASPD councillors were elected: six in the electoral ward of Bautzen; seven in Dresden; one in Leipzig;

Saxony and the party's left-wing members. In the Saxon factories the ability to use the expropriation campaign to "make a piece of revolution" during Weimar's middle years did not transpire.[51]

Expropriation through Extra-Parliamentary Action?

In extra-parliamentary party work the KPD leadership also emphasised the creation of Unity Committees, with the intention of turning these into forums for the implementation of communist-led campaigns.[52] In order to work towards these ends local party organisations were instructed to establish contact with the SPD, Reichsbanner, War Victims' Organisations, Pensioners' Organisations, the Free Thinkers, Tenants' Groups, the Sports Organisations and the organisations of those who had lost out in the currency stabilisation. At meetings between the KPD and these "other workers' organisations", Unity Committees were to be proposed to organise the "joint" implementation of demonstrations, public meetings and general propaganda for the "Princes Campaign".[53] In theory the expropriation campaign was to be used to assist the permanent mobilisation of the party, with the objective of winning new members and an extended periphery of sympathisers.[54] In reality, however, the political activity of the KPD's membership had

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three in Zwickau; and one in Chemnitz. The SPD had 4,961 councillors in Saxony. On the origins and development of the ASPD see Lapp, 'Political Extremes', pp144ff.

[51] For Wickham's conclusions in the Frankfurt/M area, 'Working Class Life', p186; Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p289.

[52] SAPMO I 3/10/115, Bericht ueber die Kampagne zum Volksentscheid im Bezirk West Sachsen, den 23.7.1926, Bl.140; SAPMO I 3/9/73, Bericht ueber das Volksbegehren in Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland, Bl.286.

[53] SAPMO I 3/8/31, 'Alle Kraefte fuer den Volksentscheid!' KPD.8.Ostsachsen. Rundschreiben (23.1.1926), Bl.8.

[54] SAPMO I 3/10/112, Bericht der BLS. am 6.4.1926,Bl.398; SAPMO I 3/10/115, BL der KPD Westsachsens. An deas ZK der Partei, Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 12.3.1926, Bl.130.

sharp peaks during the collection of signatures for the petition, between the 4 and 17 March, and the referendum itself on the 20 June.[55] However, the popularity of the campaign saw an above average willingness of party members to take part in it.[56] Statistics collected by the BL in Erzgebirge-Vogtland on the participation of members during the collection of signatures for the referendum petition in March indicate that in 67 local groups up to 40 per cent of members were active; in 61 local groups 60 per cent were active; in 14 local groups up to 80 per cent; and in 42 up to 100 per cent. In 65 of the district's 250 local groups the questionnaire was not returned.[57]

The united front tactic's ability to bring members of the wider workers' movement into communist-led campaigns was decidedly limited. Even in Erzgebirge-Vogtland, the Saxon centre of the political tendency for "proletarian unity" among the KPD's right-wing and the SPD's far left-wing, 90 per cent of local SPD leaderships rejected participation in Unity Committees outright.[58] The reason for the SPD's response was that it was only too well aware the KPD leadership wanted to use the united front tactic to erode the influence of the SPD's left-wing leaders among party militants. Crucially, however, *genuine* co-operation on the specific issue of the expropriation was being carried out by Communists and Socialists outside the constraints of the partisan Unity Committees.[59] The political border between the two parties was strongest in the cities and declined, along with party

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[55] SAPMO I 3/9/73, Politischer Bericht Erzgebirge-Vogtland Februar und Maerz 1926, Bl.267-8; SAPMO I 3/9/73, Politischer Bericht fuer den Monat Juni 1926, Bl.308-9; SAPMO I 3/10/115, Bericht ueber die Kampagne zum Volksentscheid im Bezirk Westsachsen, den 23.7.1926, Bl.140; Stadtsarchiv Leipzig (Sta.L.), Ah Borna Nr.2624, Ah Borna, den 3.4.1926. An die Khm Leipzig, Bl.125f.

[56] For details of meetings in the BL Departments into the factory and street cells and local groups see, SAPMO I 3/9/73, Politischer Bericht fuer den Monat Juni 1926, Bl.308-9.

[57] ibid, Bericht ueber das Volksbegehren in Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland, Bl.288.

[58] ibid. Bl.286.

[59] ibid.

strength generally, in the industrial-rural settings of the Saxon industrial villages. This was also reflected in the location of the limited number of Unity Committees, which were predominantly formed in small localities. At the beginning of the "Princes Campaign" in Saxony there had been no Unity Committees at all.[60] In Erzgebirge-Vogtland by the end of the campaign in June there were eight Unity Committees which included the SPD and a further 30 without official socialist representation.[61] Again in West Saxony the barriers impeding the Communist party tactic were strongest. The preparations for forming the Unity Committee of Greater Leipzig were begun in early January.[62] The Unity Committee was finally formed without representation from the SPD or the local trade-union cartel; it did, however, include representatives from the USPD, the Socialist Bund and the Organisation for Victims of the War.[63] In northwestern Saxony the border between the parties was also less well defined in environments where industrial workers lived and worked in close proximity to rural workers. In Tauchau and Nerchau Unity Committees were set up at in late January, but were almost immediately dissolved following the intervention of the ADGB.[64] Throughout the six months of the campaign there were no Unity Committees co-ordinating a communist-led expropriation campaign; of 164 demonstrations held in the same period only nine were held jointly with the SPD.[65] In West Saxony, a centre of the KPD's left-wing, there also continued to be violent clashes

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[60] SAPMO I 3/9/65, Bericht der BLS. vom 12.12.1925, Bl.380(Boettcher).

[61] SAPMO I 3/9/69, An das ZK. Chemnitz, den 16.6.1926, Bl.146.

[62] SAPMO I 3/10/112, Protokoll der BLS. am 15.1.1926, Bl.342(Koenen).

[63] SAPMO I 3/10/115, BL Westsachsen. An das ZK der Partei, Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 12.3.1926, Bl.131.

[64] ibid.

[65] ibid, Bericht ueber die Kampagne zum Volksentscheid im Bezirk Westsachsen, den 23.7.1926, Bl.142.

between the two parties, for example on May Day 1926 in Leipzig and in Borna.[66] Particularly in Leipzig, Communists who did try to set up Unity Committees quickly gave up when it became clear that there was no prospect of their success. The party membership then worked in isolation from the SPD during the campaign. Even during the weeks preceding the vote itself, at most some 50 per cent of the district membership were actively involved. Many left-wing Communists saw the expropriation campaign as too much of a socialist reform and not enough of a direct campaign against the SPD.[67]

In the East Saxon district party some 14 Unity Committees were set up which included representation from the SPD and local trade-union cartels.[68] However, in a proliferation of small localities in industrial-rural environments, where the KPD was weak and the SPD's left-wing was dominant, co-operation on the specific issue of the expropriation was carried out without forming partisan Unity Committees. The KPD's local groups in the sub-district Meissen provide an example of these developments. In the city of Meissen itself the strength of the SPD proved an insurmountable obstacle in the path of the communist party line.[69] The situation in the surrounding industrial villages was, however, different. In the working area of Loschwitz the KPD co-operated with the SPD in a "Working Committee" which prepared events for the expropriation campaign at joint meetings. Both parties' members distributed material together and immediately prior to the referendum vote on the 20 June the local KPD put its members at the disposal of the local

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[66] Sta.L., Ah Borna 2624, Ah Borna, den 2.6.1926. An die Khm Leipzig, Bl.146; St.a.L., Polizei Presidium (PP-S.) Leipzig, Nr.5882, Bericht ueber die Maifeier, den 3.5.1926. In Leipzig the demonstration which clashed with the socialists was led by the district factional leader Arthur Vogt.

[67] SAPMO I 3/10/112, Protokoll der BLS. am 6.4.1926, Bl.398; SAPMO I 3/10/115, BL Westsachsen. An das ZK der Partei, Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 12.3.1926, Bl.131.

[68] SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der BLS vom 10.7.1926, Bl.99.

[69] SAPMO I 3/8/33, Abschrift. Bericht ueber die Durchfuerung der Kampagne zum Volksentscheid im UB Meissen. Meissen, am 10.7.1926. An die BL Ostsachsen, Bl.138.

SPD to ensure the co-ordination of effective work.[70] In Schmeideberg, although there was

no Unity Committee, the local Sports Cartel co-operated with the KPD to enable joint

demonstrations of the two parties.[71] It was in this environment that the Reichsbanner,

which was officially neutral in the campaign because of its (nominal) representation of the

Catholic Centre Party and the DDP, joined in communist demonstrations.[72] Already in the

preparations for the May Day Celebrations the BL was concerned that in the cities the

"ultra-Left" were ignoring the party line, while in the industrial villages a "false united

front" was being carried out, in which local Communist's made no demands in return for

their participation in SPD organised events. In Radeberg the local KPD made no demands

for participation in a joint May Day celebration; in Cossmannsdorf it was agreed that the

RFB would wear civilian dress in the demonstration; and in Obersfriedersdorf a "Workers'

Cartel" was set up with the objective of overcoming the split in the workers' movement

and bringing about a re-union with the SPD.[73] East Saxony indicates that the strongest

barrier to the KPD's united front tactic was the urban setting of cities which were socialist

strongholds; this was accentuated if the KPD was weak, as in Dresden. The second

strongest indicator was the composition of the local ADGB: local support for the KPD

came predominantly from the Builders' Union, the DMV and the unskilled and industry-

based FAV.[74] Franz Walter identified the strength of the network of SPD political and

cultural organisations (*Vereinsnetz*) as the primary indicator of the strength of the socialist

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[70] ibid, Volksentscheid. Arbeitsgeniet Loschwitz (undated), Bl.152.

[71] ibid, Abschrift. Bericht der Volksentscheidskampagne der KPD (18.7.1926), Bl.150.

[72] ibid, Abschrift. Bericht von Koetzschenbroda (12.7.1926), Bl.148.

[73] SAPMO I 3/8/25, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. Sitzung der engeren BL. vom 26.5.1926, Bl.80.

[74] SAPMO I 3/8/27, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. Berichte ueber die Vorarbeit zur Durchfuerung des 1. Mai, Bl.413-14.

milieu.[75] Normally the strength of the SPD's organisational integration of its membership, both politically and socially, served as a barrier to communist influence. However, in the industrial villages contact between the SPD's and KPD's local membership in the sports cartels was fostering co-operation in contravention of their leaderships' explicit instructions.[76]

The campaign for the expropriation of the former Saxon monarchy had raised the activity of the KPD and brought the party into greater contact with the SPD. The expropriation campaign was the first campaign in which both parties had been on the same side since 1923.[77] However, this did not represent a significant success for the actual party line (ie organising dissident socialists in communist Unity Committees). The *party* conception of the "moderate" united front policy remained the destruction of the SPD as the principal obstacle to communist objectives. The documentation of the meetings of the Regional Executive make it abundantly clear that "decomposing" the SPD remained the main objective of the party line: this prioritised splitting the increasingly antagonistic pro-coalition right wing of the Saxon SPD from the class-war inclined left wing.[78] The Regional Executive, however, admitted that the Saxon KPD did not have the "political or organisational strength" to interconnect its wider political campaigns with the prosecution of the expropriation campaign.[79] The KPD leadership's plans for an extra-parliamentary campaign petitioning for the dissolution of the *Landtag* came to nothing.[80] The problems

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[75] Walter, 'Stammland', p215.

[76] ibid, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. Berichte ueber die Vorarbeit zur Durchfuerung des 1. Mai, Bl.413-14.

[77] SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der BLS vom 10.7.1926, Bl.98.

[78] SAPMO I 3/8-10/6, Bericht ueber die Stellungnahme zum Volksentscheid.Landesvorstand Sachsen. Dresden, den 26.2.1926. An das ZK, Polbuero, Bl.30f.

[79] ibid, Bl.31-2.

[80] For the objectives of the Saxon KPD see, SAPMO I 3/9/60, Resolution zur Lage, Aufgaben und Taktik der Partei. Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 10-11.4.1926, Bl.23-5.

of communist language and ideology were indicated by the report of a party functionary to the ZK, which stated that although the left-wing Social Democrats he had spoken with saw the right-wing of the SPD as "class traitors", the KPD's press campaign against the SPD's left-wing was preventing "joint work": neither the Communist functionary nor his Socialist colleague seemed to understand what was subterfuge and what was the communist party line.[81]

The KPD and the Unemployed: Expropriation by the Expropriated?

At the turn of 1925/6 Germany underwent a sharp rise in the level of unemployment as a consequence of a cyclical economic down turn. In Saxony this was intensified by structural factors, most particularly the drop in world demand for the export oriented products of the textile and clothing industries.[82] The KPD set out to link the privations of unemployment with the wealth of the former monarchies as a means of attracting the unemployed to participate in communist campaigning.[83] Communist motions from the *Landtag* and municipal councils contrasted the state's ability to give vast sums of public money to the former princes while the unemployed went hungry.[84] Parliamentary motions were then followed up at meetings of the Committees of the Unemployed, a communist front organisation, which stressed the need for participation in the campaign for the

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[81] SAPMO I 3/8-10/7, An das ZK. BL Dresden, den 17.6.1926, Bl.148.

[82] See chapter 2.2 above.

[83] SAPMO I 3/9/60, Resolution zur Lage, Aufgaben und Taktik der Partei. Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 10-11.4.1926, Bl.23-5; Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, p138.

[84] Stoeschek and Zeidler, 'Saechsischen Landtag', p443; SAPMO I 3/8-10/7, An die saechsische Arbeitershaft, Bl.54-5; Herlemann, *Kommunalpolitik*, pp94-5, quoting a ZK circular; SAPMO I 3/8/31. 'Alle Kraefte fuer den Volksentscheid!' KPD.8.Ostsachsen. Rundschreiben (23.1.1926), Bl.8.

expropriation of the House of Wettin.[85] At these meetings demonstrations of the unemployed were organised to march on the Town Halls when matters relating to their material conditions were being presented by the KPD.[86] This was done in Leipzig as part of the KPD's demonstration for a referendum on the 27 January.[87] By late March 49 Town Halls in Erzgebirge-Vogtland had experienced similar events.[88] Demonstrations of the unemployed were also organised to coincide with factories' closing times in an attempt to include workers in "united" demonstrations.[89]

The KPD, despite repeated attempts, was unable to involve unemployed workers in communist propaganda which centred on the factories.[90] During the expropriation campaign there is no evidence of unemployed workers being organised in the KPD's political or economic campaigns in the factories, which were linked in the party press and public agitation to the expropriation campaign. Furthermore, the wider circle of unemployed workers, who joined in the KPD actions for higher benefit payments, disappointed the party leadership's hopes of creating a large periphery of co-workers in

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[85] ibid.

[86] This was already a universal communist tactic, see, Huber-Koller, R-M., 'Die kommunistische Erwerbslosenbewegung in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik', in *Gesellschaft. Beitraege zur Marxistischen Theory* 10 (1977) (pp81-140), pp96-7.

[87] *Kommission zur Erforschung der Geschichte der oertlichen Arbeiterbewegung bei der Bezirksleitung der SED Leipzig der SEd in Zusammenarbeit mit den Sektionen Geschichte und Marxismus-Leninismus sowie dem Franz Mehring-Institut der Karl Marx Universitaet Leipzig:* In der Revolution geboren - In den Klassenkampf bewaehrt. Geschichte der KPD-Bezirksorganisation *Leipzig-Westsachsen* (Leipzig, 1986) [henceforth: 'In den Revolution geboren'], p142; SAPMO I 3/10/115, BL Westsachsen. An das ZK der Partei, Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 12.3.1926, Bl.132.

[88] SAPMO I 3/9/73, Bericht ueber das Volksbegehren im Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland, Bl.287.

[89] SAPMO I 3/10/112, Protokoll der BLS. am 15.1.1926, Bl.342.

[90] SAPMO I 3/10/115, Bl.169, Bericht ueber die Taetigkeiten des Bezirkes West Sachsen der KPD vom 1.4.1925 bis 31.3.1926 (Leipzig, 1926), pp5-6.

the "Princes Campaign".[91] Huber-Koller's research on the political-psychology of the unemployed shows a narrowing of their horizons to the struggle for everyday needs; feelings of atomisation and helpless isolation produced an angry apathy, which on occasion developed into spontaneous protests.[92] McElligott's research in Hamburg-Altona also concludes that if the KPD did not act in the direct interests of the unemployed, the unemployed would not take part in communist organised campaigns.[93]

Communism Offers its Hand to the Saxon Buerger.

During the mid twenties the KPD's campaigning also made attempts to win over the so-called non-proletarian working people: the artisanal urban lower middle classes and peasant farmers.[94] Internal party circulars indicate that the "princes campaign" was only a means to the communist end of extending and organising wider support for the party. The "main task" was: "To bring not only the broad masses of workers, but also wide layers of the *Mittelstand* to the KPD."[95] The ability to do so remained in the realms of communist propaganda. The Saxon KPD did not have specific BL departments with which to organise party work among the *Mittelstand* and intellectuals; consequently the Agit-Prop Departments took over what was a *bete noir* among functionaries.[96] The BLs frequently

[91] ibid, Bezirksleitung Westsachsen. An das ZK der Partei, Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 12.3.1926, Bl.132.

[92] Huber-Koller, 'Erwerbslosenbewegung', pp92-6.

[93] McElligott, A., 'Mobilising the Unemployed: The Unemployed Workers' Movement in Hamburg-Altona during the Weimar Republic' in Evans, R.J. and Geary, D. (eds.), *The German Unemployed. Experiences and Consequences of Mass Unemployment from the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich* (London, 1987), p231.

[94] Flechthcim, *Die KPD*, p186; *Die International*, IX (1926) (15.3.1926), pp184-5(E. Schneller).

[95] Circular of Bezirk Berlin-Brandenburg, quoted in 'Kommunistische Dolchstosstaktik' in, *Vorwaerts*, Nr.56, 3.2.1926.

[96] SAPMO I 3/10/115, Bezirksleitung Westsachsen. An das ZK der Partei, Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 12.3.1926, Bl.130.

criticised the grass roots party organisations for simply not carrying out the party line.[97] In the Leipzig cell group of Schleussig, for example, political agitation in the non-proletarian suburbs was not carried out.[98] Socio-political antagonisms in Leipzig were such that uniformed RFB militants, using class war propaganda, were likely only to reinforce hostilities between the blue collar and white collar "working people".[99]

Nationally, the level of support for the expropriation of the former monarchies was most significantly in excess of the combined KPD-SPD vote at the December 1924 Reichstag election in the strongholds of the Catholic Centre Party in Western Germany. Above all in Cologne-Aachen, Baden and Wuerttenberg the Catholic social and political movement had significant support among catholic workers.[100] Furthermore, the Catholic Youth Movement declared its support for the expropriation of the former Princely Houses.[101] A lack of allegiance to the Protestant Hohenzollern monarchy combined with cross-class political support for the Catholic Centre Party to create a climate favouring radical reform. In Saxony the socio-political tensions, which had become more pronounced after 1923, were also reflected in the outcome of the petition for a referendum and in the referendum itself.

The traditions of left-wing liberalism were also weak in Saxony. Support for the DDP had already been eroded by the right-ward gravitation of Saxon political affiliations, which

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[97] SAPMO I 3/9/60, Resolution zur Lage, Aufgaben und Taktik der Partei. Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 10-11.4.1926, Bl.26.

[98] SAPMO I 3/10/115, Bericht der Zellengruppe Schleussig fuer Juni 1926, Bl.146.

[99] A typical example of the KPD's slogans is, "Nothing for the princes except the iron fist of the class conscious proletariat" see, SAPMO I 3/8/31, 'Alle Kraefte fuer den Volksentscheid!', Rundschreiben, Bl.8; On the socio-political divide in Saxony see, Lapp, 'Political Extremes', p1.

[100] Schueren, *Volksentscheid*, pp137ff.

[101] ibid.

were more pronounced that the national trend.[102] During the campaign for a referendum the only major press organ which had continued to support the DDP, the *Zwickauer Tagesblatt*, transferred its allegiance to the DVP.[103] This deprived the expropriation campaign in Saxony of any support in the bourgeois press.[104] During the expropriation campaign the KPD also tried to win support among the growing middle-class protest movement, particularly among those who had lost much of their savings in the currency reform.[105] The KPD held to an ideologically based interpretation which saw the rise of the economic interest parties as a staging post on these social groups' defection from the bourgeoisie to communism.[106] Schueren identified a protest vote in Berlin, Hamburg and Potsdam among certain lower middle-class voters, who felt that their social and economic interests were being abandoned by the traditional parties of the middle classes.[107] In Saxony, however, by 1926 a line in the political sand had been drawn between the supporters of the Left and Right. The regional opposition movement to the expropriation campaign was led by the DNVP, which advocated a "strongman" to restore order in Germany, on the model of Mussolini in Italy.[108] During the campaign representatives from the former House of Wettin participated in nationalist rallies and demonstration.[109] The referendum campaign was conducted before the breakthrough in Saxony of the other chief player among the lower middle classes, the NSDAP. Despite an active Nazi campaign of

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[102] For the Reich in general see, Jones, L.E., *German Liberalism and the Dissolution of the Weimar Party System* 1918-33 (Chapel Hill, 1988), p60; For Saxony, Lapp, 'Political Extremes', pp1,35,58ff.

[103] SAPMO I 3/9/69, Protokoll der engeren Bezirksleitungsitzung vom 21.6.1926, Bl.157.

[104] Divisions in the DDP on the question of expropriation were resolved by permitting the expression of "individaul opinions" see, Schueren, *Volksentscheid*, p137.

[105] SAPMO I 3/8-10/3, An den Regionalvorstand. Berlin, den 15.1.1927, Bl.4.

[106] SAPMO I 3/8-10/3, An den Regionalvorstand. Berlin, den 15.1.1927, Bl.4.

[107] Schueren, *Volksentscheid*, pp228-34.

[108] SAPMO I 3/9/73, Politischer Bericht fuer den Monat Juni 1926, Bl.311-12.

meetings, which aimed to end the speaking ban imposed on Hitler after the Beerhall Putsch, the party remained as yet on the political fringes.[110] Conflict between the Nazis' pro-referendum left-wing, around the Strasser brothers and Goebbels, and the anti-referendum wing around Hitler, who depicted the expropriation issue as a "Jewish swindle", restricted any coherent campaign.[111]

The opponents of the expropriation campaign, the parties of the middle classes, the right-wing paramilitary *Verbaende* and the associations of the agricultural and industrial employers, presented their campaign as opposition to the "precedent" of expropriation. It was claimed that the former monarchies were not the real issue: property relations *per se* were endangered.[112] In Leipzig a bill poster of the "Working Committee Against the Referendum" stated that:

> The 20th of June will bring us great communist recruiting. Whoever wants to uphold our state and economic order will stay at home. Whoever works for the abolition of private ownership, and thereby wants to throw the German people into great confusion, will co-operate with the referendum...Anyone who goes to vote on the 20 June, and is thereby registered on the electoral list, lets themselves be known as a friend and accomplice of the socialist-communist international.[113]

Where the KPD leadership had hoped to find a reservoir of support, political developments in Saxony had created a salt flat among the "non-proletarian working

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[109] Stoeschek and Zeidler, 'Saechsichen Landtag', p440.

[110] On the NSDAP breakthrough in Erzgebirge-Vogtland, Walter, 'Stammland', pp218ff; For the campaign to the end the speaking ban on Hitler see the collection of material by the Saxon Ministry of the Interior in, Saechsischer Staatshauptrachiv Dresden (St.H.D) MdI, Nr.11135.,Bl.83ff.

[111] The conflict was overcome at the Bamberg "Fuehrertagung" in 1926 which established the principle of the *Fuehrerprinzip* see, Orlow, D., *The History of the Nazi Party, vol.1 1919-33* (Pittsburg, 1969), pp67ff.

[112] Schueren, *Volksentscheid*, p183.

[113] ibid, p183.

people."[114] Intellectuals in Saxony also failed to flood into the "Kuczinski Committees", which were headed at Reich level by prominent artists and intellectuals, most notably Albert Einstein.[115] Throughout the referendum campaign in Erzgebirge-Vogtland there were only four "Kuczinski Committees".[116] Articles in the KPD's press claiming to be the "true" representatives of the *Mittlestand*, did nothing to dissuade these social groups from regarding communism as the devil incarnate.[117] The higher the population concentration of the Saxon *Mittelstand*, the lower the level of support for anything associated with the KPD fell.[118]

The Campaign Among Peasant Farmers.

The KPD's propaganda during the "princes campaign" also specifically addressed the peasants at national, regional and local level. The KPD's draft bill in the Reichstag on the 25 November and subsequent public statements informed the peasantry that the land

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[114] The Regional Executive in Saxony noted that while the upper leadership was disposed towards the party line, lower functionaries and ordinary members did not carry it out see, SAPMO I 3/8-10/6, Bericht ueber die Stellungnahme zum Volksentscheid.Landesvorstand Sachsen. Dresden, den 26.2.1926. An das ZK, Polbuero, Bl.32(Boettcher).

[115] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, pp275-76.

[116] SAPMO I 3/9/69, An das ZK. Chemnitz, den 16.6.1926, Bl.146.

[117] SAPMO I 3/9/73, Politischer Bericht fuer den Monat Juni 1926, Bl.311-12. the document refers to a series of articles under the title, "Wo stehen die Feinde des Mittelstandes".

[118] Employment in the offices of the state administration increased the proportion of *Beamten* see, *Statistisches Jahrbuch fuer die Stadt Dresden* 31/32 (Dresden, 1932), p8; For a discussion of the social and industrial structure of Dresden, see, Kriegenherdt, F., 'Der Kampf der KPD in Dresden um die Aktionseinheit der Arbeiterklasse gegen die drohende Gefahr der Faschismus und des Krieges (non den Reichstagwahlen am 14.9.1930 biz zur Einsetzung der Hitlerregierung am 30.1.1933)', Ph.D. Dissertation (Dresden, 1966), pp1-17; For sub-regional differences in the industrial structure of Saxony, see, Bramke, W. and Hess, U., 'Ergebnisse - Schwerepunkt - Problemkreise. Berichte ueber das erste Arbeitsjahr' in *Projekt 'Sachsen im 20. Jahrhundert'. Politische, wirtschaftliche und soziale Wandlung einer alten industrie Region* (Leipzig, 1994) [henceforth: Projekt Sachsen], pp3-14.

expropriated from the former princes would be re-distributed to small and medium peasants and tenant farmers.[119] This was part of the party's wider objective of gaining sympathy from these social groups by emphasising the difference in interests between small-scale producers and large land owners.[120] In the Saxon *Landtag* Boettcher developed this tactic by pointing to the public funds given to the former House of Wettin while the peasants went without financial assistance.[121]

It was in rural areas that opponents of the expropriation campaign were most successfully able to organise their counter-campaign.[122] In the predominantly agricultural eastern regions, of East Prussia, Mecklenburg and Pommerania, both signature of the petition and voting in the referendum were well below the combined SPD-KPD vote in the December 1924 Reichstag election.[123] In Saxony, support for the expropriation of the House of Wettin actually fell in the countryside between the petition in March and the referendum vote on 20 June. This was due to the role of the *Saechsische Landbund* (SLB), the delayed co-ordination of the referendum's opponents into the Working Committee Against the Referendum, and the local press' ability to exploit the cautious psychology of the rural population.[124]

[119] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p271; Text of KPD's bill, in, *DuM*, series II, vol.8 p271f; SAPMO I 3/8-10/8, Landesvorstand Sachsen. An das ZK der KPD, den 9.4.1926, Bl.141.

[120] In 1925 the KPD divided the peasantry into four classes according to farm sizes: the upper two were labeled "bourgeois" and the lower two "proletarian" see, Farquaharson, J. E., *The Plough and the Swastika: National Socialism and Agriculture in Germany 1928-1945* (London, 1976), p40.

[121] Stoeschek und Zeidler, 'Saechsischen Landtag', p443.

[122] Ibid.

[123] ibid, p137f; Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, pp276f.

[124] SAPMO I 3/10/115, Bezirksleitung Westsachsen. An das ZK der Partei, Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 12.3.1926, Bl.133; SAPMO I 3/9/73, Politischer Bericht fuer den Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 10. Parteitag bis Oktober 1926, Bl.329; ibid, Bericht ueber das Volksbegehren in Bezirk Erzgebirge-

In the KPD there was considerable resistance among rank-and-file members and lower functionaries to carrying out the campaign in rural areas.[125] Party worker's knew that the leadership's press statements and policy directives, which claimed there was "growing sympathy" for the KPD among the rural population, were merely propaganda.[126] The KPD's rural campaign, which parallelled similar developments in the Soviet Union, was intended to channel the small peasants' movement into the KPD's expropriation campaign. Communist rural work stressed that peasants would gain by the redistribution of the lands owned by the former Saxon monarchy.[127] However, the proposed campaign of meetings overstretched the KPD's weak rural organisation, few peasants attended them and those who did were disinclined to believe what they heard. One report to the BL in West Saxony indicated that the peasants considered everything a hundred times and had been convinced by the SLB and their local press that: "after the expropriation of the former monarchies would be the Bolshevisation of the rural economy and house ownership."[128] Distrust of communism was reinforced by the perception of the party's activists as "outsiders", who arrived in lorries from nearby urban areas.[129] When KPD's activists divided into agitation troops, such as cyclists, bill-posting squadrons, those demonstrating through the neighbouring villages and "house to house" agitation groups, many peasants

Vogtland, Bl.287. The "Working Committee" was founded on 15 April see, Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p279 and note 211.

[125] SAPMO I 3/10/115, Bezirksleitung Westsachsen. An das ZK der Partei, Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 12.3.1926, Bl.130.

[126] SAPMO I 3/8/27, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. Bericht vom Monat Februar, Bl.393.

[127] 'In der Revolution geboren', p143; SAPMO I 3/9/60, Resolution zur Lage, Aufgaben und Taktik der Partei. Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 10-11.4.1926, Bl.26.

[128] SAPMO I 3/10/115, BL Westsachsen. An das ZK der Partei, Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 12.3.1926, Bl.133.

[129] ibid, Bericht ueber die Kampagne zur Volksentscheid im Bezirk Westsachsen, den 23.7.1926, Bl.140-41; ibid, Bericht der Zellengruppe Zentrum 5, Bl.147.

were alarmed, particularly when uniformed RFB members stood on their doorstep.[130] The

KPD's distinctly class war style propaganda also helped to repel rather than attract

peasants.[131] In some cases distraught peasants personally tried to disperse the communist

propaganda troops. One such example was in the village of Althen, where a peasant's

wife attacked Communists with a wooden shoe.[132] The Red Rural Sundays, which took

place immediately prior to the petition and the vote itself, were the high points of

communist activity in rural areas. The KPD made its presence felt using demonstrations

with accompanying bands and propaganda troops.[133] This too did more to disrupt rural

life than assure peasants of the KPD's intention to represent their interest.

The KPD's organisational Bolshevisation had, in rural work as in all other areas, done

nothing to assist the mobilisation of party members to carry out the party line. Factory and

street cell involvement in rural work was the exception to the rule. The prosecution of

grass roots' political work continued to be done by the residentially based party units.[134]

While the factional struggle blazed throughout party meetings, it devolved on militants in

the RFB to take communism to the countryside. Indeed, the extent to which the RFB was

responsible for carrying out practical party work had already begun to concern senior

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[130] SAPMO I 3/8-10/6, Sitzung des Landesvorstandes mit den Landesvertrauensleute. Dresden, den 5.9.1926, Bl.42-3(Waesche).

[131] SAPMO I 3/9/69, Protokoll der engeren BLS am 21.6.1926, Bl.157(Erfenschlag).

[132] SAPMO I 3/10/115, Bericht der Zellengruppe Zentrum 5, Bl.147.

[133] 'In der Revolution geboren', p143f.

[134] For an example of a factory cell involved in rural work during the expropriation campaign see, SAPMO I 3/8/33, Abschrift. Bericht der Betreibszelle S-W, Niedersedlitz. An die Bezirksleitung Ostsachsen der KPD. Dresden-Leuben, den 11.7.1926, Bl.147; SAPMO I 3/10/115, Bericht der Zellengruppe Schleussig fuer Juni 1926, Bl.146.

functionaries.[135] However, no matter how much communist campaigning was carried out in the countryside, there was no road into the hinterland which led to the peasantry's heart. The invitation to join the communist movement remained like an invitation to drink from a politically poisoned chalice.[136]

The Significance of the Expropriation Campaign in Saxony.

The outcome of the communist inspired campaign to expropriate the former Princely Houses was what could be called a respectable failure. Nationally, the referendum received 14.5 million votes favouring the former monarchies' expropriation without compensation, but 19.8 million votes would have been required for an absolute majority.[137] In the major Saxon cities of Chemnitz (53.1 per cent) and Leipzig (62.7 per cent) participation was well in excess of the Reich average of 36.4 per cent.[138] In the more *buergerlich* Dresden, the 47 per cent rate of participation represented a considerable achievement.[139] However, it was evident that the campaign's support among the "workers' parties" and rejection by the parties of the middle classes, reflected the sharpening conflicts between social classes in the region. Crucial to the referendum's outcome in

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[135] The role of the RFB is stressed throughout the party documentation see, for example, SAPMO I 10/115, Bericht ueber die Kampagne zur Volksentscheid im Bezirk Westsachsen, den 23.7.1926,Bl.141; SAPMO I 3/9/69, Protokoll der engeren BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 21.6.1926, BL.157(Ohr).

[136] SAPMO I 3/8-10/6, Sitzung des Landesvorstandes mit den Landesvertrauensleute. Dresden, den 5.9.1926, Bl.42-3(Waesche).

[137] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, 277-82.

[138] ibid, pp281-2.

[139] Statistics, in Wiederhoeft, H., 'Der Kampf der KPD zur Schaffung der Einheitsfront in der Zeit der Fuerstenenteignungskampagne 1925/6 in Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland' Diplomarbeit (Leipzig University, 1965), pp52ff; On the social profile of Saxony, Laban, K., 'Zur Struktur der staedtischen Arbeiterklasse im Land Sachsen auf Grundlage der Volks-Berufs-und-Betriebszaehlung von 1925-1933', in *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Wilhelm Pieck Universitaet, Rostock* 33 (8) (1984), pp46-9.

Saxony was the SPD's active support. However, it was symbolic of the political development of the Weimar Republic that the monarchist president, von Hindenburg, had acted behind the scenes to prevent any ill fate becoming the German princes. In the course of March and April 1926 Hindenburg was able to achieve the Reich cabinet's acceptance for his own definition of the bill as an issue of constitutional change, which would have required a majority of two-thirds of all those entitled to vote.[140]

The expropriation campaign was an undoubted success for the KPD's united front from above, using a popular issue to force the SPD leadership's hand. However, this related to the subterfuge rather than the substance: the expropriation of the Princely Houses rather than the creation of a pro-Soviet "left-wing" in the workers' movement under communist leadership, which would take part in all areas of the party's on-going political campaigning. The united front from below, however, was unable to break down the organisational barriers of the social democratic movement: the campaign was in no way brought under the KPD's political leadership. Social democrats carried out the campaign in their party organisations, they did not join the KPD's "Unity Committees". The limited number of "Unity Committees" set up during the campaign are unlikely to have included the unofficial participation of more than 100 Social Democrats and perhaps as many "non-party" workers. Furthermore, these committees were only able to organise work on the specific issue of the expropriation campaign, and they fell into disuse thereafter.[141]

After the campaign to expropriate the former monarchies, the KPD's Regional Executive claimed that the referendum was "evidence" of a "left orientation" of the working classes.[142] This view was also expressed by the left-wing Social Democrat, Georg Decker,

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[140] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, 277-82.

[141] SAPMO I 3/9/69, An das ZK. Chemnitz den 16.6.1926, Bl.146.

[142] SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der BLS. vom 10.7.1926, Bl.97.

writing in the in SPD's house journal, *Gesellschaft*. Decker's analysis detailed the campaign as a left-wing counter-offensive, showing what could be achieved when the left was united.[143] However, the meaning of unity to the left-wing of social democracy, who were inclined towards co-operation with the KPD on specific issues, was different to the communist definition. In communist terms there had been very little "communist unity", and a real danger of the tactic working in reverse: Communists working with Social Democrats outside the KPD's front organisations.

Winkler concluded that the referendum campaign in itself was one in a series of blows to the Weimar Republic and parliamentary democracy. The SPD, in Winkler's view, had alienated its potential middle-class coalition partners and disappointed radical Social Democrats by helping to discredit the reforming potential of parliamentary democracy.[144] However, in Saxony at least, it was a symptom of existing socio-political antagonisms rather than their cause. Political tension in Saxony had already been molded by the developments during the Weimar Republic's early years. The KPD's response to political developments after the expropriation campaign, further detailed the difficulties experienced in carrying out the united front policy.

5.3   The United Front Comes to Ground.

The Saxon Political System in the Middle Years of Weimar.

The KPD's return to a united front policy in late 1925 coincided with a period of accelerated fragmentation in the Weimar political system. The lines of fracture ran both within and between the parties. It was in this context that the KPD made the ideological

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[143] Decker, G., 'Lehren des Volksentscheides', in *Gesellschaft* 3 (2) (1926), pp193-203.

[144] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p289.

claim to be the "objective" representative of not only the proletariat, but the wider *Werktaetigen,* the working people, which included the artisanal and commercial lower middle classes and peasant farmers. During 1926/7 the KPD placed greater emphasis on winning the support of the "working people".

In Saxony the social and economic impact of the hyper-inflation and then currency stabilisation had a more intense political impact than in the *Reich* in general.[145] In the 1926 *Landtag* election the traditional middle-class parties, the DDP, DVP and DNVP, lost 40 per cent of their share of the vote to the Peoples' Rights and Re-evaluation Party (VRP), which represented the interests of those who had lost substantial financial sums in the currency re-evaluation, and the Economic Party (WP), which represented the business interests of small-scale artisanal producers and shopkeepers.[146] The origins of these political developments in Germany have been located in the social shifts, produced by the process of industrial modernisation from the late Imperial period, which spawned a search for vehicles of political protection.[147] In Saxony the high proportion of small- and medium-scale industrial and the commercial interests intensified the dissolution of the

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[145] Feldmann, G. D., 'Saxony, the Reich and the Problem of Unemployment in the German Inflation', in *Archiv fuer Sozialgeschichte (AfS)* XXVII (1987), pp103-44.

[146] Jones, *German Liberalism,* p264; Lapp, 'Political Extremes', p189; For a report on these developments in Saxony, see, B.A.P. (Bundesarchiv Potsdam) RKO 15.07, Nr.243/1,Bl.68ff.

[147] Winkler, H. A., 'From Social Protectionism to National Socialism: The German Small Business Movement in Comparative Perspective', in *Journal of Modern History (JMH)* 48 (1) (1976), pp.1-18; Jones, L. E., ' 'The Dying Middle' - The Fragmentation of the Bourgeois Middle', in *Contemporary European History (CEH)* 5 (1) (1972), pp24-5. On the impact of industrialisation on the social basis, or milieu, underpinning the political system, Lepsius, R.M., 'Parteiensystem und Sozialstruktur. Zum Problem der Demokratisierung der Gesellschaft', in Ritter, G. A. (ed), *Deutsche Parteien vor 1918* (Cologne, 1973), pp58-80. For an overview with reference to Saxony see, Szejnmann, C-C. H., 'The Rise of the Nazi Party in Saxony between 1921 and 1933', Ph.D. thesis (King's College, University of London, 1994), p.15.

party system. Saxon industrialists, and the wider commercial and artisanal lower middle classes, resented the region's transition from the "pioneer land" of the industrial revolution to a poor relation, left out in the political cold by the Reich government's political prioritisation of large-scale industrial and business interests.[148] Saxony's confinement within an "old industrial" structure pushed apart the different interest groups which had formed the social basis of the traditional parties of the middle classes.[149] Rentiers and pensioners, who had defected to the DNVP from the DDP and DVP in 1924, transferred their political allegiance in 1926 to the VRP.[150] Saxon small-scale business interests, in significant numbers, defected politically from the DVP to the WP.[151] The economic and social protests of the Saxon business community also helps to explains why the DVP, and the VSI (*Verband Saechsische Industriellen*), were positioned on the right-wing of the national party.[152] The relegation of the Saxon economy to the fringes of the national economy, the labour-intensive nature of Saxon industry, and the *Reich* government's use of progressive taxation to finance the *Sozialstaat*, all contributed to the confrontational relationship between Saxon employers and employees.[153]

The small- and medium-scale structure of Saxon agricultural production also contributed to Saxony's drift into ring-wing political particularism. Saxon farmers by 1927 began to

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[148] In general, Jones, L. E., 'The Dying Middle': Weimar Germany and the Fragmentation of Bourgeois Politics', in, *CEH* 5 (1) (1972) (pp23-54), pp24-5; On the impact of industrialisation on the social basis, or milieu, underpinning the political system, Lepsius, 'Parteiensystem', pp58-80.

[149] On the influence of industrial interests on the mainstream political parties see, James, H. J., *The German Slump. Politics and Economics 1924-1930* (Oxford, 1986); Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', pp.205ff.

[150] Lapp, ibid, pp208-9.

[151] ibid.

[152] ibid, pp.209ff,190ff.

[153] Blaich, F., 'Staatsverstaendnis und politische Haltung der deutschen Unternehmer, 1918-1930', in Bracher, K. D., Funke, E. und Jackobsen, H-A. (eds.), *Die Weimar Republik* (Dusseldorf, 1987), p166.

feel the twin impact of reduced domestic demand and the decline in commodity prices as a correlative of the world depression in agriculture.[154] In agriculture, as in industry, the conflict of interests between branches of production saw fragmentation of political interests along economic dividing lines, eroding traditional political loyalties. The radicalisation of the Saxon peasantry, although later than among workers in industry and commerce, initiated the metamorphosis of the *Saechsische Landbund* (SLB), which had been closely associated with the DNVP, into the independent and regionally assertive *Sachsische Landvolk* (SLV).[155] The Saxon rural protest movement had grown out of a feeling of being socially and economically sidelined by the DNVP's domination by heavy industry and large-scale agriculture interests.[156]

The fragmentation of the traditional middle-class parties was parallelled in the SPD. The so-called "23", the SPD *Landtag* deputies who continued to take part in the regional coalition government with the DDP and DVP, were expelled from the party in April 1926. Under the leadership of Wilhelm Buck and Karl Bethke, the ASPD (*Alte Sozialdemokratische Partei*) was formed as a party of class compromise through participation in the institutions of state. However, unlike the right-wing particular interest parties, the ASPD did not become a significant social movement. The overwhelming majority of the SPD membership and electorate were not inspired to politically rehouse themselves.[157] The lack of a centre ground in Saxon politics, on which a socio-economic

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[154] Lobmeier, K., 'Die Sozialoekonomische Lage und das politische Verhaltnis der Mittelschichten in der Kreishauptmannschaft Chemnitz 1927 bis 1935' Dissertation (University of Leipzig, 1989), pp21-3.

[155] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', pp227.

[156] Farquharson, *Plough and the Swastika*, pp26-7; Gessner, D., 'Agrarian Protectionism in the Weimar Republic', in *Journal of Contemporary History (JCH)* 12 (1977), pp766-70.

[157] Lapp, B., 'A 'National' Socialism: The Old Socialist Party of Saxony, 1926-1932', in *JCH* 30 (1995), pp291-309. Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, pp195-202,327-31.

compromise could be built, increasingly gave way to political polarisation. This process had its roots in the Imperial era, when the working and lower middle classes were politically excluded by a restrictive franchise.[158] However, while political protest benefited the SPD in the Imperial political system, the Weimar political system saw a rightward gravitation of the lower middle classes.

Divisions in the Saxon middle classes prevented a coherent economic policy in the 1926-29 *Landtag*. However, the memory of the SPD-led governments between 1921-23 bridged the divide that economic interests had created.[159] The role of the ASPD was crucial in enabling the Saxon coalition government of 1926-29, which repealed much of the earlier socialist reforms: with four seats it held the balance of power.[160] The role of the ASPD in the Saxon political system was that of catalyst, enabling the exclusion of the Left from regional political power.[161] With the legislation of the *Landtag* administration defined by a predominantly right-wing agenda, the KPD applied the term "social fascist" to the ASPD in the mid twenties, before it became current at national level after 1928.

The KPD's Interpretation of Saxon Political Developments.

It was in this climate of economic dissatisfaction and political protest that the KPD played out the united front policy in Saxony. The Regional Executive adopted a policy of political subterfuge, as opposed to direct confrontation with the SPD. In the 1926 *Landtag* elections the KPD called for a "Red Workers' Saxony", implying support for an

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[158] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', 145f.

[159] Szejnmann, C-C. H., 'The Rise of the Nazi Party in Saxony between 1921 and 1933', Ph.D. thesis (King's College, University of London, 1994), pp17ff.

[160] Sejnmann, 'Rise of the Nazi Party', pp19ff.

[161] Fenske, H., *Wahlrecht und Parteiensystem* (Frankfurt, 1972), pp298-300.

SPD-led reform government.[162] The municipal elections in November saw the Saxon KPD approve the use of "joint lists" with the SPD in wards which would otherwise have fallen to the parties of the Right.[163] However, the KPD Regional Executive's policy was intended to prevent the SPD gaining politically by persuasively pointing out that it was the Communists who were preventing a "workers' government".[164] The Saxon KPD's policy, however, did not even constitute a political cease fire with the left-wing of the SPD, let alone a *modus operandi*. The KPD held to its "unmasking" policy, whereby continuous propaganda was made which claimed that the Saxon SPD's radical public statements were merely an attempt to hold back the workers from communism.[165] The KPD's tactic envisaged winning over the so-called "Workers' Opposition" in the SPD at public and party meetings, which would demonstrate the alleged differences between the SPD's words and actions.[166]

The objective of the KPD's political line to promote an "alliance" between the proletariat and the non-proletarian "working people" made the breakthrough of the *mittelstaendisch* particular interest parties of direct relevance. The ZK interpreted the political rise of the economic protest movement as a re-grouping within the middle classes, characterised by the lower middle classes' search for political representation which was independent of both the middle and working classes. This option was, however, ruled out by the KPD's

[162] SAPMO I 3/8-10/5, Landesvorstandsitzung. Dresden, den 2.8.1926, Bl.136-40. The Left was represented by Fritz Gloebig, the apparatus faction by Rudolf Renner and the Right by Lieberasch.

[163] SAPMO I 3/8-10/9, Unsere Taktik im Wahlkampf in Sachsen. Landesvorstand (undated), Bl.56-8.

[164] SAPMO I 3/8-10/5, Landesvorstandsitzung. Dresden, den 2.8.1926, Bl.129-30.

[165] SAPMO I 3/9/61, Aufgaben, Taktik und Situation der Partei. Bezirksparteitag am 12-13.2.1927, Bl.47; SAPMO I 3/8-10/3, Landesparteiarbeiterkonferenz. Dresden den 23.1.1927, Bl.2-3.

[166] SAPMO I 2/1/50, Wahlergebnis in Sachsen und unsere weitere Taktik. Protokoll der Sitzung der ZK der KPD vom 10.11.1926, Bl.7(Thaelmann). At this meeting Thaelmann made "corrections" to the Saxon Regional Executive's forthcoming public statements from a leftist perspective, see ibid, Bl.6.

ideologically driven bipolar model of society, in which the lower middle classes were incapable of independent political action, and must therefore gravitate towards either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. The KPD's task was to demonstrate that they "stood with the proletariat".[167] The KPD's interpretation focused on the economic rivalries within the middle-class vote, instead of accepting that the consequence of communist involvement in the Saxon government in 1923 had intensified these social groups' anti-Marxism. Equally, the right-wing political agenda of the particular interest parties was dismissed as the result of differences between their leaderships and memberships.[168] The KPD was unable to accept that a protest against the policies of large-scale capitalism by small-scale producers could come from a right-wing political perspective, which was also directed against organised labour. For this reason party policy continued to insist that a "proletarian mass movement" could bring lower middle-class malcontents over to the KPD.[169] On the basis of this political interpretation, the KPD's campaign to win over the Saxon *Mittelstand* involved creating an "opposition tendency" in the protest movement which would divide the protesters from their new found political leaders.[170] In all salient points this policy was the same "unmasking" tactic that the KPD applied to the SPD. The KPD's regional leadership actually contended that it could bring down the Held government in the

[167] ibid, Bl.4(Schneller); SAPMO I 3/9/69, Stellungnahme zur Landtagswahl. Protokoll der engeren BLS. am 1.11.1926, Bl.301(Schneller).

[168] SAPMO I 3/8-10/7, Landesvorstand Sachsen. An die ZK, Polbuero. Dresden, den 15.12.1926, Bl.107-9.

[169] SAPMO I 3/8-10/3, 'Gegen den Buergerblock', in *Arbeiterstimme*, Nr19, 24.1.1927, Bl.17.

[170] Wahlergebnis in Sachsen und unsere weitere Taktik. Protokoll der Sitzung des Sitzung der ZK vom 10.11.1926., SAPMO I 2/1/50.,Bl.4(Schneller); SAPMO I 3/9/69, Stellungnahme zur Landtagswahl. Protokoll der engeren BLS. am 1.11.1926, Bl.303(Mapitz).

Landtag by putting pressure "from below" on the leaderships of the "special interest" parties to withdraw support from the coalition.[171]

"Let All Who Have Ears Hear": The KPD Addresses the Working People.

The KPD intended the Working Peoples' Movement to provide "the organisational and political means of continuing the united front campaign and uniting all working layers for communism."[172] The campaign had the objective of widening the party's sphere of influence and reviving the Unity Committees, which had all but vanished after the campaign to expropriate the former Princely Houses. The KPD leadership saw the campaign as a means: "to free the widest section of the Social Democratic workers from their reformist, or seemingly radical leaders, and to bring them nearer to the (Communist) Party, along with the decisive layers of the *Mittelstand*."[173] The ZK's policy discussions placed a strong emphasis on winning over radicalised Social Democrats and workers employed in large factories.[174] The campaign was to be given a national platform at the Reich Congress of the Working People, held in early December 1926 in Berlin.[175]

When the Congress of Working People met, under the chairmanship of the Independent Socialist Ledebour, 1,956 delegates were present. However, the Working Peoples' Movement had done little to attract those outside of the KPD's own ranks: 137 delegates

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[171] SAPMO I 3/9/61, Aufgaben, Taktik und Situation der Partei. Bezirksparteitag am 12-13.2.1927, Bl.47.

[172] SAPMO I 3/9/69, Protokoll der Sitzung der engeren Bezirksleitung vom 6.12.1926, Bl.319(Hauschild).

[173] SAPMO I 3/8/31, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. Rundschreiben zum Januar Arbeitsplan 1927. Dresden, den 21.12.1926, Bl.157.

[174] SAPMO I 2/1/50, Protokoll der Sitzung des ZKes der KPD vom 10.11.1926,Bl.1(Heckert).

[175] SAPMO I 3/8/31, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. Rundschreiben an all Ortsgruppen und Zellen. Dresden, Anfang August 1926, Bl.126.

were members of the SPD; 31 were members of the USPD; and a handful of delegates had been sent from the Christian trade unions, the *Mittelstand,* and peasant farmers.[176] At local level the delegate movement had stressed the KPD's advocacy of the interests of all working people, connecting the specific grievances of the audience to the policies of the party.[177] However, Heckert's main speech made clear that the KPD wanted to create a national impression of a wide ranging movement of sympathy and support for the Soviet Union.[178] In reality, however, the KPD leadership knew that the campaign had done little to mobilise the party membership and had not proved to be a popular platform for communist recruitment and propaganda.[179] Despite this manifest reality the Congress was not the culmination of communist overtures to the "working people", but more of a prominent staging post in an on-going policy of communist infiltration.

Report to the Working People!: The Saxon KPD's Efforts to Revive the United Front.

After the Reich Congress the Working Peoples' Movement was further developed in a campaign of meetings "reporting" on the Congress' decisions. The party's lower organisations received circulars informing them how to "skilfully connect" grievances about local working and living conditions with the objectives of the Working Peoples' Movement. The central aim of communist activity was to create a catalyst widening communist influence and to organising non-communists in Unity Committees, which

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[176] Fowkes, *Communism in Germany,* p138; Flechtheim, *Die KPD,* p186.

[177] SAPMO I 3/8/31, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. Rundschreiben an all Ortsgruppen und Zellen. Dresden, Anfang August 1926, Bl.126-27.

[178] *Bericht der Verhandlungen des 11. Parteitages der KPD* (Berlin, 1927), p36(Dengel), quoted in Fowkes, *German Communism,* p138.

[179] SAPMO I 2/1/50, Protokoll der Sitzung des ZKes der KPD vom 10.11.1926, Bl.2-3(Thaelmann).

would carry out KPD-led campaigns.[180] The policy in Saxony was co-ordinated by a Regional Committee of the Working Peoples' Movement, under the leadership of Paul Boettcher.[181]

The Regional Committee meeting of 3 March 1927 indicates the difficulties experienced in pursuing the united front tactic and the sub-regional variations in its progress.[182] From the beginning of the working peoples' delegate movement (ie electing representatives of social groups and political organisations to communist congresses) in August 1926, it had proved difficult to generate enthusiasm in the party membership or the wider population. In West Saxony there had been some 200 meetings; however, only 30 of these included local trade-union organisations, and only 10 local Unity Committees were founded. In Erzgebirge-Vogtland there had been some 150 meetings and rallies, but only 14 local Unity Committees were set up. In East Saxony only 50 meetings were held and two Unity Committees formed.[183] The social and political composition of the local Unity Committees are not documented, but the overwhelmingly communist complexion of the whole campaign is reflected in the delegates to the Regional Congress of the Working People, which was held in Dresden on 21-22 May 1927: from 220 delegates, 17 were

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[180] SAPMO I 3/8/31, KPD.8.Ostsachsen. Rundschreiben zum Januar Arbeitsplan 1927. Dresden, den 21.12.1926, Bl.156-7; SAPMO I 3/9/69, Protokoll der Sitzung der engeren BLS. vom 6.12.1926, Bl.318(Mapitz).

[181] SAPMO I 3/8-10/3, Landesparteiarbeiterkonferenz. Dresden, den 15.1.1927, Bl.3; SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, An den Landesvorstand Sachsens. ZK Rundschreiben. Berlin, den 15.1.1927, Bl.7-8.

[182] SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, Landesvorstand Sachsens. Dresden, den 11.3.1927. An das ZK der KPD, Polbuero, Bl.5-6.

[183] SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, Landesvorstand Sachsens. Dresden, den 11.3.1927. An das ZK der KPD, Polbuero, Bl.5-6.

members of the SPD; only five delegates had been sent from a local trade-union branch; one delegate represented the *Mittlestand*; and 19 were delegated by small peasants.[184]

Despite the obstacles obstructing party policy, the KPD propaganda machine proclaimed that the Regional Congress had been a "great success" and "powerful validation" of party policy.[185] Boettcher's speech, like Heckert's at national level, placed greatest emphasis on the "working peoples'" sympathy for the Soviet Union and opposition to the alleged danger of an imperialist war of intervention against it. The other central themes in the speech addressed the social and economic concerns of the wider constituency targeted for communist recruitment: the KPD would oppose tax and customs policies "burdening" the peasant farmers and *Mittelstand*; cultural reaction would be opposed (ie religious education in schools); and unemployment benefits would be increased, while rent rises would be opposed.[186] The KPD's Regional Committee of the Working People, however, realised that the communists' "signals" had received almost no echo from the "working people". Addressing the membership's resistance to carrying out the party line among the *Mittelstand*, the leadership stated that: "In our party there is undoubtedly an underestimation of party work among the *Mittelstand* and a relative indolence towards winning the sympathising classes."[187] The experience of party workers, at the front line of political campaigning, was ignored: the KPD during 1927 continued the policy without modification, expending vast reserves of energy for little in return. The top down imposition of an unpopular policy provides an illustration of the KPD's political relationship with Saxon society at local level. The following discussion will detail the

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[184] SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, Landeskongress des Werktaetigen Sachsens am 21-22.5.1927, Bl.15-6.

[185] ibid,Bl.23-4.

[186] SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, Landesvorstand Sachsens. An das ZK der KPD, Polbuero. Dresden, den 18.6.1927, Bl.27.

[187] ibid, Landesvorstand Sachsens. Dresden, den 16.5.1927. An das ZK der KPD, Polbuero, Bl.8.

impact of the KPD's political line with reference to communist activity in the factories and trade unions; in the municipal councils; among the unemployed; and with the *Mittlestand* and peasant farmers.

Communist Factory Workers and the Working Peoples' Movement.

The Regional Executive of the Saxon KPD regarded carrying the political line into the factories and trade unions as the fulcrum on which the Working Peoples' Movement was balanced: the success of the whole tactic was deemed to hinge on the success of this aspect of the party's campaign.[188] Communists in the factories were instructed to forward resolutions at all factory and union meetings linking the demands of the Congress of Working People, to conditions in the individual factories. The main thrust of the communists' tactic was to "demonstrate" the left-wing SPD leadership's alleged role in preventing the extra-parliamentary mass action, which, according to the KPD, was the only means of successfully struggling against the Saxon *Landtag* government.[189] The KPD's tactic envisaged the formation of a broad movement which would unfold as non-communists were drawn into the party's Unity Committees.[190] However, the KPD leadership's tactic did not take account of the weak structures of the party's trade-union divisions in the sub-districts, which came up against the ingrained support for the Social Democrats in the unions. The policy also came up against the reluctance of Communists in

[188] SAPMO I 3/8-10/3, Landesvorstand Sachsens. Dresden, den 11.3.1927. An das ZK der Partei, Polbuero, Bl.6; SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, KPD Landesvorstand Sachsens. Dresden, den 18.6.1927. An das ZK der Partei, Polbuero, Bl.27.(Boettcher).

[189] ibid, Bl.17.

[190] SAPMO I 3/8-10/3, An das Landesvorstand Sachsens. ZK Rundschrieben. Berlin, den 15.1.1927, Bl.7-8; SAPMO I 3/8-10/3, Bericht ueber die Landesparteiarbeiterkonferenz am 23.1.1927. An das ZK der KPD, Polbuero. Dresden, den 25.1.1927, Bl.15.

the factories to carry out policies which were unrelated to factory or union based issues.[191] Indeed, it was the reluctance of Communists in the factories to carry out a sectarian policy which was a defining feature of the KPD's right-wing union functionaries.

Throughout 1926 and 1927 the Saxon KPD undertook three campaigns in the factories which aimed to exploit differences within the Saxon SPD. The KPD's campaigning was intensified after the SPD's right-wing formally split-off as an independent party in April 1926. However, the ASPD initially retained strong influence in the trade-union branches in the Dresden-Bautzen area. According to Lapp, the ASPD's support in this area only dissipated when the party adopted a more explicitly German nationalist ideology under the influence of Ernst Niekisch in 1928.[192] The KPD's campaign focused its fire on both ASPD members in leading positions in the Saxon trade unions and on those who remained in the SPD, but were sympathetic to the party's stance in favour of participation in the institutions of state. These union functionaries included the ASPD members Wirth in the Railway Workers' Union, Jaeckel in the DTV and Franz Schilling, a "sympathiser", in the DMV, who was the editor of the *Saechsische Gewerkschaftszeitung*.[193] The KPD's tactic, in precisely the same manner as applied to the SPD and the organisations of the so-called non-proletarian working people, aimed to develop contacts with the ASPD's social basis, which was to be won over by discrediting their party leaders.[194] While lambasting the ASPD as a "social fascist" organisation, the KPD leadership believed that its members

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[191] SAPMO I 3/8-10/5, Bericht von Erich Melcher. An das ZK der Partei. Dresden, den 3.11.1927, Bl.146; SAPMO I 3/8-10/4., KPD Landesvorstand Sachsens. Dresden, den 18.6.1927. An das ZK der Partei, Polbuero, Bl.29.

[192] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', pp152f.

[193] SAPMO I 3/8-10/3, Landesvorstand Sachsens. An die BLen Erzgebirge-Vogtland, Ost und Westsachsen (undated), Bl.14.

[194] SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, KPD Landesvorstand Sachsens. Dresden, den 18.6.1927. An das ZK der Partei, Polbuero, Bl.27.

could be won over for communism. The KPD's adoption of policies, based on such political conceptions, became crucial in the early 1930s when the same tactic was applied to the social basis of the Nazis.

The Saxon KPD's factory policy was part of the party's national campaign to associate the SPD and ADGB leaderships with the impact of industrial rationalisation: above all this related to the creation of structural unemployment and the deskilling of the workforce.[195] In Saxony the KPD tried to unfold an extra-parliamentary campaign which would involve the co-operation of employed workers and those who had been made unemployed as a result of industrial rationalisation. The policy was also dressed up in revolutionary sounding slogans, which claimed that the "movement" could overthrow the Saxon government.[196] The KPD leadership's policy was a two-pronged propaganda campaign in the factories. The left-wing of the SPD was offered a "voting alliance" to prevent the election of right-wing Social Democrats and ASPD members as union functionaries; if, or largely when, they refused to co-operate with the KPD, the communists could add the alleged co-operation of the right and left-wings of social democracy to their propaganda arsenal.[197] At least one reason for the SPD's refusal to co-operate with the Communists in

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[195] SAPMO I 3/8-10/10, Provisorischer Zentralausschuss der Erwerbslosausschuesse Sachsens. An das Bezirksausschuss des ADGB, die Bezirkskartell des AfA Bundes, und das Bezirksausschuss des Allgemein Deutschen Beamtenbundes Sachsens. Dresden, den 20.5.1926, Bl.59-60. For the SPD's economic policy conceptions during the mid twenties, Howard, M. C., and King, J. E., 'The Revival of Revisionism. The Political Economy of German Marxism, 1924-1929', European History Quarterly (EHQ) 18 (4) (1988), pp409-36. Peukert points out that, as there is no comprehensive study of industrial rationalisation in different regions and economic sectors, generalisations should be avoided; see, Peukert, D., The Weimar Republic. The Crisis of Classical Modernity (trans.: R. Deveson; Penguin, 1991), p115.

[196] SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, KPD Landesvorstand Sachsens. Dresden, den 18.6.1927. An das ZK der Partei, Polbuero, Bl.59-60.

[197] SAPMO I 3/8-10/6, Bericht ueber die Sitzung mit den Pol. und Gewerkschaftsleitern der drei saechsischen Bezirke am 31.3.1926, Bl.39

the factories was the constant and vitriolic attacks on them in the KPD's regional press.[198]

In the centre of the SPD's "class war" faction, in Chemnitz and Zwickau, the SPD was able to act, often successfully, against the influence of the ASPD in the unions independently of communist co-operation: a hard fact that the KPD's internal reports were only too well aware of.[199] The SPD in these areas also had the motivation that the ASPD had made a small electoral impact in the local elections of November 1926.[200]

After the inclusion of the DNVP in the Saxon government in July 1927, the KPD rekindled the campaign to remove the ASPD from its positions in the trade unions.[201] The re-composition of the Saxon government, extending from the DNVP, an outspoken advocate of the interests of industrialists, to the ASPD, was viewed by the KPD as a golden opportunity for an intensified campaign in the factories. The KPD's propaganda campaign stated that the first *Burgfrieden* since August 1914 had been agreed upon by the unions and the German Nationalists.[202] The Regional Executive of the KPD based its campaign on presenting motions at factory and trade-union meetings on the dangers of "social fascism" and the need to unfold an extra-parliamentary campaign to remove the ASPD Ministers from the government and the unions. The Regional Executive instructed Communists in the factories to discuss the "social fascist" role of the ASPD with colleagues, pointing out that the SPD and ADGB were disciplining members for

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[198] For Example, SAPMO I 3/8-10/10, Bericht von Siewert fuer die Zeit von 27.4-31.5.1926, Bl.47-8.

[199] SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, KPD Landesvorstand Sachsens. Dresden, den 18.6.1927. An das ZK der Partei, Polbuero, Bl.88; SAPMO I 3/9/61, Bericht der Gewerkschaftsabteilung. Bezirksparteitag am 12-13.2.1927, Bl.17.

[200] *StJFS* Nr.46 (Dresden, 1927), p459.

[201] SAPMO I 3/8-10/3, Landesvorstand Sachsen. Dresden, den 20.9.1927. An das ZK der Partei, Sekretariat, Bl.18.

[202] SAPMO I 3/8-10/10, Landesvorstand Sachsens. Dresden, den 14.7.1927. An das ZK der Partei, Sekretariat, Bl.79-80.

participation in the KPD's Working Peoples' Movement, but did nothing about union members who belonged to the ASPD.[203] However, KPD members did not develop the campaign at any notable number of meetings in their unions or factories. At the end of 1927 it was conceded that there had been no "broad movement" in the unions after the entry of the DNVP into the state government.[204] The strongest ASPD influence continued to be in the DTV, under the leadership of the union official Jaeckel.[205] At the West Saxon District Party Congress in December 1927 it was conceded that the whole campaign had done little to mobilise Communists in the factories.[206] Party members regarded campaigning on pay and conditions in the factories as a means of widening communist influence, while explicitly political campaigns were believed to be the role of residentially based party organisations.

The KPD's united front policy was most seriously brought into crisis by the pronounced upsurge of local and regional strikes, which took place under SPD-leadership between autumn 1927 and spring 1928. The peak of the economic conjuncture, with high levels of employment across the spectrum of Saxon industries, had produced the optimum conditions for the unions to apply upward pressure on wages.[207] In August 1927 the Saxon Ministry of the Interior noted that "almost all branches of industry" were affected by strikes. This principally involved the textile industry, railway workers, the Saxon

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[203] ibid.

[204] SAPMO I 3/10/108, Bericht der Bezirksleitung Westsachsen der KPD an den Bezirksparteitag am 10-11.12.1927, Bl.60.

[205] SAPMO I 3/8-10/3, Landesvorstand Sachsen. Dresden, den 20.9.1927. An das ZK der Partei, Sekretariat, Bl.18.

[206] SAPMO I 3/10/108, Bericht der Orgabteilung. Bezirksparteitag am 10-11.12.1927, Bl.65f.

[207] St.Ha.D.,, MdI Nr.11126/1, Monatsbericht ueber die politische und wirtschaftliche Lage im Freistaat Sachsen (Juni 1927) [henceforth: Monatsbericht], Bl.20.

tobacco industry and the Central German coal industry.[208] The KPD's central propaganda theme, that the left-wing of the SPD was in all essential aspects no different from the party's right-wing, was placed under intense pressure by the radicalism of local union branches, which were controlled by Social Democrats.[209] The KPD's ideological interpretation of strikes as an expression of class war (ie political forces) conflicted with the reality of these movements as economic protests, particularly when the economic conjuncture increased the demand for labour. The SPD's ability to act in harmony with the grass roots mood in the workforce allowed them to dominate the strike movement, thereby reversing the central ideological tenet of the united front tactic: the inclusion of non-communists in communist-led actions. The KPD leadership's refusal to adapt to the realities of every-day factory life served only to intensify the crisis caused by the SPD-led strike wave; the party found itself on the periphery of the strike movement unable to influence its organisation or aims.[210]

Immediately before the strike in the Central German lignite industry, which lasted between 17-22 October, the KPD in Borna relied on the RFB to distribute leaflets in front of the pits.[211] The KPD's efforts to have the strike take on political objectives, in contrast to the "reformists'" purely economic demands, also failed to gain currency among the textile, railway and tobacco workers' wage movements. Furthermore, the KPD relied on public meetings to present its case after it proved impossible to convene meetings dealing with their policy in the factories and trade unions.[212] During a joiners' strike in Chemnitz in

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[208] St.Ha.D.,, MdI Nr.11126/1, Monatsbericht (August 1927), Bl.36.

[209] For local examples of the KPD's policy, see, Heer-Kleinert, L., *Die Gewerkschaftspolitik der KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt/M, New York, 1983), pp328ff.

[210] St.Ha.D.,, MdI Nr.11126/1, Monatsbericht (August 1927), Bl.36.

[211] Sta.L., Ah Borna Nr.2624, Ah Borna, den 3.10.1927, Bl.262.

[212] St.Ha.D.,, MdI Nr.11126/1, Monatsbericht (Oktober 1927), Bl.62f; ibid, (November 1927), Bl.78.

October 1927 the ZK placed the local party organisations in the highly unattractive position of rejecting participation in a SPD-led strike, claiming that it would only end in an "unacceptable compromise" with the employers.[213] This became the KPD's official position in the elections to the factory councils in early 1928: despite the unions' achievement of a range of favourable pay awards, the KPD's official stance was that to elect SPD officials would result in the failure of "partial actions" for pay and conditions. The KPD's policy was limiting the involvement of communist trade unionists as well as failing to hit a chord with the wider workforce. Nevertheless, the ZK instructed the BLs to gain control of the strike movement by using public and internal party meetings on the need to give the strikes a political character.[214]

A range of factors had combined to obstruct the KPD's ability to take the Working Peoples' Movement into the Saxon factories. One factor was the resistance of Communists in the factories, including the minority organised in factory cells, to carry out political work that could result in their expulsion from the unions.[215] The KPD's re-organisation on the basis of cells was clearly not able to impose a party line unrelated to the every-day experience of party members. The immersion of the party machine in the factional feud also limited its ability to co-ordinate political campaigns. This especially affected West Saxony where the dominance of the Vogt Group throughout 1927 meant that local left-wing Communists rejected even discussions with Social Democrats in the unions who, it was alleged, "never learned".[216] The factional struggle and the top-down imposition of policies which did not accord with the political instincts of party workers

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[213] SAPMO I 3/9/69, Protokoll der engeren BLS von 19.9.1927, Bl.412,416-7(Gen. Gewerkschaft).

[214] St.Ha.D.,, MdI Nr.11126/2, Monatsbericht (Januar 1928), Bl.14-15.

[215] SAPMO I 3/9/63, Jahresbericht. Bezirksparteitag am 24-25.3.1928, Bl.91-3; SAPMO I 3/10/108, Bericht der Orgabteilung. Bezirksparteitag am 10-11.12.1927,Bl.65-6.

[216] SAPMO I 3/8-10/7, Landesvorstand Sachsens. An das ZK der Partei, Sekretariat (undated), Bl.97.

combined to blunt the KPD's cutting edge.[217] While the KPD leadership defined its role in the unions as the political proselytisation of non-communist workers, the local party militants remained influenced by the context of their local environment. Mallmann is correct in stating that there were local milieu where Communists behaved similarly to radical Social Democrats.[218] However, in Saxony at least, as the decade progressed, the stress needs to be placed increasingly firmly on the limited number of cases in which social conditions encouraged Communists to believe in the possibilities of co-operation with their Social Democratic rivals.

Although the gradual "left-turn" in communist tactics came from a new phase in the factional struggle, the SPD's dominant role in the strikes of late 1927 and early 1928 reinforced the concerns of left-wing Communists that organisational contact with the SPD would lead to the united front working in reverse: Communists joining SPD-led strike movements instead of Social Democrats defecting to the KPD because of dissatisfaction with their leadership's "moderation". Although this does not explain the origins of the "Third Period" political line in the KPD, it does help to explain why left-wing Communists could receive it with, at least initial, enthusiasm. The Saxon example confirms Ute Stolle's thesis that the "left-turn" was conceived of by the Left in the party leadership, as a tactic "to re-integrate the mass basis of the KPD, and to counteract the attractions of reformism."[219] However, it was not a decision made by democratic party consent. Crucially, it was not the KPD's left-wing which carried out work in the factories and

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[217] SAPMO I 3/10/110, Protokoll der Bezirksparteiarbeiterkonferenz am 11.3.1928, Bl.20(Schumann).

[218] Mallmann, K-H., *Kommunisten in der Weimarer Republik. Sozialgeschichte einer revolutionaeren Bewegung* (Darmstadt, 1996), p381ff.

[219] Stolle, U., *Arbeiterpolitik im Betrieb: Frauen und Maenner, Reformisten und Radikale, Fach und Massenarbeiter bei Bayern, BASF, Borsch und in Solingen (1900-1933)* (Frankfurt-am-Main, New York, 1980), p267.

trade union, but the right-wing. The more left-isolationist communist policy became, the more communist trade unionists would be pushed into a renewed factional struggle, thereby limiting the impact of communist policy in the factories.

Kommunalpolitik: The Local Face of the KPD.

Communist councillors were expected not just to involve themselves in council activities, but also to connect all parliamentary proceedings to the KPD's extra-parliamentary campaigns.[220] During the mid twenties the KPD's *Kommunalpolitik* was used to highlight the party's work for social benefits, such as opposing rent increases, promoting tenants' protection laws and, when necessary, voting with the SPD to achieve increases in unemployment benefits.[221] However, as Bahne illustrates with reference to the Ruhr, social policy was not central to the KPD's political strategy.[222] Communist work in local government was primarily to facilitate the party's wider penetration of local politics. Using Communal Advisory Councils (*Beiraete*), local deputies were to work with Communists in tenants' and residents' organisations, the Co-operatives, the Free Thinkers and sporting clubs, with the objective of causing disillusionment with the SPD and thereby winning over erstwhile Social Democrats for communism.[223] The same tactic was to be applied to the organisations of the *Mittlestand* and peasant farmers. For this reason local Communist

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[220] SAPMO I 3/9/61, Bericht der Abteilung Kompol. Bezirksparteitag 12-13.2.1927, Bl.22. For communist political strategy at municipal level in general see, Wunderlich, *Kommunalpolitik*, pp163-7.

[221] SAPMO I 3/8-10/3, An das Landesvorstand Sachsens. ZK Rundschrieben. Berlin, den 15.1.1927, Bl.8.

[222] Bahne, S., 'Die KPD im Ruhrgebiet in der Weimarer Republik', in Reulecke, J. (ed.), *Arbeiterbewegung an Rhein und Ruhr. Beitraege zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung in Rheinland-Westfalen* (Wuppertal, 1974), p330.

[223] SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, KPD Landesvorstand Sachsens. Dresden, den 18.6.1927. An das ZK der Partei, Polbuero, Bl.88.

deputies opposed increases in local taxation, and voiced support for the "tax rebellion" of the Saxon lower middle classes.[224] The KPD's policy of reducing the level of local taxation on the lower middle classes was done without ever addressing the conflict of interest with the party's advocacy of higher social spending or the self financing of local administrative districts.[225] Although the KPD's efforts to recruit the *Mittelstand* for the Working Peoples' Movement only ever met with the virulent anti-Marxism of the *Mittlestandsbewegung*, the party leadership continued to devote considerable energy to convincing party workers that by rigourously applying the party line the lower middle classes would be "awakened".[226] During this process of infiltrating the social seams of local politics the KPD's press openly stated the actual aim of the policy: the destruction of the SPD and winning over its members. Social Democrats' knowledge of the KPD's party line, however, worked against the communist policy. Communists involved in tenants' organisations informed the leadership that their tirades against the SPD leadership were preventing the party from widening its influence.[227] The Saxon SPD had not abandoned its own strategy of involving the KPD in the *Landtag* and local councils in so-called "workers' majorities", to achieve social concessions and socialist reforms. The overlap in the two "workers' parties'" objectives in the mid twenties saw the limited local use of "joint lists" in electoral wards to prevent the parties of the middle classes dominating Town Halls. The KPD was also aware that to have done otherwise handed local organisations of the SPD the propaganda coup of being able to convincingly point out the communists' responsibility in enabling a

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[224] SAPMO I 3/9/73, Politischer Bericht fuer den Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 10 Parteitag bis Oktober 1926,Bl.331; I 3/8-10/5, Landesvorstandsstizung vom 2.8.1926, Bl.141(Waesche).

[225] The KPD only ever stated that benefits should be paid at the expence of employers see, SAPMO I 3/8-10/3, An das Landesvorstand Sachsens. ZK Rundschrieben. Berlin, den 15.1.1927, Bl.8.

[226] SAPMO I 3/9/63, Bericht der Bezirksleitung. Bezirksparteitag am 24-25.3.1928, Bl.1-4.

[227] SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, Bericht. Landeskongress des Werktaetigen Sachsens am 21-22.5.1927, Bl.20.

local *Buergerblock* government.[228] Where the KPD had used "joint lists" in local elections

in addition to the Town Hall tactic of "workers' majorities", for example in Doebeln and

Waldheim, the Janus face of the Working Peoples' Movement (ie claiming to represent the

lower middle classes as well as the proletariat) was highlighted in schizophrenic

colours.[229] Among the Saxon middle classes anti-Marxism functioned as the political glue

holding economic rivals together in Town Halls.[230] The KPD's policy of winning over the

Mittelstand by proletarian "mass actions" never left the realms of theoretical discussion.

The surreal nature of life inside the KPD is further illustrated by the attack on senior

members of the Saxon leadership for carrying the "joint lists" policy when another "left-

turn" loomed in late 1927. Melcher and Gaebel, who during 1925/6 were the leading

figures in the East Saxon BL, were accused of "deviation" because of their successes in

negotiating electoral agreements with the SPD, and the "rump" USPD, at local level.[231]

The KPD's policy of contact with the SPD at local level did not run as smoothly as the

ink on the pages of party directives. The transmission of the party line was in practice

refracted through the pertaining local conditions. In Erzgebirge-Vogtland the party line

underwent a strong refraction to the right: throughout the district Social Democrats were

elected as local office holders with communist votes, and a genuine parliamentary co-

operation for "workers' demands" was readily entered into without sectarian

precondition.[232] A BL report stated with regret that:

> Our comrades believe that the united front tactic among the masses must be
>
> understood in such a way that the SPD's leaders, right as well as left, must not be

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[228] SAPMO I 3/8-10/5, Landesvorstandssitzung vom 2.8.1926 in Dresden, Bl.136f.

[229] SAPMO I 3/8-10/9, Landesvorstand Sachsens. Dresden, den 15.11.1926, Bl.48.

[230] Lapp, 'Political polarisation', p199f.

[231] SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, Bericht. Landeskongress des Werktaetigen Sachsens am 21-22.5.1927, Bl.48.

[232] SAPMO I 3/9/61, Bericht der Abteilung Kompol. Bezirksparteitag 12-13.2.1927, Bl.22.

so strongly struggled against. With this comes the danger of being taken in tow by the SPD. In certain cases it has already been the case.[233]

The contrast with Western Saxony could not have been more striking. The domination of the leftist Vogt faction had penetrated so deeply into the membership that local Communist deputies were hostile to any degree of co-operation with the SPD. The priority of parliamentary work lay in making demands for higher unemployment benefits and causing extra-parliamentary actions of the unemployed.[234] In Leipzig, where the KPD and SPD had a combined majority in the Town Hall, the KPD focused its activity on public meetings to discredit the SPD's budget as "bourgeois".[235] The BL's Department of Communal Politics was reorganised in May 1927 in an effort to impose conformity by installing new functionaries. However, meetings held between local councillors and members of the party apparatus failed to achieve their objective.[236] The KPD's experience in local politics demonstrates the limitations placed on carrying out the party line, both by the party's membership and the wider political environment.

The ZK formed the Working Peoples' Movement on a theoretical basis, which did not account for local conditions. However, the reality of local conditions saw the communist policy being reinterpreted to reflect conditions at grass roots level. Party districts molded by right-wing communism and contact with the SPD brought about genuine co-operation; districts dominated by the KPD's left-wing, continued to resist limited co-operation with the SPD. To have addressed these issues in the context of a democratic internal party discussion would have had an explosive impact on the factional struggle. It was for this

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[233] ibid.

[234] SAPMO I 3/10/108, Bericht der Bezirksleitung Westsachsen der KPD an den Bezirksparteitag am 10-11.12.1927, Bl.72.

[235] ibid, Bl.60.

[236] ibid, Bl.72f.

reason that senior functionaries in the party apparatus, such as Wilhelm Koenen, always looked to schooling courses to put these local "deviations" straight.[237]

The Communist Employed Forget About their Unemployed Genossen.

The sharp fall in unemployment in Saxony, reaching just above 150,000 in mid 1927, deprived the KPD of its "demonstration arm" and "non-communist" delegates to regional communist congresses.[238] Even when regional unemployment surged to near the levels experienced in 1923, between autumn 1925 and spring 1926, the KPD had experienced competition from "wild" or independent committees of the unemployed. In Saxony the local branches of the ADGB were also actively involved in work among the unemployed.[239] Nevertheless the KPD had been the principal beneficiary of the social dislocation caused by unemployment. However, the more the KPD concentrated on opposing the Unemployment Insurance Act of 1927, claiming that it would reduce the level of benefits through a whole series of qualifications, the less the party was able to mobilise the unemployed.[240] It was one thing taking to the streets for benefit increases as part of a communist action, but quite another to oppose them in similar actions. During the KPD's 1926 *Landtag* election, the Regional Executive complained of the party's

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[237] SAPMO I 3/8-10/6, Sitzung der Landesvorstand Sachsen mit den Landesvertrauensleuten. Dresden, den 5.9.1926, Bl.43.

[238] *Zeitschrift der Saechsisches Statistisches Landesamt (ZSSL)* 87/88 (1941/2), p86.

[239] On "wild" committees of the unemployed see, SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, Bericht. Landeskongress des Werktaetigen Sachsens am 21-22.5.1927, Bl.82-3; Staatsarchiv Bremen (Sta.B.) Sig. 4, 65 1727/291, Monatsbericht (Februar 1926).

[240] SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, KPD Landesvorstand Sachsens. Dresden, den 18.6.1927. An das ZK der Partei, Polbuero, Bl.59-63; St.Ha.D.,, MdI Nr.11126/2, Monatsbericht (Januar 1928), Bl.19. For details of the 1927 Unemployment Insurance Act and its origins, in, Stachura, P.D., 'The Development of Unemployment in Modern Germany', in Id. (ed.), *Unemployment and the Great Depression in Weimar Germany*, (London, 1986), pp3-17.

inability to create a movement of the unemployed.[241] At the Regional Congress of the Working People, held in Dresden on the 21-22 May 1927, the three Saxon BLs were criticised for their lack of involvement in organising communist work among the unemployed; their failure to send adequate representation to the Reich Congress of the Unemployed in Berlin in December 1926; and their failure to set up the committees of the unemployed at local level.[242] The Regional Executive identified the main reason for the collapse of the communist work among the unemployed as the return to work of the party activists who had carried out the policy. The BLs were instructed to breath new life into this area of party work by rebuilding the committees of the unemployed and going onto the streets with party propaganda.[243] However, until unemployment again surged during the Great Depression, the Saxon KPD was unable to cause widespread street demonstrations.

The Working Peoples' Movement and the Saxon Mittelstand.

During 1927 the Regional Executive of the Saxon KPD formulated a policy to bring down the *Landtag* government by means of an extra-parliamentary movement against the impact of its policies.[244] The KPD's interpretation of the constellation of political forces in the *Landtag* held that by influencing the lower middle classes, who supported the "special interest" parties, the KPD could force the dissolution of the Saxon government.[245] In

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[241] SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, Bericht. Landeskongress des Werktaetigen Sachsens am 21-22.5.1927, Bl.132-3.

[242] ibid, Landesvorstand Sachsen. Dresden, den 16.5.1927. An das ZK der Partei, Sekretariat, Bl.10-11;

[243] ibid, Bericht. Landeskongress des Werktaetigen Sachsens am 21-22.5.1927, Bl.16-17.

[244] SAPMO I 3/8-10/3, "Gegen den Buergerblock", in *Arbeiterstimme*, Nr.19, den 24.1.1927, Bl.17.

[245] SAPMO I 2/1/50, Wahlergebnis in Sachsen und unsere weitere Taktik. Protokoll der Sitzung des Sitzung der ZK vom 10.11.1926, Bl.4(Schneller).

reality, however, the *leit motiv* of the regional government after the 1926 *Landtag* election was to exclude both the SPD and KPD from political influence.[246] The policy discussions of the ZK, however, refused to acknowledge any immovable practical political obstacle blocking the path of its ideological interpretation.[247]

During the inter-party discussions on the formation of a governing coalition in early January 1927, the KPD instructed the lower party organisations to prepare for a campaign to win over the "misled" supporters of the special "interest parties". Party circulars detailed the organisation of campaigns which were intended to "free" the artisanal and small-scale commercial lower middle-classes from their leaders in the VRP and WP.[248] The policy's failure to materialise as a political campaign did not alter the KPD's tactics during the political negotiations surrounding the inclusion of the DNVP in the Saxon government in summer 1927. The KPD leadership continued to dissipate considerable time and effort to forcing a reluctant membership to cause a protest movement of the lower middle classes under communist leadership.[249]

The KPD only ever, at least officially, saw the lower middle classes' flight from the DNVP to the "particular interest" parties as part of their journey on the road to a communist Damascus; their public statements of anti-communism were never accepted as part of a swing to the right in Saxon politics.[250] Instead, the regional party leadership blamed the failure of the Working Peoples' Movement to involve the artisanal and

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[246] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', pp206ff.

[247] SAPMO I 3/8-10/3, An das Landesvorstand Sachsens. ZK Rundschrieben. Berlin, den 15.1.1927, Bl.4-8.

[248] SAPMO I 3/8-10/7, Landesvorstand Sachsen. Dresden, den 15.12.1926. Rundschreiben ueber die Lage in Sachsen. An die Bizirksleitungen, Bl.107.

[249] SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, Bericht. Landeskongress des Werktaetigen Sachsens am 21-22.5.1927, Bl.24.

[250] Jones, *German Liberalism*, pp252,476ff.

commercial middle classes on the failure of the lower level party organisations to establish local connections with these social groups.[251] However, even the active party membership which was involved in the Working Peoples' Movement remained unmotivated to pursue a policy so evidently at odds with the situation in Saxony.[252] The strengthening of the right-wing prevailing political wind had, however, began to fill the sails of the NSDAP, at least in Erzgebirge-Vogtland. With a focal point in the textile town of Plauen leading figures such as Gregor Strasser, Gottfried Feder and Robert Ley addressed attentive audiences of small business owners and small traders. The agenda of the Nazis' meetings was hostile to large-scale capitalism, while also reassuring the anxious lower middle classes that they would not become "proletarians".[253] Of symbolic importance was Hitler's first speech in Saxony after the speaking ban imposed after the "Beer Hall Putsch": it took place in November 1927 in the "workers' city" of Chemnitz.[254]

The Peasant Farmers and the Working People's Movement.

During the Working People's Movement the KPD's advocated a "workers' and peasants" government as an alternative to the *Buergerblock*.[255] The KPD's slogans, however, meant nothing to the Saxon peasantry, which continued to support their political interest party, the *Saechsische Landbund*, and, by 1928, the stridently right-wing *Sachsisches Landvolk*,

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[251] SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, KPD Landesvorstand Sachsens. Dresden, den 18.6.1927. An das ZK der Partei, Polbuero, Bl.27(Boettcher).

[252] ibid, Bl.29.

[253] St.Ha.D., MdI Nr.11126/1, Monatsbericht (September 1927), Bl.46.

[254] St.Ha.D.,, MdI Nr.11126/1, Monatsbericht (November 1927), Bl.66.

[255] SAPMO I 3/8-10/3, "Gegen den Buergerblock", in *Arbeiterstimme*, Nr.19, den 24.1.1927, Bl.17. For the Comintern's interpretation of campaigning among peasants see, Jackson, G. D., *Comintern and Peasant in Eastern Europe, 1919-1930* (New York, 1966).

which promoted the economic interests of small-scale rural producers. The peasant vote, however, was largely absorbed by the NSDAP in the 1930 *Reichstag* election.[256] There is no evidence of any significant peasant interest in the KPD's League of Working Peasants (*Bund schaffender Wirt*).[257] There is some evidence that the KPD was able to include a small number of peasants in the Working Peoples' Movement. The Saxon Congress of Working People in May 1927 included the participation of 19 delegates from small-scale farming communities in Erzgebirge and Lausitz.[258] It is at least possible that these delegates' involvement on the fringes of the KPD came from their contact with impoverished workers in the local cottage industries, where small peasant farmers took on seasonal work.[259]

The KPD used a range of activities to recruit peasant farmers into the Working Peoples' Movement. So-called "Peasant's Congresses" were held at which speakers informed their audience of the KPD's role in the *Landtag* defending peasants' communist interests.[260] One such example was a "Peasants' Day" in Marienberg in Erzgebirge on 4 December 1927. The event was organised by the KPD's League of Working Peasants, under the farmer and Communist functionary Birnbaum. The event was largely packed with Communists, but attracted perhaps 100 peasants. The speeches presented the KPD as a defender of peasants' interests, forcing the state government to pay attention to the rural population's material needs. This was complemented by glowing "eyewitness reports" of a

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[256] Lapp, 'Political polarisation', pp222ff.

[257] In the mid twenties the KPD's official national figures stated that there were 10,000 members of the League of Working Peasants see, Farquharson, *Plough and the Swastika*, p40.

[258] SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, Bericht. Landeskongress des Werktaetigen Sachsens am 21-22.5.1927, Bl.19.

[259] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', pp11-15. For similar circumstances in Baden see, Grill, J.H., *The Nazi Movement in Baden 1920-1945* (vol.1.; Chapel Hill, 1983), pp131ff.

[260] SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, Bericht. Landeskongress des Werktaetigen Sachsens am 21-22.5.1927, Bl.42-3.

peasant Valhalla in the Soviet Union, where taxes were not paid but subsidies were generous.[261] The event also functioned as internal party propaganda by using the "Peasants' Day" as an example of what the KPD could achieve if the party actively carried out party policy.[262]

The KPD's lack of members in rural areas saw the development of the sponsorship system (*Patenschaftssystem*) whereby party organisations in industrial areas and cities "adopted" a rural area or village to work on.[263] In Western Saxony, however, the party leadership complained that this type of work had only involved some members from Greater Leipzig.[264] There is, however, no hard evidence that the KPD's rural agitation and propaganda did anything but antagonise the rural population. Peasant hostility was particularly marked when communist activities were carried out by uniformed RFB militants.[265] Furthermore, the rural-industrial landscape of the industrial village became something of a sparring ground between the rival para-military organisations which proliferated in Saxony during the mid 1920s.[266] In the acrimonious political atmosphere of Saxony during the Weimar Republic Lapp describes how: "The right to parade - and thereby dominate a town's public spaces - was fiercely contested."[267] Rival political affiliations were stamped out by the activities of the SPD and Reichsbanner, in the form of celebrations commemorating the November Revolution and the Weimar Constitution; the

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[261] St.Ha.D.,, MdI Nr.11126/1, Monatsbericht (December 1928, Bl.86f; ibid, (Januar 1928), Bl.17.

[262] SAPMO I 3/9/63, Jahresbericht fuer 1927. Bezirksparteitag am 24-25.3.1928, Bl.91.

[263] SAPMO I 3/9/61, Bericht der Gewerkschaftsabteilung. Bezirksparteitag am 12-13.2.1927, Bl.18.

[264] SAPMO I 3/10/108, Material zum Bezirksparteitag. KPD Westsachsen, Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 3.11.1927, Bl.28.

[265] SAPMO I 3/8-10/4, Bericht. Landeskongress des Werktaetigen Sachsens am 21-22.5.1927, Bl.42.

[266] The laws for the protection of the republic were no longer applied against the right-wing associations after 1923, see, Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', pp177ff.

[267] ibid, pp179.

Stahlhelm, Werewolf and Jungdo commemorated "German Nationalist" events, such as Sedan Day and the formation of the German Reich in 1871; the KPD was involved in its own "revolutionary" celebrations, commemorating the Russian Revolution and Lenin-Liebknecht-Luxemburg Day each January.[268] The KPD's "Rural Sundays" and "Red Days", which were held in the industrialised countryside, sparked off frequent clashes with the Nazis and the right-wing paramilitary organisations.[269] Crucially, Lapp has detailed how the right-wing paramilitary organisations and their celebrations began to carry grass roots "bourgeois unity" while the political parties increasingly fragmented into economic particularism.[270] In the rural environment of Erzgebirge and its textile-working cities, most notably Plauen, the NSDAP made its earliest and deepest penetration of Saxon political life.[271] In the culture of political polarisation in Saxony the KPD's Working Peoples' Movement was a tactic only serving to increase hostility between the political roles of peasants and industrial workers.

5.4 Conclusion: The Limits of Communist Campaigning

What progress had the Saxon KPD made in the middle years of the Weimar Republic to create a pro-Soviet left-wing in the workers' movement? The campaign to expropriate the former German princes had been a success for the KPD's united front from above: negotiating with the leaderships of the SPD and ADGB to "force" them into joining a communist campaign. However, in terms of the united front from below, winning over

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[268] For a typical example see, St.H.D., MdI Nr.11126/2, Monatsbericht (January 1928), Bl.14.

[269] ibid, (Oktober 1928), Bl.53.

[270] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', pp200-3.

[271] Walter, 'Stammland', pp218ff. Plauen features regularly in the reports of the Ministry of the Interior, see, for example, StAD., MdI Nr.11126/1, Monatsbericht (Juni 1927), Bl.39.

rank-and-file Social Democrats, progress had been distinctly limited. The expropriation campaign had proved to be a popular campaigning issue on the Left, producing a popular movement initiated by the KPD. However, the united front tactic had worked in reverse at local level: the number of Social Democrats and so-called "non-party workers" who joined the KPD's Unity Committees, had been far exceeded by joint demonstrations and rallies organised on an equal basis by local groups of the SPD and KPD. Co-operation on an issue of socialist reform, rather than creating a movement under communist leadership, had characterised the campaign. Even in Erzgebirge-Vogtland, where the KPD remained rooted in the workers' movement, the number of Social Democrats joining the KPD's Unity Committees had been extremely small. Saxon Social Democrats did not share the KPD's Leninist belief that working class "unity" could only be achieved under communist leadership; still less did they want to destroy their own party. The political border between the SPD and KPD was strongest in the larger cities and receded in the smaller towns and, above all, in the industrial villages which peppered the countryside. It was in the industrialised countryside, which dominated the Saxon economy throughout Erzgebirge, Vogtland, and the outlying industrial villages of the Elbe Valley, where local militants from both parties co-operated on the specific issue of the expropriation campaign. Contact between Communists and Social Democrats, in the sporting and cultural *Vereine*, reinforced feelings of working-class solidarity. The "Class War" group in the SPD, which found greatest support in the southwest of Saxony, promoted "proletarian unity" despite the party leadership's hostility to local co-operation with Communists.[272] It was in the same setting where the KPD's right-wing advocated achieving communist goals in contact with the SPD. The extent of the local "left prolitarian milieu", however, was limited and

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[272] For example see, *Klassenkampf* 3 (10) (1928), p291.

the parties retained their separate identities.[273] Saxony is a regional example indicating that Mallmann has gone too far in replacing the Stalinisation thesis with an explanation of the KPD's internal development in terms of local conditions. In the mid twenties the truth lay somewhere in between: local militants would not carry out policies which had no connection to the environment they operated within; however, party members had no input in policy making and many activists refused to speak at party meetings for fear of being accused of holding views which "deviated" from the party line.[274] In the mid twenties the KPD was not in the first instance a social movement, but a movement which made a totalitarian claim on its members' political lives. Unlike the SPD and the Catholic Centre Party, which developed a socio-political milieu, the KPD's politicisation of all areas of party life repelled members rather than cementing relations with them.[275]

By late 1927 the united front policy had come up against significant obstacles in Saxony. The dilemma of communist policy was that without an issue of popular appeal the KPD could not conduct a high profile campaign, but contact with the SPD, in issues of socialist reform, saw the subterfuge being subsumed by genuine co-operation with the SPD at local level. The Working Peoples' Movement was unable to continue the momentum of the united front campaign. The "movement" never took on the dimension of a popular campaign and remained a narrowly communist affair. The tactic of winning over the Saxon *Mittelstand* was confined to party propaganda: it found no echo in Saxon society. The policy was justified using an economic interpretation of political behaviour, which

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[273] Cf. Mallmann, 'Sozialgeschichte', p23.

[274] SAPMO I 3/8-10/3, Bericht ueber die Landesparteiarbeiterskonferenz am 23.1.1927. An das ZK der KPD. Dresden, den 25.1.1927, Bl.11.

[275] On the KPD's attempts to develop a communist worker's sub-culture, and the difficulties experienced see, Guttsmann, W. L., *Workers' Culture in Weimar Germany. Between Tradition and Commitment* (Oxford, 1990), pp74ff.

held that the economic plight of the Saxon lower middle classes would lead them to the KPD. Discussions within the Saxon BLs, however, indicate the policy's close connection with Soviet foreign policy: the wider a pro-Soviet "left-wing movement" in Germany, the more assured Moscow could feel that there was a counterbalance to the "Western Orientation" of German foreign policy in the mid 1920s.[276] The KPD's interpretation of the course of political developments were a mirror image of what actually occurred. In Saxony the economic protest movements of the lower middle classes, which aimed to preserve their social and economic status, were politically expressed at the 1926 *Landtag* election with the rise of "special interest" parties.[277] In Saxony the memory of 1923 intensified a national trend towards virulent middle-class anti-Marxism.[278] While Conan Fischer is correct that the KPD leadership believed the *Mittelstand* formed part of a "potential" communist constituency, the evidence in Saxony indicates that there were no developments in German society and politics to substantiate the policy.[279] Furthermore, the party membership simply ignored work among the middle classes, believing that it was impossible to channel the lower middle-class protest movement into communist conduits.

The wave of strikes in late 1927 and early 1928 also threw the policy of contact with the SPD into crisis. The KPD repeatedly asserted that the Saxon SPD's left-wing only used a verbal radicalism to hold back the "masses" from communism. However, these strikes were led by the left-wing of the SPD, which dominated the local branches of the Saxon trade unions. Contact with the SPD in the unions saw the concept of the united front being turned on its head: Communists, politically unaffiliated workers and Social

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[276] For example, SAPMO I 3/9/60, Die politische Lage und unsere Aufgaben. Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 10-11.4.1926, Bl.5f.

[277] Jones, *German Liberalism*, p264.

[278] Lapp, 'Political polarisation', pp169ff.

[279] Fischer, *German Communists*, p39.

Democrats were coming under SPD leadership. The development of Saxon politics in the mid twenties presented the KPD leadership with something of an identity crisis: how could the KPD function on the left of Saxon politics, but insulate the membership and potential supporters from the attractions of radical reformism? The Left in the Saxon KPD believed that events justified a return to a left-isolationist political tactic at all levels of party work.[280] The right wing of the KPD, however, continued to insist that the united front policy created the framework of contacts and connections in the wider workers' movement, which would benefit the KPD in the next "crisis of capitalism". The impact of the KPD's "left-turn" in 1928/9 is the subject of the following chapter.

The local socio-political environment, rather than the ideologically driven directives of the party leadership, continued to condition whether party members carried out party policy or not. In Erzgebirge, Vogtland and the industrial villages around Meissen, the expropriation campaign had brought the first co-operation between the SPD and KPD since 1923. In West Saxony, however, social and political antagonisms continued to characterise relations between the two "workers' parties". The SPD and KPD conducted the expropriation campaign separately at local as well at district level. During the mid twenties the KPD's Stalinisation could not, as yet, uproot the local membership from the conditions they lived and worked in. If directives from above did not correspond to the immediate context of every-day political life, they were not carried out. The KPD's forced

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[280] Certain interpretations stress the presure on the KPD leadership from party members to change the communist trade-union and factory policy because of the lack of room for maneuvre within the reformist-led organisations. See, Wunderer, H., *Arbeitervereine und Arbeiterparteien. Kultur und Massenorganisationen in der Arbeiterbewegung (1890-1933)* (Frankfurt/M, 1980), pp138ff; Lehndorff, S., *Wie Kam es zur RGO? Probleme der Gewerkschastsentwicklung in der Weimarer Republik von 1927 bis 1929* (Frankfurt/M, 1975), pp54ff. In Saxony there is no evidence of party members, who were employed in the factories and organised in the trade unions, calling for a change in party tactics. See, chapter 6.3 below.

re-organisation of its membership was not only strongly resisted, but those organised in factory cells would not carry out party political campaigns which were unrelated to factory and union affairs. Equally, the unemployed would only take part in communist campaigns if they directly addressed their own material needs.

The KPD's claim to be the vanguard of the working class was a purely ideological assertion devoid of political substance. By early 1928 the SPD was able to point out that the KPD's "unmasking" tactic had left the communists stranded on radicalised sandbanks, while the SPD enjoyed substantial support throughout Saxony.[281] There was, however, a German context to the KPD's location in the Saxon political system. The KPD took on the role of a "particular interest" party for industrial workers who felt socially and economically marginalised under the Weimar Republic.[282] The KPD's self identity as a party of permanent campaigning was also beyond the strength of a political body weakened by a diet of inappropriate policies and continual fratricidal factional feuds. It is not new to identify the origins of the KPD's overtures to the lower middle classes and changing tactic towards the SPD in relation to the domestic policies of the CPSU.[283] However, it must be stressed that the imposition of these policies in Germany turned the KPD into an apparatus party: a permanently running party machine without the fuel of a

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[281] *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, Nr.49, 27.2.1928.

[282] Peukert, D., 'Zur Sozialgeschicht der KPD', in Kloenne, A. and Vack, K., *Zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, 4 (November 1978) , p36.

[283] Rosenberg, A., *Geschichte des Bolshevismus* (Frankfurt/M, Cologne, 1975).

membership which would take the party forward.[284] In the mid twenties the KPD was already manifesting the political traits which would push the party away from its roots in the German workers' movement during the Great Depression.

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[284] Weber, *Wandlung*, p267.

6. "Social Fascism" and Saxony: The Roots and Reception of the "Left-Turn" in the KPD, 1928-1930.

6.1 Introduction

It might have been expected that the new "revolutionary" General Line, conducted by the world communist movement between 1928 and 1934, would have been introduced with a fanfare of trumpets by the Comintern and its national sections. However, the KPD accepted the new party line at the 9th ECCI-Plenum in February 1928, not in the form of an official protocol but by signing a secret agreement. The Thaelmann Group voluntarily signed up for the policy, while the Conciliators or at least their delegates,Ewert and Eisler, signed after Moscow's arm twisting.[1] This step represented the first stage in formalising a policy which had already become noticeable in Germany from late 1927 and had been sanctioned at the 15th Congress of the CPSU.[2] At the March 1928 District Party Congress in Erzgebirge Vogtland Ernst Schneller had openly informed the delegates, that, although the party line from the 9th ECCI Plenum was primarily relevant to policy in France and Britain, and not specifically related to Germany, it was the duty of all Communist Parties to support the Comintern's international policy.[3] The 6th World Congress of the Comintern, held in the summer of 1928, continued the administrative secrecy and bureaucratic bulldozing already undertaken at the ECCI-Plenum. Watlin's

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[1] Weber, H., "Zu den Beziehungen zwischen der KPD und der Kommunistischen Internationale", in *Vierteljahrshefte fuer Zeitgeschichte (VfZ)* 2 (1968), p205. The name Conciliator (Versohnler) was a reference to their sympathies for Right communism at the 6th World Congress of the Comintern, while declaring the Group was "Comintern-loyal" and prepared to carry out the General Line. The term Conciliator was pejorative in the party lexicon in that it referred to a faction in the CPSU's history which before 1917 advocated "reconciliation" between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks.

[2] Fowkes, B., *Communism in Germany under the Weimar Republic* (London, 1984), p145.

[3] Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR (SAPMO) I 3/9/63, Bezirksparteitag der KPD Erzgebirge Vogtland am 24-5.3.1928, Bl.22.

research, using declassified Soviet documentation, indicates that many delegates to the Comintern's World Congress were only too well aware that the real decisions were being made at the secret meetings which parallelled the official Congress.[4] Internal KPD documents indicate that the Comintern did not want a renewed factional feud in the KPD and had hoped that the "course of concentration" leadership would bring German policy in line with the CPSU's official policy.[5] However, the KPD was unable to pursue a rolling "left-turn" because the policy's opponents resisted its implementation in Germany. The introduction of the "social fascist" policy of outright conflict with the SPD became the mouse which roared.

The official resolutions included in the minutes of the Congress announced a "3rd Period" of revolution and wars: the first period was represented by the post-war revolutionary up swing; the second period by the relative stabilisation of international capitalism; and now the new General Line for all communist parties was justified by the ending of the period of capitalist stabilisation and the expectation of a new revolutionary wave.[6] However, the main resolutions of the Comintern Congress were not related to revolution in Western Europe but to the alleged danger of an imperialist war against the Soviet Union, in which the socialist Second International would co-operate; the colonial question; and the situation in Soviet Russia.[7] The Comintern's policies meant that the KPD must defend the

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[4] Watlin, A., *Die Komintern, 1919-29* (Mainz, 1993), p180.

[5] The internal party discussions are detailed in the file series: I 3/8/25 (Ostsachsen); I 3/9/70 (Erzgibirge-Vogtland); I 3/10/114(Westsachsen). For a new interpretation of the KPD's "left-turn" which stresses the active involvement of Bukharin see, McDermott, K. and Agnew, J., *The Comintern. A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin* (London, 1996), ppp68ff.

[6] Degras, J.(ed) *The Communist International, 1919-1943. Documents* (vol.2; London, 1971), pp455ff. On the definition of "social fascism" esp. p459.

[7] ibid; Weber, H., *Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus. Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (Gekuertzte Studentenausgabe; Frankfurt/M, 1971), p195.

Soviet Union from the an allegedly planned imperialist war and struggle against the state and its apparatus, with which the SPD and the reformist trade unions had grown together. The KPD was again regarded as "the only workers' party", and the main enemy within the working class was the "left" SPD, which "tried to disguise its fight against the Soviet Union with lying phrases of sympathy and 'conditional' support."[8] The policy *vis a vis* the reformist trade unions was defined at the 4th Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU), which met during March and April 1928. The *RGO-politik* (policy of the Red Trade Union Opposition) announced, in highly ambiguous terms, that a new from of organisation was needed for the class war and that strikes should be led "without and against" the reformist union leaders, who had become intertwined with the state apparatus.[9]

The following chapter investigates the causes of the KPD's "left-turn" between 1928-30 and how the Saxon party membership received it. The historiographical debate will be placed in the context of new documentation to provide a case study of Saxony. The traditional explanation for the KPD's return to a policy of ultra-Leftism located the turning points in Soviet Russia. Moscow's reasons of state, foreign policy and the conclusion of the CPSU's power struggle, triggered the Communist parties' attack on the social democratic workers' movement as "social fascists".[10] The revision introduced by more

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[8] Weber, H., *Hauptfeind Sozialdemokratie. Strategie und Taktik der KPD 1929-33* (Duesseldorf, 1982), pp18-19.

[9] This was stated by Losowsky at the 4th RGI Congress, see, Fowkes, *German Communism*, p147.

[10] Rosenberg, A., *Geschichte des Bolshevismus* (Reprint of Original; Frankfurt/M, Cologne, 1975), pp243ff; Rosenberg, A., *A History of the German Republic* (London, 1936), pp288-9; Fowkes, *German Communism*, p145ff; Weber, *Wandlung*, passim; Flechtheim, O.K., *Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (3 edn; Hamburg, 1986), pp197ff; Bahne, S., *Die KPD und das Ende von Weimar. Das Scheitern einer Politik 1932-35* (Frankfurt/M, New York, 1976), pp68-70; Particularly on the relationship between Soviet foreign policy and the KPD's policies in Germany, Weingartner, T., *Stalin und der Aufsteig Hitlers: Die*

recent literature has been to identify causes for the "left-turn" in German political and socio-economic developments. Hennig, Wuenderlich and Wieszt explain the acceptance of the "social fascist" policy by the KPD's membership as a response to the actions of the SPD in the Reich and Prussian governments. The SPD's involvement in the construction of *Panzerkreuzer "A"* (a so-called pocket battleship) in late 1928, and in particular the event of May Day 1929 *(Blutmai)*, when the SPD administered police force opened fire on illegal communist outdoor marches, were accepted as "proof" that the SPD had changed from a party of social democracy to one of "social fascism".[11] Wickham goes as far as to state that the policies associated with the "social fascist" thesis were not just imposed by Stalin, but were "perfectly acceptable" to many members of the KPD because the two parties' points of common contact in the wider workers' movement had been so eroded by 1929 that the political parties became the sole basis of political expression in a socially divided working class.[12] Winkler took a middle position which agreed with the "Stalinisation" school of thought that the KPD's policies originated in Moscow, but sociological changes in the KPD's membership, which increasingly comprised unskilled and unemployed workers, produced a "structural echo" for a radical protest against capitalism and the policies of the SPD.[13]

Deutschland Politik der Sowjetunion und der Kommunistischen Internationale, 1929-34, (Berlin, 1970), passim.

[11] Hennig, E., 'Nachbemerkungen zu einem Aspekt des kommunistischen Tageskampfes gegen die Sozialdemokratie', in *Gesellschaft, Beitrage zur Marxschen Theorie* 6 (1976), pp292f; Wuenderlich, V., *Arbeiterbewegung und Selbstverwaltung. KPD und Kommunalpolitik in der Weimarer Republik. Mit dem Beispiel Solingen* (Wuppertal, 1980), pp57-8; Wieszt, J., *KPD-Politik in der Krise, 1928-32* (Frankfurt/M, 1976), pp17ff.

[12] Wickham, J., 'Social Fascism and the division of the Working Class Movement: Workers and Political Parties in the Frankfurt Area 1929/30', in *Capital and Class* 7 (1979) (pp1-34), pp28ff.

[13] Winkler, H.A., *Der Schein der Normalitaet. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik, 1924-30* (Berlin, Bonn, 1988), pp438-9.

A series of studies also explain the KPD's policy in the factories with reference to conditions in Germany. The process of rationalisation, which had been accepted by the SPD and Free Trade Unions, had split the working class into a new "workers' aristocracy", the social basis of "social fascism" (ie the SPD), and an increasingly impoverished and radicalised layer of "mass workers" in heavy industry, the social basis for communist policies. Schoeck saw the KPD's isolation from the social democratic workers' movement by 1929 as having enforced the *RGO-politik* on the KPD: social isolation led to a new form of political organisation.[14] Heer-Kleinert pointed out that, while the KPD's political predictions did not transpire, it held to an ideologically reinforced system of thought: the KPD continued to anticipate revolution in Germany, carried by the revolutionary rejection of Weimar by the underprivileged strata within the working classes.[15]

Central to this case study of Saxony will be an analysis of the accuracy of the consensus in the literature that there was a relatively rapid and smooth transition to the policies of ultra-Leftism.[16] The chapter will begin by assessing the reception of the "left-turn" in the Saxon KPD, using newly available documentation of the party at local and district level. The chapter will then ask to what extent the KPD's membership took up the Comintern's call for a fratricidal "class war" within the German working class? Finally, an assessment will be made of the extent to which sociological changes in the Saxon KPD gave the policies of the "3rd Period" a "structural echo" in the party's membership.

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[14] Schoeck, E.C., *Arbeitslosigkeit und Rationalisierung. Die Lage der Arbeiter und die kommunistische Gewerkschaftspolitik* (Frankfurt/M, 1977), pp15,172ff.

[15] Heer-Kleinert, L., *Die Gewerkschaftspolitik der KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt/M, 1983), p360.

[16] This interpretation stretches accross the otherwise interpretative gulf between neo-communist historians such as Weiszt, *KPD-Politik*, p36, and Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, p439.

6.2 The Saxon KPD and ultra-Leftism: Party Comrades or Political Opponents?

The "Wittorf Affair".

The "Wittorf Affair" has traditionally been viewed as an attempted "palace coup" by the Conciliators, who, alarmed by the KPD's policies, used their minority representation in the Secretariat, Politburo and ZK to oust Thaelmann as party chairman.[17] The immediate pretext was provided by an embezzlement scandal in Thaelmann's home district of Hamburg. The political leader, John Wittorf, whom Thaelmann had appointed to this post in March 1927, was found to have been a gambler who had made good his losses by embezzling 1,850 marks of party funds with the complicity of three other local party officials including the treasurer. The expose by the left communist newspaper, *Volkswille*, forced the KPD to set up a commission of inquiry under Hugo Eberlein, the party's financial expert, which uncovered a proliferation of similar irregularities in the local party and affiliated organisations. Crucially, Thaelmann's role in protecting his factional appointees in Hamburg, at the expense of party propriety, was uncovered.[18] Ernst Meyer's widow described this discovery in her memoirs as a "god send": the Conciliators did not

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[17] For details of the Wittorf Affair before access to the wider documentation see, Weber, *Wandlung*, pp199ff; Fowkes, B., *Communism in Germany*, pp149f; Levine-Meyer, R., *Inside German Communism. Memoirs of Party Life in the Weimar Republic* (London, 1977), pp131ff.

[18] The treasurer had come to the KPD from the NSDAP only two years before, SAPMO I 3/9/70, Protokoll der engeren Bezirksleitung vom 15.10.1928, Bl.130(Schreiber). After the Wittorf Affair all party treasuries were checked and a proliferation of irregularities were uncovered and "exposed" in the SPD press. In Erzgebirge-Vogtland the RH treasure was short of 1,000 marks, which was explained by the district chairman as a "loan" to a member see, SAPMO I 3/9/70, Protokoll der engeren BLS vom 3.12.1928, Bl.196-7. The SPD's *Volksstimme* 13.11.1928, Nr.265, *Reichskonferenz der KPD*, stated that in the KPD, "one corruption scandal follows another and the respectable elements in the KPD shake the dust off their feet".

want a square political struggle and the events in Hamburg allowed them to stage a "palace coup" in the uppermost leadership.[19]

Two interrelated factors coincided in the KPD's uppermost leadership, the Secretariat, to bring about Thaelmann's deposition.[20] Firstly in was known that Thaelmann was building up an entourage of factional appointees, causing concern to members of the national leadership, who feared that they could lose their positions. Thaelmann had already made clear his intention to oust the Conciliators from the KPD leadership at the secret meetings held during the 6th Congress of the Comintern.[21] The Right in the KPD, whose influence was also unofficially represented in the ZK, had been preparing for a renewed factional struggle since early 1928.[22] Secondly, it was felt that Thaelmann should take personal responsibility for leading the KPD into a public scandal caused by his factional friends.

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[19] Levine-Meyer, *Inside German Communism*, p131. Ernst Meyer was the leading figure in the Conciliator faction. Due to illness, however, the main role in the Wittorf Affair was undertaken by Ewert. Both Ewert and Meyer had influential positions in the Secretariat after the Essen Congress.

[20] Weber, *Wandlung*, pp199ff; Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, pp149f; Levine-Meyer, *Inside German Communism*, (London, 1977), pp131ff. Thaelmann had made it clear at the secret meetings, chaired by Stalin, during the 6th Comintern World Congress that he wanted to oust the Conciliators from the KPD's leadership see, SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll der Sitzung der erweiterten Bezirksleitung vom 18.10.1928, Bl.346(Schumann). The events at the 6th World Congress of the Comintern are detailed from the perspective of the Thaelmann faction in SAPMO I 3/9/70, Protokoll der engeren Bezirksleitung vom 15.10.1928, Bl.124(Mapitz). The right had been preparing for a renewed factional struggle since early 1928 see, Watlin *Die Komintern,* pp181f (using new documentary evidence). For the role of Bukharin and other Comintern Secretaries making it possible for Thalheimer and then Brandler to return to Germany see, Bergmann, Th., *Gegen den Strom-Die Geschichte der KPD(O)* (Hamburg, 1987), pp38-46; Dunke, H., *Die KPD von 1933 bis 1945*, (Cologne, 1972), pp17ff.

[21] SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll der Sitzung der erweiterten Bezirksleitung vom 18.10.1928, Bl.346(Schumann). These events at the 6th World Congress of the Comintern are detailed from the perspective of the Thaelmann faction in, SAPMO, I 3/9/70, Protokoll der engeren Bezirksleitung vom 15.10.1928, Bl.124(Mapitz).

[22] For opposition in the Comintern national sections to Stalin's role in the Wittorf Affair, particularly the Swiss CP see, Watlin, *Die Komintern,* pp181ff.

These factors tipped the balance in the five man Secretariat when Dengel, a leftist, endorsed the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations to relieve Thaelmann of his position.[23] When the Politburo recommended Thaelmann's deposition as party chairman, the ZK initially gave its full agreement. However, under the direction of Heinz Neumann, a prominent member of the Stalin faction, 25 of the 31 members of the ZK carried out a *volte face* at the end of September, even before a KPD delegation reached Moscow, enabling the Comintern to rapidly re-appoint Thaelmann.[24]

Not only was the discontent in the KPD leadership with Thaelmann, and his intensification of the "left-turn", wider than previously thought, it was also deeper than a mere "palace coup". In the BL of West Saxony, where there was a Right-Conciliator majority,[25] a resolution in support of Thaelmann's deposition was accepted on 27 September.[26] The BL's position was then immediately related to the wider membership at a Party Workers' Information Evening in Leipzig, which was attended by Schumann, Boettcher and Hans Puetz. The meeting was informed that the BL considered a debate on the policies of the 6th World Congress of the Comintern long overdue.[27] It was only after

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[23] The Sekretariat and Politburo meetings were discussed in, SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll der Sitzung der erweiterten Bezirksleitung vom 18.10.1928, Bl.347(Schumann). The Secretariat comprised Thaelmann, Dengel and Schneller on the KPD's Left and Ewert and Meyer. Meyer's illness and treatment in Moscow left Ewert the sole representative of the Conciliators in the Secretariat.

[24] SAPMO I 3/9/70, Protokoll der engeren Bezirksleitung vom 15.10.1928, Bl.133(Vertreter des ZKs); SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der engeren Bezirksleitung am 3.10.1928, Bl.356(Raedel); ibid, Bl.359(Renner).

[25] With some irony this was a leadership appointed by the ZK to curb the leftism of the Vogt Group during the "moderate" party line of 1926-7, see chapter 4.5 above.

[26] Only one member of the BL voted against the motion, see, SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll der Sitzung der erweiterten Bezirksleitung vom 18.10.1928, Bl.346.

[27] ibid, Protokoll der Sitzung der erweiterten Bezirksleitung vom 18.10.1928, Bl.354(Daseckc); ibid, Bl.359(Schumann).

the ZK majority turned tail and once more gave their support to Thaelmann, that Schumann and the Conciliators abandoned the Right, and "their methods", claiming, rather tenuously, not to have broken party discipline as they had acted against Thaelmann rather than Comintern policy.[28] In the BLs of Erzgebirge-Vogtland, which was controlled by the Left under Mapitz, it was ensured that no resolution on the "Thaelmann Case" was taken until the Comintern had dealt with the matter.[29] In East Saxony the BL made a signed declaration in support of Thaelmann, in the hope of "strengthening the backbone of the Thaelmann Group" against the Right and Conciliators; the resolution ended in an appeal to the membership to support the party's Left.[30] This was a clear indication that the apparatus faction, which had avoided the factional feuds by turning whichever way the party wind blew, knew that Thaelmann's opponents faced a party tornado from the East.

The "Thaelmann Case" had also gone into the membership through the activities of the independent minded RFB. Although the RFB leader, Willi Leoew, had spoken out in support of Thaelmann, its National Leadership had issued a circular to the *Gau* leaderships on 3 October calling for a discussion among the membership. In West Saxony the RFB sent a circular to all party divisions and local groups detailing events. This was all

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[28] ibid, Entschliessung der Versoehnler (Westsachsen) vom 18.10.1928, Bl.361.

[29] Erzgebirge-Vogtland was in fact a stronghold of the Right or Brandler faction. The Chemnitz Left owed its position to centralised control over the installation of BLs. East Saxony, as a weak party district, was already relatively easily and quickly controlled by the central leadership through the party apparatus faction. SAPMO I 3/9/70, Protokoll der engeren Bezirksleitung vom 15.10.1928, Bl.123(Mapitz). Raedel informed the BL meeting on 3 October that the Politburo had telephoned him immediately after it had voted to reinstate Thaelmann, SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der engeren Bezirksleitung am 3.10.1928, Bl.365-6(Raedel).

[30] Only Schneider, an associate of Melcher, abstained, see SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der engeren Bezirksleitung am 3.10.1928, Bl.364(Anton); ibid, Beschluss der engeren Bezirksleitung Ostsachsen. Dresden, den 3.10.1928, Bl.367.

the more important as not all RFB members were party members.[31] A well organised and co-ordinated Right faction, which was entrenched in the Reich Trade Union Division, and had positions in the district apparatus in Thuringia, West Saxony, Hessen Frankfurt (Offenbach) Silesia and Breslau, was well placed with capable leaders such as Brandler, Thalheimer, Paul Froehlich, Hans Tittel and Erich Hausen, to mount a challenge to the party line and leadership.[32] Not only was this done by Thalheimer's prolific circulars, but the right's influence in factory cells and among trade-union Communists transmitted the Right's position throughout the KPD from below.[33] One such case was in the Sachsenwerk factory, which employed over 1,000 workers in the industrial suburbs of Dresden. The factory cell leadership endorsed a resolution condemning Thaelmann and distributed literature printed by the Right. The discussion then spread into the adjoining City District of Streisen.[34] The discussion on the "Thaelmann Case" also spontaneously took place in local party organisations with a pro-Thaelmann leadership, such as Freital, because the debate was being transmitted through the grass roots party organisations in a manner that the ZK could not suppress.[35]

The micro level documentation of events at district and local level indicate that the "Thaelmann Affair" was more than a "palace revolution": the impetus for a party debate quickly came from the bottom up after a fire in the crown room blazed through the party subjects' lodgings. The Comintern had intended the KPD's "left-turn" to be presented as a

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[31] The ZK was concerned that the RFB's widespread meetings on the "Thaelmann Case" in Thuringia took place despite 60 per cent of members not belonging to the KPD see, SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll der Sitzung der erweiterten Bezirksleitung vom 18.10.1928, Bl.347(Schumann).

[32] Bundesarchiv Koblenz (Ba.K.), R 134/42/49-97. Hausen was also a Candidate member of the ZK.

[33] SAPMO I 3/8/25, Abschrift. Protokoll der engeren Bezirksleitung Ostsachsen vom 10.10.1928, Bl.390(Bericht des Instrukteures).

[34] ibid, Bl.388-90(Bericht der Instrukteur).

[35] ibid, Protokoll der engeren Bezirksleitung am 3.10.1928, Bl.361-2(Rentsch).

continuation of the policies decided at the previous Reich Congress, and for the "course of concentration" leadership to carry it out. However, another factional struggle broke out, culminating in the 12th, and final, Reich Congress. The Thaelmann Group now set out to use the party apparatus to control the debate. Hausen, a leading member of the KPD's right-wing, complained about the transformation of the party's apparatus into a corrupt bureaucracy.[36] However, these were crocodile tears: the Comintern could impose its position in the KPD not least because each faction, Right as well as Left, which came into the ascendant, willingly purged the influence of its rivals.

What had changed in the power struggle by 1928 were the internal methods of routing out party dissidents by using the secret internal party apparatus, the *Nachrichtendienst*, which became known to party activists as the "ZK Cheka". There had always been Comintern representatives in the ZK who could, and did, report to the CPSU over the heads of the KPD leadership. However, by 1928 this was extended into a means of dealing with dissent in the wider party. A system of control was developed, which extended into the everyday activities of party dissidents, employing not only "ideological terror", but often physical force.[37] The use of these methods of coercion was not exclusive to the Thaelmann faction. Schumann, a Conciliator, was accused of spying on the Left in

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[36] Tjaden, K. J., *Struktur und Funktion der 'KPD-Opposition' (KPO). Eine organisationssoziologische Untersuchung zur 'Rechts'-Opposition im deutschen Kommunismus zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1964), p84.

[37] The term "ideological terror" comes from the Italian leader of the ultra-Left faction, Amandes Bordiga, and the German, Karl Korsch, to describe the attack on views which did not correspond to the Comintern's official line as "anti Bolshevik" and help for the "enemies" of the Soviet Union, see, Weber, *Hauptfeind*, p80. The CPSU derided Right communists as the "agents of the enemy" see, Weber, *Wandlung*, p207

West Saxony by the prominent leftist Fritz Gloebig.[38] In East Saxony the atmosphere in the party was described in internal reports as "catastrophic": leading district functionaries resented being placed under surveillance.[39] House searches were made of dissident member's private houses. One method used was by "invitation": party members were informed that the "party" wanted to check their flats for Oppositional literature. One such example was in East Saxony: the BL informed the Right activist, Wagner, that a representative of the leadership was to "accompany" him home to assess the precise nature of literature that he had distributed at party meetings.[40] House searches were also carried out by simply knocking at the door. In the district of North Bavaria, the leading local functionary and Right Communist, Emma Groensfelder, described the appearance of the "ZK Cheka" at her flat in a search for factional material.[41] H. A. Winkler has used the memoirs of leading party functionaries to construct an interesting and convincing analysis of the penetration of the KPD's secret apparatus by the Soviet secret police and its rise to domination over the legal party. Winkler argues that this process was used to reinforce the Stalinisation of the KPD, ensuring the dominance of Soviet state interests. Furthermore, the secret party apparatus carried out the KPD's *Gleichschaltung* in a process which neared completion by 1928. Winkler presents the image of a legal party facade which gave a radical communist face to an underground secret apparatus, which dominated the KPD

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[38] SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll der Sitzung der erweiterten Bezirksleitung vom 18.10.1928, Bl.359(Schumann).

[39] SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der engeren Bezirksleitung Ostsachsen am 3.10.1928, Bl.357-8(Instrukteur).

[40] ibid, Abschrift. Protokoll der engeren Bezirksleitung Ostsachsen vom 10.10.1928, Bl.390(Bericht des Instrukteures).

[41] Neuhaeusser-Wespy, U., *Die KPD in Nordbayern 1919-1933. Ein Beitrag zur Regional und Lokalgeschichte des deutschen Kommunismus* (Nurenberg, 1981), p226. Emma Groensfelder was expelled at the end of 1929 for "behaviour harmful to the party" (ie factionalism).

and acted in the tradition of the Tsarist secret police.[42] Winkler's interpretation has been confirmed by a new documentary based study of the KPD's *Nachrichtendienst*. The main conclusions of this study are that the secret apparatus reinforced the division between the claims of party propaganda, which were addressed to German workers, and the KPD's role to act in the interests of the Soviet Union.[43] The immediate presence of Soviet functionaries, working through the *Nachrichtendienst*, helps explain why the KPD leadership was unable to announce any substantial modifications to party policy as a response to developments in Germany.

Gleichschaltung in the Districts.

It had become the norm in the KPD that the BLs carried out the district party membership's *Gleichschaltung*. The ZK's first task, therefore, was to ensure that the BLs would filter out the voices of opposition in the process of "electing" delegates to the various stages in the campaign of meetings which made up the "discussion" on party policy.[44] By the end of October 1928 only two BLs (Halle-Merseburg and Thuringia) from a total of 28 continued to have a majority opposing Thaelmann's re-appointment as party chairman, giving the impression that the leadership need only snap its fingers and the whole membership came into line.[45] In West Saxony a "course of concentration" leadership coalition, between the Right and Conciliators, also continued to resist the

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[42] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, pp443-5, and source references notes 445-7.

[43] Kaufmann, B., Reisener, E., Schwips, D., and Walter, H., *Nachrichtendienst der KPD 1919-1937* (Berlin, 1993), pp94ff.

[44] For a case study of the Ruhr, see, Herlemann, B., *Kommunalpolitik der KPD im Ruhrgebiet 1924-1933* (Wuppertal, 1977), p143.

[45] Weber, *Wandlung*, p210. For developments in Saxony see, SAPMO I 3/9/70, Entschliessung der BL Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 21.10.1928, Bl.159; SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der BLS am 24.10.1928, Bl.404.

Thaelmann leadership. However, the BL did not have a majority opposing the party line because of the reluctance of the Conciliators, under Georg Schumann, to risk open confrontation with the ZK.[46]

Schumann's political behaviour is interesting both in terms of the role of the Conciliators and the nature of internal party life among the "inner core" of functionaries. Firstly, at Reich level and in Halle-Merseburg, where they enjoyed a majority, the Conciliators continued to advocate the use of the united front tactic and trade union policy on the basis of the Essen Party Congress.[47] In West Saxony, however, Schumann tried to present his criticisms of the party's political line within what was known as the "framework" of the party. In order to minimise the charge of breaking party discipline, Schumann stated that he "unconditionally and unreservedly" supported the decisions of the Comintern and RILU Congresses. However, Schumann voted against the ZK majority's resolution on the basis of their "false interpretation" of the "internal party course".[48] But, Schumann's use of party semantics was well known to the ZK majority, which simply dismissed his protests out of hand. The repeated use of the slogan "Hands off the Party" indicated how the "Party" was being continually re-defined in terms of the dominant faction, reinforcing the rhetoric which depicted the Opposition as the "enemy within the Party". This style of leadership led the district secretary Engert, who had been a member of the West Saxon leadership since 1924, to inform Remmele, the ZK's representative, that:

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[46] The vote in the BL on the three main factionally based resolutions was: 28 to 5 against the Right's resolution; 20 to 13 against the ZK majority's resolution; 18 to 15 against the Conciliator's resolution, see SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll ueber die Sitzung der erweiterten BL Westsachsen am 21.11.1928, Bl.471-2.

[47] Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, p151.

[48] SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll ueber die Sitzung der erweiterten BL Westsachsen am 21.11.1928, Bl.459-61(Schumann).

Everything is characterised as Leninism. In 1925 when Ruth Fischer was at the helm the policy was Leninism. At that time there was a God called Maslow and his prophet was Remmele. A quarter of a year later the same Remmele asserted that Maslow and his friends were enemies of Leninism. Then something else was Leninism. I have lost trust in such a leadership.[49]

The ZK appointed Rudolf Renner as a ZK *Kommissar* in West Saxony, with the intention of overcoming the BL's reluctance to abandon its opposition to the "left-turn".[50] However, Renner was unable to simply walk into the BL and take over control on behalf of the ZK. Instead, something of a stalemate was created. With the help of the party workers in the Vogt Group, the ZK was able to restrict dissident functionaries speaking at meetings in the local groups and cells.[51] However, at the same time the Right was able to draw in Paul Froehlich, a prominent Right Communist, into the BL.[52] Furthermore, the BL had a factional majority which continued to prevent the ZK from controlling the process of delegation to party meetings.[53]

The 2nd Party Workers' Conference

With control of the overwhelming majority of the BLs, the ZK could now take the "party discussion" into the wider party membership. The campaign of meetings culminated in the 2nd Reich Party Workers' Conference, which was held in Berlin between 3 and 4

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[49] ibid, Bl.464(Engert).

[50] Weber, *Weber*, pp210-11.

[51] The vote was 18 for, to 5 against and 3 abstentions, see ibid, Protokoll ueber die Sitzung der erweiterten BL Westsachsen am 21.11.1928, Bl.472.

[52] ibid, Bl.451.

[53] ibid, Bl.466-7(Kohl).

November 1928.[54] However, the process of delegation to the conference was less democratic still than during the First Reich Conference in 1925: delegates were not elected, but nominated at BL meetings. The ZK was able to confirm or reject the nominees.[55] The Conference was intended to give the KPD's "left-turn" a belated semblance of membership participation in the policy decision. At the Conference Neumann insisted that the "social fascist" thesis did not diverge from the decisions of the Essen Congress, it was merely their application to present conditions in Germany.[56] Neumann's policy declaration centred on identifying a radicalisation of the workforce, pointing to the strike in the Ruhr iron and steel industry, and the movement's alleged abandonment by "social fascist" functionaries in the SPD.[57] However, the function of the Conference was not only to act as a platform reinforcing the "left-turn" in policy, it also made significant changes to the party's leading personnel. After the 2nd Reich Conference the Secretariat comprised Thaelmann, Remmele and Neumann; the only Conciliators to remain in the Politburo were Ewert and Meyer, and the Thaelmann Group had a three-quarters majority in the ZK.[58] The ZK then acted against the Opposition's influential positions in the party press: in the central organ, *die Rote Fahne*, Suesskind, a Conciliator, was replaced by the Stalinist Neumann; at local level the Conciliators lost their positions

[54] The resolutions of the conference were published in the SPD press see, 'Reichskonferenz der KPD', in *Volksstimme*, Nr.264, 12.11.1928.

[55] SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll ueber die Sitzung der erweiterten BL Westsachsen am 21.11.1928, Bl.466-7(Kohl); Weber, *Wandlung*, p211. Weber stated that the process of delegation was not fully democratic but did not have the documentation to detail why.

[56] SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der Voll-BL am 11.11.1928, Bl.422-4(Saefkow); SAPMO I 3/9/70, Protokoll der engeren BL Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 5.11.1928. Bericht der Reichsparteiarbeiterkonferenz, Bl.177. On the resolutions of the Conference in general, Weber, *Wandlung*, pp211f.

[57] ibid. The Ruhr strikes were in fact a lockout and the KPD, using "independent strike leaderships" for the first time, was unable to win any significant support from the trade-unionists or the unorganised.

as editor-in-chief in Hamburg, Essen and Chemnitz, retaining only Halle-Merseburg. The Right lost control of the *Saechsische Arbeiterzeitung* (SAZ) in West Saxony and the *Bergische Arbeiterstimme* in Solingen.[59] Almost all of the KPD's press could now be used in the leadership's campaign against the Opposition, including the functionaries' organ, *Der Parteiarbeiter.*[60] The only notable exception was the pages of *die Internationale*.

The link between party organisation and the implementation of party policy was also tightened by the introduction of "organisational discipline" (*Koerperschaftsdisziplin*): not only must party debate end after a decision was reached by a higher authority, but, more importantly, any policy discussion was only sanctioned within the organisational unit the party member belonged to. Furthermore, dissident BL secretaries were precluded from presenting their views at meetings of the lower organisations, while the party apparatus stood at the disposal of the ZK majority.[61] This explains why the Right, who were largely factory-based trade-union Communists, did not gain from the KPD's re-organisation on the basis of factory cells and vociferously campaigned for a re-invigoration of internal party life by returning to the larger and more representative membership meetings.[62]

Only a handful of right-wing Communists were able to present their factional critique of the KPD's return to an ultra-Left policy. Central to the Right's declaration was that ultra-

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[58] Weber, *Wandlung*, p208-11.

[59] ibid, 208f. For details on the deposition of Moeller in Chemnitz, see SAPMO I 3/9/70, Protokoll der engeren BL Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 15.10.1928, Bl.134ff. For Boettcher in Leipzig, see SAPMO I 3/10/114, Entschliessung der BL Westsachsen am 5.11.1928, Bl.443; For Solingen, Wunderlich, *Kommunalpolitik*, p55.

[60] Weber, *Wandlung*, p210; On the role of *Der Parteiarbeiter*, see SAPMO I 3/10/114, Entschliessung ueber die 6. Weltkongress (Recht), Bl.473.

[61] idid, Protokoll ueber die Sitzung der erweiterten BL Westsachsen am 21.11.1928, Bl.469(Remmele).

[62] SAPMO I 3/9/79, Bericht ueber die Fraktionstaetigkeit der Rechten im Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland, Bl.11.

Leftism during the Ruth Fischer leadership in 1924/5 had merely limited the KPD's influence on the wider working class. The "left-turn" was frequently justified in the party press with reference to the role of social democratic police presidents breaking up "workers' demonstrations" (ie communist actions). However, Boettcher pointed out that: "If the united front is put down to the question of spilt blood, then we could never have had a united front with the SPD since 1918."[63] The Right stressed that if the KPD looked to a separate social constituency, in isolation from and outright opposition to the SPD, the political result could only be the constriction of the party's "room to manoeuvre".[64] The Conciliators at the conference did not vote against the ZK majority's resolutions.[65] However, they did submit a resolution, signed by twenty delegates, which detailed their opposition to the restrictions on debate speakers and the use of organisational measures to prevent all those holding a minority view from expressing their opinions to the membership.[66]

Gleichschaltung in the Membership.

Previous studies at Reich, regional and local level have placed the emphasis on a largely uncontested transition to the policies of the "3rd Period" in the KPD membership. Historians have explained this in terms of a combination of factors: the regional weakness of the Right, such as in the Ruhr; the ZK majority's rapid control of the BLs; and the view that the new General Line gave expression to strong anti-reformist tendencies long held at

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[63] SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll ueber die Sitzung der erweiterten BL Westsachsen am 21.11.1928, Bl.462(Boettcher).

[64] ibid, Bl.461-2(Boettcher).

[65] SAPMO I 3/9/70, Entschliessung der BL Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 5.11.1928, Bl.188.

[66] ibid. In previous literature the Conciliators thought to have abandoned all opposition at the conference cf., Weber, *Wandlung* p212.

all levels in the KPD.[67] Weber is undoubtedly correct that the Opposition stood no chance against the party machine.[68] However, in Saxony the KPD was shaken more than in other regions for two reasons. Firstly, the Right occupied prominent positions in the Saxon BLs and the Regional Executive; and secondly, the continued strong support for right-wing communism, centring on the southwestern localities. To the Saxon Left factions the challenge presented by the Right was taken extremely seriously. All the more so as until the "open letter" against the Right, in mid December 1928, the Comintern, still under Bukharin's leadership, refused to sanction a full blown party purge. In Saxony the ZK instructed the BL only to use expulsions of ordinary members in the most extreme cases when all other schooling and ideological persuasion had failed and the party line was under threat in the district or locality.[69] During the initial stages in the KPD's *Gleichschaltung*, therefore, the Opposition had considerable room for manoeuvre in the lower party organisations.

In East Saxony the KPD's shallow roots in the district had enabled an earlier and more effective control of party affairs by functionaries in the Reich apparatus, under Rudolf Renner and Sigrid Raedel: district secretaries came and went as the tides of the factional struggle turned, but they had remained constants in the equation. However, having nailed their flag, along with the Left majority in the BL, to Thaelmann's "left-turn", Renner and Raedel now felt threatened by the ZK's inaction against open factional activity by the Right.[70] The East Saxon BL knew nothing of Thaelmann's constant petitioning of Stalin to sanction a party purge against the Right, and on 13 December sent a BL resolution to

[67] ibid, p209; Wunderlich, *Kommunalpolitik*, pp55-6; Herlemann, *Kommunalpolitik*, p144; Winkler, *Schein der normalitaet*, p444.

[68] Weber, *Wandlung*, p209.

[69] SAPMO I 3/10/114, Entschliessung der BL Westsachsen am 5.11.1928, Bl.443.

[70] SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der Voll-Bl am 11.11.1928, Bl.430(Goldhammer).

the ZK calling for immediate action.[71] Already in early November the BL was acting as a form of "party court", in place of the slower channels of the Complaints Commission. While the ZK had cautioned against expulsions at this point, the East Saxon party acted on 11 November to confirm the expulsion of Erich Melcher, the previous Political Secretary, for alleged co-operation with the Opposition. Furthermore, two factory functionaries, Fritz Schreiter and Kurt Wagner, were expelled for a minimum period of six months for distributing Erich Hausen's circulars in the factories.[72]

In West Saxony the cross-currents in the party acted to limit the ZK's authority in what was a centre of Leftism in the membership. Having finally installed a compliant leadership in the course of 1927, the BL coalition, of the Right and Conciliators, constrained reining in the dissidents.[73] The ZK took various measures to impose compliance in West Saxony. At the end of 1928 the District Trade Union Department was taken over by the Organisation Division for five weeks. In Leipzig all trade-union work was run by a ZK *Kommissar*.[74] The leftism of the Vogt Group had drawn considerable support from factory workers, particularly in Leipzig, in opposition to what was seen as too much co-operation with the social democrats in 1926/7.[75] The rejection of the new leftism in the factories, however, represented a change in the nature of the KPD's union policy: it was

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[71] On Thaelmann's correspondence with Stalin, see Watlin, *Die Komintern*, pp180-1. SAPMO I 3/8/25, Entschleissung. Protokoll der engeren BL vom 12.12.1928, Bl.466. The resolution was signed by: Bernhard Wiesner, Bruno Siegel, Martin Schneider, Anton Saefkow, Bruno Goldhammer, Kurt Froehlich, Paul Gruner, Martin Hoop.

[72] SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der Voll-Bl am 11.11.1928,Bl.430. The outcome of the vote was: on Melcher unaminous; Wagner, 1 against and 2 abstentions; Schreiter, 1 against and 1 abstention.

[73] ibid, Protokoll der engeren BL am 21.11.1928, Bl.438(Siegel).

[74] SAPMO I 3/10/116, Bericht der Gewerkschaftsabteilung der Bezirks Westsachsen fuer die Monate Dezember bis Mitte Maerz 1929, Bl.587.

[75] See Chapter 4.2 above.

one thing to support a policy of industrial militancy but quite another to sacrifice the benefits of organisation in the trade unions, not least of which was strike pay. The Communist Youth (KJVD) in Leipzig, which had a history of contact with the Socialist Youth movement (SAJ), was also a centre of Right opposition to the new party line. The KJ's district leader, Luft, and three other district leaders, were deposed by the ZK and the organisation was then led by appointees from the Reich leadership.[76] In the Sports Organisations there was also a form of non-acceptance of the implications of the party line by Communists who were not factionally organised.[77] Where contact with the rank-and-file members of the SPD seemed a natural part of working-class life, even leftists questioned cutting off organisational contact in order to, in the ZK's opinion, enhance the KPD's revolutionary profile.

It was in Erzgebirge-Vogtland that the BL had greatest difficulty in acting against the Right. The district, especially in the industrial suburbs of Chemnitz, remained a stronghold of the Right, and was the political *Heimat* of Heinrich Brandler, its factional leader. The Left in the BL, around Mapitz and Ohr, owed their position not to support among the district membership, but to keeping court in Thaelmann's entourage. During the "moderate" political line in the mid twenties, the BL had the role of acting as a counterbalance to the strength of support for the right-wing communism in the membership.[78] The leftists in the BL could now act, out of factional self interest, against all opposition to the party line. After the Reich Party Workers' Conference the BL's first

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[76] Staatsarchiv Bremen (Sta.B.), Monatsbericht ueber die politische und wirtschaftliche Lage im Freistaat Sachsen (November 1928) [henceforth: Monatsbericht], Sig. 4,65-1729.

[77] SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll ueber die Sitzung der erweiterten BL Westsachsen am 21.11.1928, Bl.460(Schumann).

[78] See chapter 4.2 above.

step to impose the new party line was a BL meeting on 5 November, which unanimously accepted the Conference's decisions and decided to hold a District Party Workers' Conference on 17-18 November.[79] The mode of delegation to the conference ensured a built in majority in favour of the ZK's resolutions. The "delegates" included members of the BL and UBLs, delegates who had attended the Reich Party Workers' Conference, leaders of the City District and Working Area leaderships in Greater Chemnitz and finally a number of hand-picked factory workers.[80] The party members who attended at the conference represented the so-called party workers' faction; however, rather than constituting a grass roots pro-ZK tendency, it was a group of hand-picked "delegates".[81] The BL had acted to ensure the outcome of the conference in advance. The KPD's publication of the resolutions of the District Party Workers' Conference, which voted for the ZK's resolutions by 132 to four with four abstentions, was by no means representative of the strength of district support for right-wing communism.[82] It was the absence of documentation detailing local developments that led earlier accounts of the KPD to conclude that the "left-turn" was widely accepted by the party membership.[83]

The KPD's top down imposition of the party line had taken on a now characteristic form. The party press published the contrived "votes" of conferences, which declared overwhelming support for the ZK's policies. In reality, however, opponents of the "left-turn" were excluded from the conferences. The "debate" itself was in reality part of the

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[79] SAPMO I 3/9/70, Protokoll der engeren BL Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 5.11.1928, Bl.176.

[80] ibid.

[81] Details in, SAPMO I 3/9/65, Bericht ueber die innerparteilich Lage. Vorbereitung der Bezirksparteikonferenz vom 17-18.11.1928, Bl.27-30.

[82] SAPMO I 3/9/79, Bericht ueber die Fraktionstaetigkeit der Rechten im Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland, Bl.12.

[83] Cf. Weber, *Wandlung*, p213.

KPD's *Gleichschaltung*. The "debate" was not just about ensuring conference resolutions supporting party policy: the apparatus functionaries who went into the lower party organisations simultaneously spent considerable time trying to organise the membership to carry out the policy. Local functionaries expressing outright rejection of the party line were ousted in micro-level coups and a new leadership "elected" who agreed to conform to the party line.[84] The strength of the Right throughout the district, however, continued to cause the BL serious concern. The BL in Erzgebirge-Vogtland wrote to both the ZK and the CPSU urging the purge of Brandler and Thalheimer in the hope that a headless opposition would also lose its foot-soldiers.[85]

Role of the Right-Opposition

The Right's challenge to the ZK majority functioned as part of a nationally organised and coordinated group. However, only in Offenbach did the KPD-Opposition (KPD(O)) win over a majority of the membership, functionaries and the communist electorate.[86] The Right did, however, have significant influence within the KPD in the districts of Wuerttemberg, centred on Stuttgart; Silesia, centred on Breslau, and in Saxony, especially the southwest of the region with an epicentre in Chemnitz.[87] The leading figures in the Saxony Right, Brandler, Vettermann, Ludewig Kuehn and Davidowski, organised their

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[84] SAPMO I 3/9/70, Entschliessung der BL Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 5.11.1928, Bl.188; For an example of a micro-coup d'etat in Zschachwitz, see SAPMO I 3/8/25, Innerparteiliche Lage in Ostsachsen. Protokoll der BL am 21.11.1928, Bl.443.

[85] SAPMO I 3/9/79, Bericht ueber die Fraktionstaetigkeit der Rechten im Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland, Bl.12.

[86] Wickham, J., 'The Working Class-Movement in Frankfurt-am-Main during the Weimar Republic', Ph.D. thesis (University of Sussex, 1979), pp194f.

[87] SAPMO I 3/9/64, Zum Bericht der BL an den Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 13-14.4.1929, Bl.10.

factional activity from Davidowski's flat in Chemnitz. Meetings of the wider factional leadership were held in the Annegarten Inn.[88] The ZK's ability to close down the channels of dissent in the party and the communist press meant that the Right's main means of gaining its political position a wider audience was the distribution of leaflets in the factories and at the factory gates at closing time.[89] Right Communist councillors in many local councils also used their positions to distribute factional material. Public meetings were also convened. For example Paul Froehlich, who had recently taken up work in Saxony, was openly holding meetings against the ZK's policies.[90] The strength of support for the Right among trade-union Communists also brought invitations from cell groups to speak on the implications of the Comintern's policies for factory work.[91] The BL's response, in line with that employed throughout Germany, was to use strong-arm tactics to prevent the Right speaking at factory cell meetings.[92]

The KPD was able to enforce party discipline in the Krautheim factory cell, which had invited Brandler to speak on 20 November. However, the support for the Right in the Schubert and Salzer factory cell, led by the oppositional activist Edmund Mueller,

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[88] The Right also organised some families, most famously the Zippel family in Chemnitz. Prominent activists included: Vettermann, Kuehn, Hausding, Davidowski, Leske, Rips,Weber, Otto Wenzel, Fanny Zippel, Edmund Mueller and Mally, see SAPMO I3/9/89, BL.Erzgebirge-Vogtland der KPD, Chemnitz, den, 13.11.1928. An das ZK, Sekretariat, Berlin, Bl.35f.

[89] SAPMO I 3/9/70, Entschliessung. Protokoll der engeren BL Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 5.11.1928, Bl.188; ibid, 'Brandler organisiert Fraktionsarbeit. Die Parteispalter an der Arbeit', in *Kaempfer*, 13.11.1928, Bl.218; SAPMO I 3/9/81, An das ZK der KPdSU z. Haende des Generalsekretaers Genossen Stalin, Moskau. Chemnitz, den 27.11.1928, Bl.6-10; SAPMO I 3/8/25, Protokoll der Voll-BL am 11.11.1928, Bl.423,427,429-30.

[90] SAPMO I 3/8/25, Entschleissung. Protokoll der engeren BL vom 12.12.1928, Bl.466.

[91] Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1729, Monatsbericht (November 1928); *ibid* (March, 1929); SAPMO I 3/9/81, An das ZK der KPdSU z. Haende des Generalsekretaers Genossen Stalin, Moskau. Chemnitz, den 27.11.1928, Bl.6.

[92] Weber, *Wandlung*, p221.

required party organised violence to prevent Brandler speaking. The BL held a meeting of cell leaderships in Greater Chemnitz on 20 November, which voted 95 to three to occupy the meeting hall.[93] This resulted in some 100 "party loyalists" flooding the meeting, which had attracted around 80 factory Communists to hear Brandler, Kuehn and Vetermann speak.[94] After severe disruption, the meeting was transferred to another location. The meeting, however, ended in an intra-party brawl with the riot police intervening, while Brandler fled from a window to safety.[95] The KPD leadership is also documented as having used similar methods against the Opposition in Dresden.[96]

The purge of right-wing Communists took place after further developments in the Comintern. At the meeting of the Comintern's Political Secretariat, which dealt with the German question on 23 November, Meyer was completely isolated.[97] Following the German delegation's return to Berlin, the Conciliators had one last opportunity to address the ZK on their objections to the party course.[98] However, as Bukharin's star finally set in the Comintern, Stalin could act against his supporters in the KPD. At the ZK meeting of 13-14 December the Right were given an ultimatum: either abandon all factional opposition to the party line by 20 December, or to be expelled.[99] At the ECCI Plenum on 19 December Bukharin made a final effort to mediate between the factions in the KPD.

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[93] SAPMO I 3/9/81, An das ZK der KPdSU z. Haende des Generalsekretaers Genossen Stalin, Moskau. Chemnitz, den, 27.11.1928, Bl.6.

[94] Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1729, Monatsbericht (November 1929).

[95] ibid.

[96] ibid.

[97] Weber, *Wandlung*, p214. Meyer was defended by Humbert-Droz and attacked by the KPD's delegates Ulbricht and Neumann and the Comintern secretaries Gusev and Kuusinen.

[98] Fowkes, *Communism in Germany*, p151.

[99] SAPMO I 3/9/70, Bericht von der ZK-Sitzung am 13-14.12.1928. Protokoll der engeren BL Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 17.12.1928, Bl.210(Remmele).

Bukharin knew that to openly side with the Opposition would seal his own fate: his appeal to party dissidents was to acquiesce in the interests of helping the Soviet Union during a period of difficulties.[100] Following the Right's refusal to capitulate, the ECCI-Plenum issued an "open letter" on the "right danger in the KPD" which called for the KPD to purge the leaders of the Opposition.[101] Simultaneously a secret letter was sent to the KPD which stated that the Conciliators' criticisms of party policy should no longer be tolerated.[102] The "open letter", which was published in *die Rote Fahne* on 22 December, accused the Right of attempting to re-found a Spartacus Bund, of representing a "socialist current in the communist movement" and having broken with Leninism.[103] At the end of December eight prominent leaders of the KPD were expelled; Brandler and Thalheimer, who were members of the CPSU, were also purged. At the beginning of January the ZK acted against the Right and Conciliators in the BLs.[104]

The formation of the KPD(O) as an independent party at the end of 1928 only organised between 4,000 and 6,000 former members of the KPD.[105] The KPD(O)'s electoral success in Saxony was also marginal. In Saxony five of the 13 members of the KPD Landtag faction defected to the KPD(O) after Boettcher's speech on 15 January.[106] However, in

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[100] Weber, *Wandlung*, pp216-7.

[101] Ba.K., R 134/61/145-193.

[102] Weber, *Wandlung*, pp218-9.

[103] *Die Rote Fahne* Nr.301, 22.12.1928.

[104] Weber, *Wandlung*, pp219-20; Ba.K. R134/61/145-193. The eight expelled Right communists were: J.Walcher, A. Schreiner, Max Koehler, P.Froehlich, A.Enderle, Hans Tittel, A.Schmidt and Karl Rehbein.

[105] Tjaden, *Struktur und Funktion*, p100; Weber, *Wandlung*, p17. In February 1931 the KPD(O)'s membership was estimated at 6,000 in the report compiled by the police authorities, see Ba.K., R 134/61/194-242.

[106] Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1729, Monatsbericht (December 1928). The other four were Lieberasch, Roetzscher, Schreiber and Siewert.

the elections to the Saxon Landtag on 12 May, despite the KPD losing two seats and the SPD gaining two seats, the KPD(O) did not receive a single mandate.[107] The ZK acted against supporters of the Right who remained in the KPD by imposing a solidarity declaration, which most of them signed, perhaps in the expectation that they could ride out another turn to the left in party policy.[108] What the purge of these right-wing communist activists did mark was the KPD's break with its roots in the German workers' movement, which had been maintained in certain important localities. The Right opposition comprised full-time trade-union officials, party union functionaries and factory councillors; councillors in the local government, including *Buergermeister*, such as Bachmann in Oelsnitz i.V. and Fedgenhaufen in Bernsgruen; and Communists involved in social-political work, such as the sick pay official Kurt Wenzel in Chemnitz.[109] It was these communists' firm location within the wider militant workers' movement which determined their conviction that communist objectives were best served by contact with left-wing Social Democrats and which led them to regard SPD colleagues as potential Communists rather than the social basis of "social fascism". The ZK's policy, however, was to eliminate all factors which produced opposition to the party line as a result of local conditions. Now that the Comintern had finally sanctioned a purge of the Right, the KPD leadership began to prepare for the 12th Reich Party Congress, with the intention of

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[107] *Statistisches Jahrbuch fuer den Freistaat Sachsen* Nr.48 (Dresden, 1930), pp304-5. For the SPD's evaluation, see *Vorwaerts*, Nr.219, 13.5.1929; B.a.P. RKO 15.07 Nr. 243/1, Politischer Bericht der Landtagswaehlen, Bl.79ff.

[108] Wuenderlich, *Kommunalpolitik*, p57. Wuenderlich explains the signing of the "loyalty declaration" in term of the "plausibility" of the KPD's anti-SPD policies by 1929.

[109] SAPMO I 3/9/79, Bericht ueber die Fraktionstaetigkeit der Rechten im Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland, Bl.10-11; SAPMO I 3/9/81, An das ZK der KPdSU z. Haende des Generalsekretaers Genossen Stalin, Moskau. Chemnitz, den 27.11.1928, Bl.9.

replacing functionaries known to be sympathetic to right-wing communism with afficianados for ultra-Leftism.[110]

The Preparations for the 12th Reich Party Congress: A Farewell to Right Communism.

The preparations for the Reich Party Congress began, in the same manner as the earlier conferences, after support for the "left-turn" was guaranteed. In the party districts of East Saxony and Erzgebirge Vogtland control of the BLs made it possible to filter out all voices of dissent during the process of "electing" delegates to the Reich Congress. The District Party Congresses, which took place in April 1929, had compliant pro-ZK majorities. Both districts gave their "unanimous" support to the ZK's and the Comintern's General Line.[111] It was in West Saxony that the ZK required to take a series of measures against the Opposition: not because the Right had predominant influence at grass roots level, but because of its remaining positions throughout the district apparatus, in particular the Trade Union Division.

In West Saxony two District Party Congresses were convened in order to bring the district into line before the Reich Congress. In February an extraordinary Congress confirmed the removal of the Right and Conciliators from their positions of power.[112] At the Congress Thaelmann made a six-hour speech on factionalism and its consequences in the KPD.[113] Thaelmann's motion was then accepted by 165 votes to 17, with two

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[110] Claudin, F., *The Communist Movement from Comintern to Cominform* (Penguin, 1975), pp158-9.

[111] SAPMO I 3/9/64, Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-vogtland am 13-14.4.1929, Bl.1-9; SAPMO I 3/9/64, 'Bezirksparteitag des Bezirkes Erzgebirge-Vogtland. Innen geeignt, aussen gestaerkt', *Kaempfer*, 15.4.1929, Bl.190; SAPMO I 3/8/21, Bericht der Bezirksleitung an den 18. Bezirksparteitag der KPD Ostsachsen (6-7.4.1929), Bl.3ff.

[112] Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1729, Monatsbericht (February 1929).

[113] SAPMO I 3/10/109, Bezirksparteitag Westsachsen am 16-17.2.1929, Bl.2ff.

abstentions.[114] However, this result was only possible because of the ruthless use of the party apparatus at the meetings and conferences of the lower party organisations which had delegated representatives to the Congress. Representative of this manipulation was the Mandate Commission's refusal to accept Right delegates elected from Taucha and Leipzig City Districts "A" and "F" because of an allegedly "disorderly" election process.[115] The Right would not have gained a majority at the Congress even under genuinely democratic conditions: the purpose was, however, to create the communist monolith which excluded all voices of dissent. A factional side-effect in eliminating the Opposition was the re-emergence of the Vogt Group which, although in support of the party's "left-turn", wanted the return of their factional leader, Arthur Vogt, from Stuttgart, where he was acting as the ZK's *Kommissar* against the locally strong Right. The vote on the Vogt Group's motion was narrowly defeated by 74 votes to 65.[116] The vote indicates how strongly the ZK now depended on the support of these former left-communist dissidents to carry the new policy. This, however, did not detract from the main objective of the Congress: Schumann's dismissal as Political Leader was given a semblance of district approval, as was his replacement by the Thaelmann supporter, Winterich, who was appointed to head a provisional "ZK loyal" BL.[117]

With the Right and Conciliators removed from the BL, the Opposition's struggle was not only taken into the factories and trade unions but also into the RH, in the same manner as

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[114] A condition of delegation to the Congress was that party members had paid their dues and were organised in the appropriate trade-union , Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1729 Monatsbericht (February 1929).

[115] ibid; SAPMO I 3/10/109, Bezirksparteitag Westsachsen am 16-17.2.1929, Bl.5.

[116] Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1729, Monatsbericht (Februar 1929).

[117] During the Wittorf Affair Winterich was of one of the ZK members most quickly returning to support Thaelmann. St.a.B., Sig. 4,65-1729, Monatsbericht (February 1929).

the Vogt Group had done in mid 1927.[118] In 1927 the Right had been installed in the District Executive of the RH by the ZK in order to sideline the influence of the Vogt Group. Now the tables had turned and the ZK wanted to remove the Right from the RH's leadership.[119] At a meeting of the RH in Leipzig, the ZK was able to gain a small majority, enabling the appointment of its factional adherent, Drews, as District Leader.[120] Immediately after the meeting, the ZK's supporters removed the Right from the RH's premises by smashing the windows and doors in a violent clash, which again saw the police being called to break up an intra-communist brawl.[121] A subsequent District Congress of the West Saxon RH in Leipzig, on 16 June, confirmed the appointment of the new leadership. Winterich's speech dropped all pretence that the organisation had a non-party character stating that: "There is no such thing as non-party in the proletariat's struggle for liberation."[122] This was only stating the obvious: the leadership was being passed from Right to Left depending on which faction the ZK wanted to eliminate. The ZK aimed to close off all avenues of opposition inside the party, not least as organisations like the RH could provide a gathering point for the wider Saxon Right. The KPD's ability to impose a new leadership contrasted with the ability to maintain a effective auxiliary organisation: by autumn 1929 the district RH was 4,000 marks in debt and could no longer meet its financial commitments.[123]

At the District Congress in West Saxony in April 1929 the Conciliators were able to present a minority resolution, which supported the ZK minority around Eberlein and

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[118] ibid,(March 1929).

[119] ibid.; *Arbeiterpolitik*, Nr.11, 1929.

[120] ibid, Monatsbericht (March 1929),

[121] ibid

[122] ibid, Monatsbericht (June 1929).

[123] ibid, Monatsbericht (October 1929).

Ewert. The resolution continued to warn of the KPD's loss of influence by disregarding the united front policy and active trade-union work.[124] However, with the complete exclusion of the Right, the Conciliators' motion was voted down by 165 votes to four.[125] The Conciliator's did remain an organised faction until the 12th Party Congress, expressing a minority view in the ZK and publishing their political views in *die Internationale*.[126] It was clear, however, that their days as a faction were numbered. In March the Conciliators lost control of the BL in their stronghold of Halle-Merseburg, which was now headed by the ZK's *Kommissar*, Wilhelm Koenen.[127] With poetic justice the Conciliators, an apparatus faction, were removed from influence on the KPD's policy by absorbing their leading figures, such as Ewert and Hans Eisler, into the Comintern's apparatus to work for a policy they opposed.[128] The Right and Conciliators had been ousted as organised factions with positions in the party leadership.

The internal party preparations for the 12th Party Congress had gone a very considerable way towards ending organised factional challenges to the party line: the monolith had few political cracks. Opposition to the decisions of the 6th Congress of the Comintern, which had furiously burned inside the KPD after the Wittorf Affair, had succeeded in causing a party debate and convening a party congress. The crucial aspect of the KPD's political development was the further refinement of the party machine, against which the Opposition could not compete. Weber pointed out that the purge of the Right had been

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[124] SAPMO I 3/10/109, Resolution zum 6. Weltkongress zur Lage und den Aufgaben der Partei im Bezirk Westsachsen, Bl.11-14. The resolution was signed by: Erich Bartsch, Georg Schumann, Alfred Simon and Karl Heft.

[125] 'Nach dem Bezirksparteitag mit verstaerkter Kraft an der Arbeit', in *Sozialistische Arbeiterzeitung (SAZ)*, Nr.99, 29.4.1929.

[126] Weber, *Wandlung*, p222; The Conciliators' platform is in, *Die internationale*, XII (1.7.1929), pp431-6.

[127] *Bericht 9. Parteitag*, p366, quoted in Fowkes, *German Communism*, p151.

[128] Fowkes, *German Communism*, pp152-3.

carried out in six weeks in contrast to the one-and-a-half years required to oust the ultra-Left.[129] New documentation, however, indicates certain important modifications to the earlier studies: the campaign against the Right began in early 1928 and lasted until spring 1929; Moscow was unable to prevent a factional feud breaking out in the KPD; and the ZK was unable to prevent another "party discussion" on Comintern policy. There is no doubt, however, that the KPD's party machine, which drove the party's Stalinisation, had been more finely tuned: organisational control could install the leaderships and channels for carrying out political policy. Institutionalising the Comintern's "3rd Period" policies in Saxony had not been achieved by harnessing a "left trend" in the party at large: the communist movement left nothing to chance. Instead, loyalty to the Comintern, the Bolshevik Revolution and opposition to reformism, comprised a propaganda campaign which sought to conceal the KPD's political developments rather than inform members of a coherent policy. The District Congresses in Saxony could proclaim that all those who did not accept the political line were guilty of a "cowardly retreat before the enemy" and that where the KPD had "bravely and decisively carried out the party line against reformism" the party "enjoyed great successes."[130] The reality in the Saxon KPD, however, was not the mobilisation of the membership by a frontal attack on reformism, but passive resistance to the policy among the party's membership and lower functionaries who came in contact with the SPD. If the "3rd Period" was to have any meaning at all it would have to be implemented by party members who could identify with its claims. Because German society in 1928/9 did not provide such conditions, the KPD tried to create a mood inside the party which would be receptive to party policy. In order to

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[129] Weber, *Wandlung*, p220.

[130] Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1729, Monatsbericht (Februar 1929).

achieve such a mood in the party the KPD focused on the strikes and factory council elections of 1928/9, the campaign for a referendum on the SPD-sanctioned construction of *Panzerkreutzer* "A", and the events surrounding the so-called *Blutmai* of 1929 in Berlin.

6.3   Forcing the Party Line: The "3rd Period" and Communist Campaigning.

The RGO-politik and Trade Union Communists

The policy of open confrontation with the SPD found its equivalent in trade-union policy. The 4th Congress of the RILU, held in Moscow between mid March and early April 1928, introduced a policy which emphasised the organisation of the "revolutionary" workforce, under communist leadership, in opposition to the reformist policies of the SPD-dominated ADGB.[131] In Germany by late 1927 the Left leadership in the KPD's ZK became increasingly concerned about the role of the SPD's left-wing in Saxony leading a range of strikes over pay and conditions. The so-called *RGO-politik* (revolutionary policy of the trade-union Opposition) was regarded as a central component in the KPD's conflict with "reformism". According to the KPD's ideology, the ADGB had become an integral part in maintaining the well-being of the capitalist state. The SPD's policy of "economic democracy", it was claimed, was based on improving the efficiency of German capitalism, while dressing this up as a policy to achieve improvements in living standards. Much of the debate in the communist movement during the introduction of the "3rd Period" General Line was concerned with assessing the role of industrial rationalisation in advancing the efficiency of the West's economy, while the Soviet Union continued to

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[131] For the resolutions of the 9th ECCI Plenum on the trade-union question see, Degras, *Communist International*, pp432-36.

endure economic dislocation.[132] The thesis of social revolution riding on a communist political tide was largely based on the traditional Marxist concept that capitalist hubris would be followed by its final nemesis: world revolution. The KPD's task in Germany was to make voluminous propaganda that reformism was no longer willing or able to lead the proletariat's struggles in the factories.[133]

The 4th RGI Congress had re-defined not only the KPD's political tactic, but also re-defined communism's target sociological recruitment group: no longer were the unorganised workers regarded as "politically backwards", but, as they were "free" of social democratic traditions, their growing social impoverishment would make them the most "radicalised and revolutionised" layers of the working class.[134] For this reason the KPD, jointly with the RGO, was to take on the "independent leadership" of economic struggles by electing "strike leaderships", which were to include all workers under communist leadership, leading strikes "against the will" of the reformist union leaders.[135] The KPD's policy was based on an abstract political interpretation of the role of strikes as an expression not merely of economic interest, but against the capitalist state system itself: the larger the strike the stronger its anti-state character.[136]

There is no empirical evidence in either left-wing party districts, like the Ruhr, or traditionally right-wing districts, like in southwestern Saxony, that the membership had

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[132] ibid, p455.

[133] Weiszt, *KPD-Politik*, pp53-7; Bahne, S., 'Die KPD im Ruhrgebiet in der Weimarer Republik' in Reulecke, J. (ed.), *Arbeiterbewegung am Rhein und Ruhr. Beitrag zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung in Rheinland-Westfalen* (Wuppertal, 1974), p333; Rosa Meyer-Levine accepts this interpretation despite the fact that Ernst Meyer was hostile to this position at the time, *Inside German Communism*, pp158-60.

[134] Wieszt, *KPD-Politik*, pp35-6,341-2; Wuenderlich, *Kommunalpolitik*, pp56-8.

[135] Eisner, F., *Das Verhaeltniss der KPD zu den Gewerkschaften in der Weimarer Republik* (Cologne, Frankfurt/M, 1977), p222.

[136] Weiszt, *KPD-Politik*, pp58-9.

forced the new line from below.[137] In Saxony, the formation of the RGO as a separate

communist organisation was not the corollary of a wave of expulsions of Communists

triggered by local union officials nervous at their radicalism. The pressure for the policy

came from a different direction in the KPD: the Thaelmann leadership was petitioning the

ECCI to sanction a full blown ultra-Left tactic.[138]

It was one thing for the ZK to make political pronouncements on the KPD's trade-union

policy, but quite another to have this policy carried out in the factories. This was the real

test of how the party membership viewed the policy. During the first half of 1928 the

Right conducted a dispute with the leader of the RILU, Alexander Losowsky, in the pages

of *die Kommunistische Internationale*. Representative of this dispute was Arthur

Lieberasch's warning that in practice the RILU's policy in Germany was not functioning as

a "strike strategy" but as an isolation tactic, like during the Ruth Fischer period, and was

eroding the wider influence which was required to defeat reformism.[139] This debate was

continued at district level. In West Saxony Boettcher and Lieberasch warned against the

implications of prioritising organising the unorganised workers in "strike leaderships" and

re-defining what was an "employers' offensive" on pay and conditions as a "workers'

offensive." Boettcher and Lieberasch stressed that the slogan "dictatorship of the

proletariat" had never caused a wage struggle and for this reason the KPD needed to

continue its day-to-day work in the unions for social and economic concessions as a path

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[137] For the Ruhr, see Bahne, 'Ruhrgebiet', p335.

[138] Wieszt, *KPD-Politik*, p351. Neumann and Ulbricht represented this view in the ECCI. For an example of the factional use of the trade-union tactic, see SAPMO I 8/8/25, Protokoll der Voll-Bl am 11.11.1928, Bl.422-3 (Saefkow).

[139] Lieberasch, A., 'Fragen der Streikstrategie', in, *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, IX (1928), pp658-63; Losowsky, A., 'Antwort einem aengstlichen Kommunist', ibid, pp664-67.

to communism.[140] Much of the KPD's policy emphasis was concentrated on the workers in the massive factories of the heavy industrial sector, which was almost completely absent from the Saxon economy. However, communist union activists in Saxony informed the BLs that the policy had no hold in either large or small factories.[141]

The KPD's trade-union policy experienced a credibility crisis during the strikes which took place in Saxony. After the rash of strikes throughout the winter of 1927/8, the next significant wage movement in Saxony was the lock out of 200,000 workers in the metal working industries following the employers' rejection of the DMV's pay demands.[142] These developments clearly put the KPD's claims that reformism could not lead movements to achieve workers' demands into difficulties: all the more so as many left-wing Social Democrats, who ran the union's local branches, were openly calling for reform of the system of compulsory state arbitration.[143] Rank-and-file members of the KPD continued to stand side-by-side in industrial disputes with their social democratic colleagues. In the suburbs of Chemnitz Communists in the metal trades rejected the BL's strike strategy in a dispute culminating in their expulsion in early 1929.[144] The KPD's propagandistic response to the role of radical reformism in Saxony was typified by

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[140] SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll ueber die Sitzung der erweiterten BL Westsachsen am 21.11.1928, Bl.462-3(Boettcher); ibid, Bl.465(Lieberasch).

[141] SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll ueber die Sitzung der erweiterten BL Westsachsen am 21.11.1928, Bl.464 (Engert).

[142] DMV called for a wage rise of 15pf per hour in each of the three Saxon wage districts. The employers stated that this would damage international competativeness see, St.Ha.D. (Staatshauptarchiv Dresden), MdI, Nr.11126/2, Monatsbericht (April 1928), Bl.62; From a *parteilich* perspective, see Reschwamm, D., 'Der saeschische Metallarbeiterkampf im April/Mai 1928', in *Saechsische Heimatsblaetter* 30 (5) (1984), pp209-212.

[143] SAPMO I 3/9/64, Zum Bericht der BL der BL an den Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 13-14.4.1929, Bl.5.

[144] ibid, Bl.5-6.

statements such as the reformists had "allowed the strike as a manoeuvre" to win workers' votes during the 1928 Reichstag elections.[145] This not only contradicted party ideology, but did nothing to "win over the majority of the working class" in a struggle against binding state arbitration.[146]

When further wage agreements expired at the turn of 1928/9, industrial disputes again increased in Saxony.[147] In the Saxon printing trades and textile industries mid level union functionaries informed the ZK's representatives that they would not carry out the policy adopted at the 4th Congress of the RILU because there was no "right development" of reformist union leaders nor was there a "left development" in the masses, least of all among the non-unionised workers, whom the KPD set out to include in the election of "strike leaderships".[148] In East Saxony the KPD's BL conceded that the reformist trade unions played a dominant role among the workforce. However, it asserted that:

> It is also possible in East Saxony, where the leadership of the struggle lies in the reformists hands, to snatch the leadership...It is our task to build up strike leaderships to show the workers that there is a way other than the reformists' scotching policy.[149]

The central issue in the policy debate throughout the party was the Ruhr lock-out. At the meeting of the ECCI's Political Secretariat on 28 November, the Left in the ZK used the Ruhr struggle to justify an ultra-Leftist policy in Germany. Ulbricht presented events as a

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[145] ibid, Bl.6.

[146] State arbitration under the SPD's Labour Minister, Rober Wissel, awarded a pay increase of between 5 and 7 pf per hour. The KPD claimed that this represented a "defeat" because price rises wiped out any gain. See Reschwamm, 'Metallarbeiterkampf', p212.

[147] Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1729, Monatsberichte (October 1928-Januar 1929).

[148] SAPMO I 8/8/25, Protokoll der Voll-Bl am 11.11.1928, Bl.422(Saefkow).

[149] ibid, Bl.427(Schneider).

working-class offensive, signifying an upswing of the revolutionary wave.[150] In

characteristic style the KPD used events in another part of the country as a policy paragon

for what would be possible if the leadership's instructions were carried out. The Ruhr

lock-out's function as internal party propaganda for the new political line was viewed as

more important than the reality that local Communist activists in the Ruhr refused to carry

out the policy and had openly opposed the leadership's position at public meetings.[151] The

issue of the Ruhr conflict was taken into the factories using communist factory papers and

convening meetings on the strike, which alleged the SPD's betrayal of workers' objectives.

Communist factory papers claimed that events in the Ruhr proved that workers could

"strike" in contravention of the SPD's policy of compulsory state arbitration, but the

SPD's "secret diplomacy" with trust capital, the bourgeoisie and the military, threatened

the movement's success. The SPD workers in Saxony, however, were aware of the actual

course of developments in the Ruhr lock-out; many of them were even contributing to a

social-democrat-run solidarity fund.[152]

The decline of communist influence in the factories as a result of the new trade-union

policy was made clear in the 1929 factory council elections, which were the first since

1925 with independent Communist candidates. In Leipzig, which had been a centre of

support for the KPD's left wing, party members and union activists also rejected the

official party line. This was shown by the lack of interest in a regional conference on

trade-union policy in mid 1928 in Dresden; only eight delegates were sent from the

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[150] Watlin, *Die Komintern*, pp183-4.

[151] The Ruhr lock-out is dealt with in detail by Peterson, L., 'Labour and the End of Weimar: The Case of the KPD in the November 1928 Lockout in the Rheinish-Westphalian Iron and Steel Industry, in *Central European History (CEH)* 15 (1) (1982), pp57-94; Bahne, 'Ruhrgebiet', pp332-9.

[152] These events are examined in the documentary collection in, St.Ha.D.,, MdI, Nr.19019, Bl.1-68.

functionary conferences in Leipzig.[153] The annual report of the West Saxon Trade Union

Division for 1928-29 also records a decline in the election of Communist factory

councillors in 1929 on the previous year.[154] In the exceptional cases where the KPD's vote

held up, such as among the Leipzig tram workers, Communist union functionaries had

refused to carry out the party line.[155] In former KPD strongholds a significant

consequence of the party's tactic was the loss of union payment offices to the SPD. In

Chemnitz the payment office of the carpenters' union, which had been in communist hands

since 1919, went over to the SPD for the first time during the Weimar Republic.[156] In the

Right stronghold of Solingen, the DMV payment office also went from communist control

to the SPD for the first time since 1918 as a result of the KPD's union policy.[157] Often

Communist union functionaries, as well as rank-and-file members, simply ignored party

directives for drawing up independent candidate lists in the factory council elections.[158]

The party centre was unable to impose its position as the district and local trade-union

divisions were still under the control of Right Communists or under caretaker *Kommissar*

leadership.[159] During the campaigns for the factory council elections, the factional struggle

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[153] SAPMO I 3/10/116, Jahresbericht der Bezirksgewerkschafts-Abteilung des Bezirk Westsachsens 1928-29, Bl.616-7.

[154] ibid, Bl.617.

[155] The factory council vote was 2,197 for the KPD and 2,336 for the SPD, see ibid, Bl.618.

[156] SAPMO I 3/9/64, Zum Bericht der BL an den Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 13-14.4.1929, Bl.10.

[157] Wuendelich, *Kommunalpolitik*, pp58; Stolle, U., *Arbeiterpolitik im Betrieb: Frauen und Maenner, Reformisten und Radikale, Fach und Massenarbeiter bei Bayern, BASF, Borsch und in Solingen (1900-1933)* (Frankfurt/M, New York, 1980), p260.

[158] SAPMO I 3/10/116, Bericht der Gewerkschafts-Abteilung der Bezirk Westsachsens fuer die Monate Dezember bis Mitte Maerz 1929, Bl.596; ibid, Jahresbericht der Bezirksgewerkschafts-Abteilung des Bezirk Westsachsens, 1928-29, Bl.618.

[159] ibid, Bericht der Gewerkschafts-Abteilung der Bezirk Westsachsens fuer die Monate Dezember bis Mitte Maerz 1929, Bl.587.

was paralysing the KPD's ability to carry out the "left-turn" in the factories.[160] Crucial to the KPD's marginalisation in the Saxon factories during the late twenties and early thirties was the refusal of even left-wing Communists in the factories to carry out a policy of organisational isolation from the SPD, which could neither win the party wider influence nor achieve any tangible gains.

In Saxony, explanations for the adoption of the *RGO-politik* as a product of socio-economic and political developments in Germany do not hold up in the light of documentary evidence. Indeed, to accept this thesis is to accept that the Comintern and the Thaelmann faction in the KPD had a valid political interpretation. Trade-union Communists, who were familiar with the condition in the factories, rejected the tactic as an "isolation" policy: a one way ticket for the KPD out of the factories, rather than to the head of a movement of political strikes. Communist factory policy did, however, have a function in the German political system. The *RGO-politik* was intended to push the gulf between the SPD and KPD at national level into the parties' social bases. The KPD wanted to end the internal party political consequences of contact with the wider workers' movement, even calling on the replacement of long serving Communists, who were frequently former Social Democrats, by "new fresh strength" which would be "capable" of carrying out party policy.[161] The KPD tried to give its new factory policy a sense of

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[160] St.Ha.D.,, MdI, Nr.11126/3, Monatsbericht (April 1928), Bl.21; SAPMO I 3/10/116, Bericht der Gewerkschafts-Abteilung der Bezirk Westsachsens fuer die Monate Dezember bis Mitte Maerz 1929, Bl.596; ibid, Jahresbericht der Bezirksgewerkschafts-Abteilung des Bezirk Westsachsens 1928-29, Bl.618. In West Saxony all the KPD's political energy was taken up by the preparations for the Extra-Ordinary District Party Congress (16-17.2.1929) and the exclussion of the Right from its remaining district positions.

[161] On what the Comintern saw as the advantages of unorganised workers see, Wieszt, *KPD-Politik*, pp341; On the Stalinist campaign to end "socialist traditions" in the KPD, see, Weber, H., 'Zur Ideologie der KPD in der Weimarer Republik. Neue Literatur', in *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz*

urgency by connecting the "strike strategy" to defence of the Soviet Union against the alleged threat of an imperialist war of intervention. However, at local level the involvement of the wider social democratic movement in anti-war protests gave this method little plausibility.[162] The *RGO-politik*, it can be concluded, did not make an impact in Saxony because even the KPD's membership in the factories could not identify with its methods.

Panzerkreuzer "A": A Missed Opportunity?

The KPD's campaign for a referendum against the SPD-led Reich government's proposed building of "Pocket Battleship A" was an opportunity to place the new anti- SPD party line at the forefront of an extra-parliamentary campaign. In the autumn of 1928 the issue of war featured prominently in campaigning across the spectrum of German political movements: the *voelkisch* movement, including the Saxon DNVP and DVP, commemorated the battles of Sedan and Tannenberg; the SPD and the ADGB commemorated the Great War, with a pacifist accent; the KPD focused on the alleged danger of a new imperialist war and the "betrayals" of the SPD in August 1914.[163] In this political climate the KPD intended to exploit the role of the SPD in government to give credibility to its "3rd Period" propaganda. The KPD's propaganda was helped by the fact that during the 1928 Reichstag election the SPD had campaigned against the building of

zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung (IWK) 2 (1985), p206; For an appraisal of Frankfurt-am-Main, see Wickham, 'Working-Class Life', p199; Claudin, *Communist Movement*, pp158-9.

[162] The KPD's use of propaganda in the factories on the threat of an imperialist war was prolific, see for example *Der Scheinwerfer. Betreibszeitung der Firma Siedel und Neumann* (October,1928), in St.Ha.D.,, MdI, Nr.19091, Bl.2-6.

[163] St.Ha.D.,, MdI Nr.11126/2, Monatsbericht (August 1928), Bl.87; ibid (October 1928), Bl.94.

Panzerkreuzer A with the slogan: "Food for Children not a Pocket Battleship!"[164] The so-called rearmament issue was a seeming gift to the KPD's new General Line, which placed at its centre the defence of the Soviet Union from an imperialist war, and the SPD's alleged active role in preparing such an attack.[165]

The SPD was placed in the classic dilemma of a reformist party: the party leadership wanted to achieve its objectives through participation in the institutions of state, but the party's grass roots political movement often rejected the compromises required to maintain a coalition government. Above all the SPD's Reich Executive came into conflict with the Class War faction, organised around the eponymous journal, and centred in Saxony. In August 1928 a furious dispute erupted at a proliferation of SPD membership meetings, many of which not only endorsed resolutions against the national leadership's policies, but even called for the expulsion of the four SPD Ministers from the party.[166] The Reich Executive, however, was able to prevent co-operation with the KPD in the campaign for a referendum by means of a "loyalty declaration". Central to the SPD leadership's compromise with the party membership was the assurance that the next party congress would address the issue of defence policy.[167]

During the KPD's campaign for a referendum the party's tactic continued to prioritise collecting the signatures of SPD workers rather than shifting the emphasis to the

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[164] Wickham, 'Social Fascism', p17.

[165] For an example of this form of propaganda in the Saxon factories, see SAPMO I 3/8/31, An den Betriebsrat der Firma. Dresden, den 15.9.1928, Bl.183.

[166] St.Ha.D.,, MdI Nr.11126/2, Monatsbericht (August 1928), Bl.89.

[167] SAPMO I 3/10/136, 'Volksbegehren in Westsachsen', in *Die Parteiarbeiter. Discussions-und-Mitteilungsblatt der KPD Bezirk West Sachsens*, vol.1, Nr.11 (November 1928), Bl.23; When the 1931 SPD Congress met in Leipzig the radical left wing split-off to form the SAP after being reproached by the majority for their policies, see Winkler, H. A., 'Choosing the Lesser Evil: The German Social Democrats and the Fall of the Weimar Republic', in *JCH* 25 (2-3) (1990) (pp205-27), p210.

"unorganised" workers that the 6th Congress of the Comintern identified as the social basis for revolution in Germany. Indeed, the KPD found the "broad masses" of unorganised workers to be largely "unpolitical" during the whole campaign.[168] The organisation of the campaign for a referendum took the form of building so-called Unity Committees at regional, district and local level, which aimed at the organisational inclusion of non-communists from all working-class organisations and the factories, with the exception of SPD leaders.[169] Despite all the radical pronouncements about factory workers forming the quintessential element of the KPD's "3rd Period" line, the party's wider propaganda again appealed to the "Working People", which was defined to include small traders, peasants and those living from pensions.[170] However, in practice it was above all the RFB, which was disposed to the radicalism of new line, which carried out much of the campaign.[171] Communist agitation in rural areas would have collapsed but for the role of the RFB's "Red Rural Sundays".[172] For example, in East Saxony the KPD was unable to carry out any rural propaganda for the referendum campaign as the party's rural

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[168] The leftist Political Secretary in Erzgebirge-Vogtland, Mapitz, stressed collecting the signatures of social democrats, see SAPMO I 3/9/70, Protokoll der engeren BL Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 24.9.1928, Bl.116; SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll der Sitzung der erweiterten BL vom 18.10.1928, Bl.345(Jakob).

[169] SAPMO I 3/ 8/25, Protokoll der engeren BL am 29.8.1928, Bl.332(Hoop); SAPMO I 3/9/70, Protokoll der engeren BL Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 24.9.1928, Bl.116; SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll der Sitzung der erweiterten BL vom 18.10.1928, Bl.343(Schumann).

[170] SAPMO I 3/8/31, An den Betriebsrat der Firma. Dresden, den 15.9.1928, Bl.183. The BL meeting, however, did not go into details about the "Working People".

[171] St.Ha.D.,,MdI Nr.11126/2, Monatsbericht (August 1928), Bl.87. In Chemnitz, a centre of right-wing communism, a meeting beginning the district committee's campaign collapsed when the RFB left for a "Red Meeting" in Nuremberg, see SAPMO I 3/9/70, Protokoll der engeren BL Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 24.9.1928, Bl.117-8

[172] SAPMO I 3/8/47, Protokoll der Sitzung der Abteilung Land am 30.9.1928, Bl.8.

division had all but collapsed: both district secretaries and party members were disinclined to carry out campaigns which got nowhere.[173]

The question in the Saxon district parties became how strictly to implement the united front from below tactic? The "purest", or most restrictive form of the united front from below, was advocated by Raedel who, in close association with the ZK, wanted the campaign to prioritise the use of letters to individual SPD workers and factory meetings on the "Battleship Question".[174] Other district secretaries, such as Martin Schneider, believed that it was necessary to "unmask" the District SPD Executive by calling on it to join the Referendum Campaign's Unity Committee, in what would have constituted a district level united front from above. Schneider's policy proposal was conceived of as a tactic to win over "radicalised" Social Democrats, rather than "moderating" the political assault on the SPD.[175] The debate concluded in an agreement that local Unity Committees could address the SPD's District Executive, but under no circumstances was an appeal for participation to come from the KPD.[176] In practice what the KPD's tactic served to do was reinforce the dividing line between the SPD and the KPD at local level as well as regionally and nationally. The KPD's tactics were limiting the scope of the extra-parliamentary campaign at a time when the policies of an SPD-led government lent some plausibility to communist propaganda concerning the need for an ultra-Left policy.[177]

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[173] At the East Saxon rural conference in February 1928 only 23 communists turned up. By September the number had dropped to six. Many of the small peasants were extremely poor *wendisch* speakers, who could not have read propaganda in German even if they could have afforded to by it from the KPD, see ibid, Protokoll der Berzirks-Land-Konferenz am 22.9.1928, Bl.7.

[174] SAPMO I 3/ 8/25, Protokoll der engeren BL am 29.8.1928, Bl.333(Raedel).

[175] ibid, Bl.333,335(Schneider)

[176] ibid, Bl.336. M. Schneider and Kurt Froehlich favoured this option. Other district secretaries such as, Martin Hoop, favoured strictly no contact with local SPD leaders.

[177] Wuenderlich, *Kommunalpolitik*, p66; Wickham, 'Social Fascism', p17.

The limits of the KPD's radius of influence, when working in isolation, became clear in the course of the campaign. In Erzgebirge-Vogtland the BL knew that the readership of *der Kaempfer* was too small to reach the target numbers of petition signatories. To overcome this the KPD undertook street propaganda, such as distributing leaflets in busy thoroughfares, and the KJ performed short theatre pieces in front of selected factories.[178] In Western Saxony, where the numbers signing the KPD's petition amounted to almost 50 per cent of the party's vote in the 1928 Reichstag election, representing the most successful campaign outside of Berlin, the limitations of the campaign were clear. Local peace societies remained under the SPD's leadership, only 20 factories and ten union meetings adopted resolutions for participation in the KPD's campaign: from these only four factory committees co-operated with the Leipzig Unity Committee; and only ten sport and leisure organisations adopted resolutions supporting the KPD.[179] Of the 19 organisations represented in the Unity Committee for Greater Leipzig only the Leipzig local branch of the painters' trade union, which was dominated by the KPD, could be presented as anything but a communist front organisation.[180] In a manner similar to the campaign to expropriate the German Princely Houses in 1926, the division between the SPD and KPD in 1928 remained less rigid in the small towns and industrial villages. For example, the collection of signatures in the wider administrative area (*Kreishauptmannschaft*) of Borna, including the lignite industry outside the town, reached the equivalent of 32.1 per cent of the communist vote in the *Reichstag* election, while it

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[178] SAPMO I 3/9/70, Protokoll der engeren BL Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 24.9.1928, Bl.116-9.

[179] ibid, Bl.116; SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll der Sitzung der erweiterten BL vom 18.10.1928, Bl.342-3(Schumann); SAPMO I 3/10/136, 'Volksbegehren in Westsachsen', in *Die Parteiarbeiter*, Nr.11 (November 1928), Bl.23. The city of Leipzig produced signatures equivallent to 51.1 per cent of the KPD vote at the 1928 Reichstag election.

[180] ibid, 'Volksbegehren in Westsachsen', Bl.23.

dropped to 24.4 per cent in the town itself.[181] Although the formation of Unity Committees had almost no success in including SPD workers, the resolutions taken in nine local groups of the SPD came from the small towns of the Saxon provinces.[182] In the factories, including those with a significant communist presence, and in the sports and cultural organisations, party members simply did not carry out the campaign in the context of identifying even local social democratic office holders as "social fascists".[183] The inner leadership of the KPD, which issued the BLs with policy directives, appears to have been party to a policy conceived firstly in the interests of separating the SPD's and KPD's social constituencies and only secondly with a political objective *per se*.

The KPD's leadership never abandoned its claim that there was a "left-development" in the German workforce. Instead, the inability to give the campaign a high political profile was blamed on the lower party organisations' "failure" to carry out the policy "correctly".[184] The party leadership also constantly stated that if the KPD was organised on the basis of factory cells, then the ZK's policies would successfully turn a "mood" of sympathy for communism into a stream of new recruits.[185] The KPD leadership also began to stress that the KPD must be organised on the basis of factory cells in order to continue party work during a period of illegality.[186] The restrictive nature of the ZK's ultra-Left

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[181] ibid.

[182] SAPMO I 3/9/70, Protokoll der engeren BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 24.9.1928, Bl.116; SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll der Sitzung der erweiterten BL vom 18.10.1928, Bl.342(Schumann).

[183] ibid, Protokoll der engeren BLS. Erzgebirge-Vogtland vom 24.9.1928, Bl.116; SAPMO I 3/10/114, Protokoll der Sitzung der erweiterten BL vom 18.10.1928, Bl.344(Boettcher); SAPMO I 8/25, Protokoll der engeren BLS. am 29.8.1928, Bl.334(Koch); For the KPD in the sports organisations, see St.Ha.D.,, MdI Nr.11126/2, Monatsbericht (August 1928), Bl.87.

[184] SAPMO I 2/2/12, Die politische Lehren der Mai-Kaempfe, Bl.4.

[185] ibid.

[186] The topic of the KPD's preparations for illegality is dealt with in detail by, Wachtler, J., *Zwischen Revolutionserwartung und Untergang. Die Vorbereitung der KPD auf die Illegalitaet in den Jahren*

policies went beyond what even left-wing Communists in Saxony could understand as a valid political tactic. In September 1928 the East Saxon district secretary, and enthusiastic leftist, Goldhammer, declared that,"This nonsense about illegality ought to be stopped whereby SPD functionaries are left in their organisations to carry out work for the SPD's decomposition."[187]

The KPD's immersion in the power struggle, which had erupted after the "Thaelmann Affair", impeded the organisation of the referendum campaign. The late delivery of propaganda material, a constant problem, had become worse. The Saxon KPD was even delayed in the collection of signatures because of a failure to issue the necessary forms.[188] By 16 October, the cut-off point in the collection of signatures, the KPD had the support of only three per cent of the German electorate. The Right used this to illustrate their criticisms of the KPD's tactics, pointing out that the political influence of the SPD among the German workers was still too widespread for the KPD to live in isolation from this reality.[189] The KPD leadership's response to the Right's statements on the failure of the party's tactic in the *Panzerkreuzer* campaign was to insist that the expectation of gaining four million votes, like in the campaign to expropriate the former monarchies, was "reformist thinking".[190] The *RGO-politik* and the campaign for a referendum on the issue of building *Panzerkreuzer A* had indicated that if the "social fascist" thesis was to be given sufficient plausibility to mobilise the KPD against the SPD, at local level as well as

1929-1933 (Frankfurt/M, Bern, New York, 1983); SAPMO I 3/10/109, 'Nach dem Bezirksparteitag mit verstaerkter Kraft an der Arbeit', in, SAZ, Nr.99, 29.4.1929, Bl.20.

[187] SAPMO I 8/25, Protokoll der engeren BL am 29.8.1928, Bl.333(Goldhammer).

[188] ibid, Bl.335(Raedel).

[189] St.Ha.D.,,MdI Nr.11126/2, Monatsbericht (September 1928), Bl.90.

[190] SAPMO I 3/9/64, Zum Bericht der BL an den Bezirksparteitag Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 13-14.4.1929, Bl.7.

nationally, the membership would have to be given a sense of the policy's immediate relevance.

Blutmai: A Contrived Confrontation.

The KPD had used the "3rd Period" party line since the May 1928 Reichstag election campaign. However, apart from the pages of the communist press and party circulars, the term "social fascist" had found little wider resonance in the membership.[191] More importantly, the "left-turn" had re-ignited the party's power struggle over the correct tactics for a communist party in Germany, drawing the actual focus of party activity inwards again. In Right communist strongholds, such as the industrial suburbs of Chemnitz, the KPD's membership in the factories fought the implications of the *Kampfbegriff* "social fascist" more than their social democratic colleagues.[192] The scene was set for a confrontation between the KPD and the SPD-led Prussian government when the Minister of the Interior, Albert Grzinski, refused to lift a ban on outdoor demonstrations, even for the highly symbolic May Day celebrations in Berlin.[193] The refusal of Grzinski, and his social democratic Police President Zoergiebel, to yield was matched by the highly confrontational language of the Communist press, internal

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[191] Bahne described the use of the term "social fascist" as "reserved" until the events of *Blutmai*, see, Bahne, S., "Sozialfascismus' in Deutschland. Zur Geschicht eines politischen Begriffs', in *International Review of Social History (IRSH)* 10 (2) (1965) (pp211-45), pp223-4; Schirmann, L., *Blutmai Berlin 1929. Dichtung und Wahrheit* (Berlin,1991), pp82-168. The Saxon *Reichstag* election campaign is detailed in, B.a.P., RKO 15.07, Nr. 25175-9.

[192] See section 6.2 above.

[193] For the sequence of events producing the ban on outdoor celebrations and the KPD's response, see Bowlby, C., '*Blutmai* 1929: Police, Parties and Proletarians in a Berlin Confrontation', in *Historical Journal (HJ)* 29 (1) (1986), pp137-40.

directives and factory papers.[194] The KPD's attack on the SPD was not only against its leaders in the Prussian government, but included a tirade against ordinary party members; the left-wing of the SPD was singled out for particularly hostile treatment.[195] The KPD's intention was to "demonstrate" that there was no community of interest between Communists and Social Democrats at any level.

The ZK's preparations for an illegal demonstration in Berlin on May Day 1929 had reckoned with the probability of a confrontation with the police ending in the deaths of participants.[196] However, the scale of events took on a dynamic of their own. The SPD's leadership in Prussia had adopted the mantle of respectable members of the establishment: public order became a priority above the tradition of street demonstrations, which stemmed from the party's years of exclusion and opposition during the *Kaiserreich*. The KPD was identified as the principal threat to *Ruhe und Ordnung*.[197] The KPD intended to present the imminent confrontation with the SPD-administered Prussian police as a justification for its propaganda that the SPD served as an arm of an oppressive capitalist state. The Prussian police, despite ten years of SPD administrative control, remained, especially in the officer corps, a centre of monarchism. If the working-class movement was seen as an "enemy" in general, then the Communists were seen as the worst and most "criminal" elements in society.[198] During the three days of conflict the excessive response of the police, and its role in producing a blood bath, was criticised from the left-wing of

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[194] Bowlby, *'Blutmai'*, pp139-40.

[195] Rosenfeld, K., 'Berliner *Blutmai'*, in, *Klassenkampf*, 3 (10) (15.5.1929), p291.

[196] This is explicity dealt with in the ZK meeting with the Political Secretaries of the party districts. A ZK circular to the party leadership in Hamburg got into the hands of the SPD and was then published in *Vorwaerts*. See, SAPMO 2/2/12, Reichskonferenz der Polsekretaere der KPD. Berlin, den 10.5.1929, Bl.2.

[197] Bowlby, *'Blutmai'*, p155.

[198] Liang, H-H., *The Berlin Police Force in the Weimar Republic* (Berkeley, 1970), p84.

the SPD into the ranks of the liberal bourgeois press.[199] Of the 33 dead and some 160 wounded only one was a Communist, two were Social Democrats, while the vast majority were residents, even passers by, who were not involved in the events organised by the KPD.[200] *Blutmai*, however, did not become the "moral victory" for the KPD, which Bowlby writes the KPD had hoped for.[201] Indeed, the KPD leadership's policy of isolating the membership from the influences of the wider workers' movement was well known to contemporary radical socialists. The "Class War" group in the Saxon SPD, which advocated "proletarian unity" despite the positions of the party leaderships, wrote that:

> There can be no doubt that the KPD leadership has heavy responsibility for this loss of blood. The workers were almost led into police fire. To the KPD's *Zentrale* it was irrelevant whether people died or not. For them it was only about creating facts from which their poisoned agitation against the SPD could be supplied with new poison...The events of May Day in Berlin have filled the gulf between Social Democrats and *Parteikommunisten* with workers' blood. The fissure in the working class is even greater than before.[202]

The role of the SPD leadership after the events of May Day 1929 did, however, have an impact on opinion among the KPD's membership. A combination of factors lent credibility

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[199] For press extracts from the *Berliner Tageblatt* of 10.5.1929 and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of 5.5.1929 see, 'Meinungsaeusserungen ueber die Berliner Vorgaenge', in *Klassenkampf*, 3 (10) (15.5.1929), pp317-8. How the police could have acted without causing a blood bath was illustrated with reference to the events of May Day in Paris: the police "got out of bed earlier than the communists", arrived at the meeting points published in *L'Humanite* and held the prospective demonstraters in custody untill the evening, ibid, p292.

[200] Winkler, H. A., *Der Weg in der Katastrophe. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1930-33* (Berlin, Bonn, 1987), p777.

[201] Bowlby, '*Blutmai*', p140.

[202] Rosenfeld, 'Berliner *Blutmai*', in *Klassenkampf*, 3 (10) (15.5.1929), pp292-3.

to an inherent antipathy towards the SPD leadership. Not only did Grzinski and Zoergiebel resolutely defend the actions of the Prussian police, but the SPD was party to the banning of the communist daily newspaper, *die Rote Fahne*, for three weeks, the permanent ban on the RFB throughout the Reich, and it was known that a ban on the KPD itself had been contemplated. All this took place against a background in which it appeared that a blind eye was being turned to the violence of the right-wing paramilitary organisations, and the speaking ban, imposed on Hitler after the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923, had been repealed in the German *Laender*.[203]

The KPD's leadership in Saxony was able to respond rapidly to *Blutmai*, not least because they had been put on stand-by in anticipation of events in Berlin: in the night of 1-2 May leaflets were distributed and meetings of functionaries held.[204] In the major Saxon cities the protest demonstrations held on 2 May were larger than those held by the KPD on the May Day itself. Around 3,000 people participated in a demonstration on the *Reichsgericht* in Leipzig. In Dresden some 5,000 demonstrators converged on the city centre. Both events passed without notable incident.[205] However, a demonstration in Chemnitz, numbering some 2,400, culminated in a violent clash with the police.[206] The KPD acted to further incite confrontation when functionaries told the crowd that there should be no retreat from the police charge. Max Hoelz stated that:

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[203] Mallmann, K-M., 'Milieu, Radikalismus und lokale Gesellschaft. Zur Sozialgeschichte des Kommunismus in der Weimarer republik', in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 21 (1) (1995), p17. For the lifting of Hitlers's speaking ban, Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1728, Monatsbericht (November 1927).

[204] SAPMO I 3/10/116, KPD Bezirk Westsachsen. An das ZK der KPD, Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 24.5.1929. Bericht der BL Westsachsen ueber die Maikaempfe, Bl.654; SAPMO I 3/10/114, Bericht von der erweiterten BLS am 16.5.1929, Bl.593(Winterich); Eisner, *Gewerkschaften*, p230.

[205] Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1729, Monatsbericht (April-Mai 1929).

[206] ibid.

If you scram from these dozen Greens (ie police officers) I will not hit them but you instead. If you are so cowardly, then you are not worthy of the Berlin workforce, who struggled at the barricades where workers' blood flowed. If you stand and march then they will scram.[207]

A continued level of tension was maintained in Saxony throughout May in a number of street demonstrations against the ban of the RFB, which had been sanctioned by the Saxon state authorities on 5 May.[208]

The KPD's leaflets in the Saxon factories called for the arming of the proletariat and urged workers to demonstrate against Zoergiebel's "social fascist police terror."[209] The public propaganda, however, contrasted with the discussions in the ZK. The disparity between the KPD's verbal radicalism and reluctance to actively organise an escalation of events became a hallmark evaluating the KPD's "3rd Period" General line.[210] The ZK meeting of 10 May, which discussed the events of *Blutmai*, clearly indicates that despite the radical language used by the communist leadership, there was no intention of calling a May Uprising to rival the events of January 1919.[211]

More significant for the development of the KPD during the 1930s was the failure of the call for a general strike in protest at events in Berlin. In Berlin itself the call was taken up

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[207] ibid.

[208] ibid.

[209] ibid; SAPMO 2/2/12, Reichskonferenz der Polsekretaere der KPD. Berlin, den 10.5.1929, Bl.1

[210] No plans were ever made for revolution in Germany, Weber, *Hauptfeind*, p18; For the role of Manuilsky in putting Soviet trade with Germany above revolution in Germany, Pogge von Strandmann, H., 'Industrial Primacy in German Foreign Policy? Myths and Realities in German-Russian Relations at the End of the Weimar Republic', in Bessel, R., and Feuchtwanger, E.J. (eds.), *Social Change and Political Developments in Weimar Germany* (London, 1981), pp241-67.

[211] SAPMO 2/2/12, Reichskonferenz der Polsekretaere der KPD. Berlin, den 10.5.1929, Bl.1

by a handful of building sites, a sweet meats factory and a few cigarette factories.[212] In Saxony too, despite the KPD's "central task" of preparing for May Day in the factories, the party showed its chronic weakness. Resolutions condemning the role of Zoergiebel's "social fascist police terror" were limited to factories which already had prominent communist influence.[213] The KPD leadership, however, turned this apparent defeat into internal party advantage by justifying the need to re-organise the party on the basis of factory cells to achieve its political objectives. The ZK meeting of 10 May adopted a resolution which stated that: "There is still a certain discrepancy between the workers' instinctive feelings for communism and carrying out a real active communist policy."[214] This was put down to the KPD's inadequate roots in the factories, above all the large factories, and the continued refusal of many party members and local functionaries to be organised in factory cells.[215] The KPD leadership concluded that the main lesson from *Blutmai* was that the party's political role could only be successful if the membership was comprehensively organised on the basis of factory cells; to work towards this aim the ZK instructed the BLs to form a body of Communist shop stewards (*Vertrauensleuts*) to co-

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[212] ibid, Reichskonferenz der Polsekretaere der KPD. Die politische Lehren der Mai-Kaempfe, Bl.3; Walter Rist, the pen-name of a former party functionary, does not include the cigarette factories in an otherwise similar account, see Id., 'Die KPD in der Krise', *Neue Blaetter fuer den Sozialismus*, II (1931) (pp345-45), p437.

[213] SAPMO I 3/10/116, KPD Bezirk Westsachsen. An das ZK der KPD, Sekretariat. Leipzig, den 24.5.1929. Bericht der BL Westsachsen ueber die Maikaempfe, Bl.655. Internal party documents indicate that resolutions were taken in West Saxony in nine metal working factories, one textile factory and a brewery, eight building sites and some tram stations and workshops, most notably the Heiterblick tram workshop which was strongly leftist and associated with Otto Vogt.

[214] SAPMO 2/2/12, Reichskonferenz der Polsekretaere der KPD. Die politische Lehren der Mai-Kaempfe. Berlin, den 10.5.1929, Bl.3.

[215] ibid, Bl.4-5. An unnamed party district, which can be taken as representative, was stated to have only 3.67 per cent of its factory membership organised in factory cells while 5.12 per cent of the factory employed membership served as factory or works councillors.

ordinate factory policy.[216] The party leadership planned to purge all factory cell leaderships which refused to carry out party policy and to replace them with personnel who would do so. A sweeping purge of street cells leaderships was also to be conducted to enable "stronger supervision" of party work and a greater "politicisation" of the party members and sympathisers.[217] The events of Blutmai clearly had a prominent role in eliminating internal party opposition to the KPD's ultra-Leftism. Bowlby observed that:

> It was no coincidence that one of the Thaelmann group's main initiatives was to shift the focus of KPD organisation away from the street cells, which played such a vital role in an area such as Wedding, and which were seen as obstacles to the creation of a truly Bolshevik discipline.[218]

One interpretation of the outcome of the events of May Day 1929 is that the ban imposed on the RFB by the Reich government constituted a "defeat" for the KPD's tactics.[219] The RFB had not only carried out much of the KPD's propaganda in the 1928 Reichstag election, but had traditionally conducted communist work in rural areas, which was unpopular with the KPD's membership.[220] Equally, the RFB was a militant and activist organisation disposed towards ultra-Leftism. It could have been anticipated that left-wing party members, who had submerged themselves in the RFB to avoid the political paralysis induced by the factional struggle, would resurface in the KPD itself to carry the "3rd Period" party line.[221] However, to borrow a phrase from present day political journalism,

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[216] ibid, Bl.6-7;

[217] ibid.

[218] Bowlby, 'Blutmai', p154.

[219] Weber, Wandlung, p225.

[220] St.Ha.D.,, MdI, Nr.11126/2, Monatsbericht (April-Mai 1929), Bl.64(April 1928).

[221] Reuter, G., KPD-Politik in der Weimarer Republik. Politische Vorstellung und soziale Zusammenstellung der KPD in Hannover zur zeit der Weimarer Republik (Hannover, 1982), p21f.

the KPD by 1929 was a party dominated by "control freaks": despite the RFB's activism, its assertive independence was regarded by the ZK as a minus not a political plus; as a reservoir of potential opposition to the party line not a generator of enthusiasm for ultra-Leftism.

Erich Wollenberg, head of the KPD's Military League in 1931/2, wrote in his memoirs that the KPD was unperturbed by the RFB's ban and had even considered its dissolution.[222] Bahne's qualifying observation that there is no documentary evidence for Wollenberg's assertion remains true today, despite access to the former central party archive.[223] However, the weight of evidence runs in Wollenberg's favour. In April 1928 the Reich Ministry of the Interior had proposed a ban of the RFB which was overruled by the Reich Constitutional Court in May of that year.[224] Initially the KPD leadership planned to overcome a ban on the RFB by organising members who were not actual party members in the KPD itself.[225] However, by 1929 the RFB's reputation for resistance to ideological, organisational and disciplinary schooling tipped the scales against its role as a vehicle for carrying out agitation and propaganda.[226] The KPD then began unsuccessful efforts to convert the RFB from a residentially based organisation to an organisation of factory groups.[227] At the ZK meeting of 10 May, which discussed the RFB's ban, Thaelmann insisted that the KPD no longer considered it appropriate to organise "non-party" RFB members in the KPD.[228] Instead the ZK decided that the RFB membership

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[222] Wollenberg, quoted in Bahne, *Scheitern*, p21.

[223] Bahne, *Scheitern*, p21.

[224] Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1729, Monatsbericht (April-May 1928).

[225] St.Ha.D.,, MdI, Nr.11126/2, Monatsbericht (May 1928), Bl.76.

[226] For example few members of the RFB in East Saxony attended the *Gau* schooling programme at the beginning of January 1929, see St.Ha.D.,, MdI, Nr.11126/3, Monatsbericht (January 1929), Bl.16.

[227] St.Ha.D.,, MdI, Nr.11126/3, Monatsbericht (January 1929), Bl.16.

[228] SAPMO 2/2/12, Reichskonferenz der Polsekretaere der KPD, Berlin, den 10.5.1929, Bl.1.

was to be transferred into "the most varied types of cover organisations."[229] The RFB ban

was followed by the creation of defence (*Abwehr*) organisations, including organisations

which could function during a period of illegality. The ZK wanted to ensure that these

successor organisations to the RFB would be built up on the basis of factory cells: this

explicitly meant small units instructed by the centre without a forum for discussion on

party policy.[230] Rosenhaft's thesis that these *Abwehr* organisations represented *in practice*

a "lively and vibrant response to the NSDAP" must therefore, at least in Saxony, be

placed in a different context.[231] The ZK did not present the construction of ersatz-

organisations for the RFB in terms of a response the rise of the NSDAP, which in 1929

remained on the periphery of the internal party discussion.[232] The ZK aimed to control the

RFB more closely as part of the communist movement's Stalinisation.[233] The later

response of the *Abwehr* organisations to the Nazis was conditioned by the violence of

grass roots Nazism against the organised working class on the streets.

The KPD also used the events of *Blutmai* for internal party organisational and ideological

considerations relating to the power struggle on the correct tactics for a communist party

in Germany. The failure of the "factory strategy" in the events of May Day 1929 was

blamed on the activities of the Right and the Conciliators in the factories and the role of

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[229] ibid.

[230] For the creation of the *Abwehr* organisations in Saxony, see in particular, St.Ha.D.,, MdI, Nr.11126/3, Monatsbericht (August 1929) Bl.51.

[231] Rosenhaft, E., *Beating the Fascists? The German Communists and Political Violence 1929-33* (Cambridge, 1983), p ix.

[232] The Saxon District Party Congresses gave very little attention to the rise of the Nazis, even in the south eastern region of Vogtland and the textile city of Plauen, where the NSDAP was already very active, well organised and attracting notable support. See, SAPMO I 3/9/64, Bezirksparteitag der KPD Berirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 13-14.4.1929, Bl.1ff. At the 12th Reich Party Congress the emphasis was also predominantly on the SPD and "social fascism", see Fowkes, *German Communism*, pp154-5.

[233] SAPMO I 3/9/64, Bezirksparteitag der KPD Berirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland am 13-14.4.1929, Bl.1ff

Zoergiebel's "police terror". The ZK could point to the SPD's change from a social democratic to a "social fascist" party to justify ending the united front policy and trade-union work as carried out in the mid twenties.[234] Immediately before the KPD's 12th Reich Congress met in Berlin, the term "social fascist" had finally entered every-day communist language.[235]

Organisation is more Reliable than Ideology.

When the KPD's 12th Reich Party Congress met in June 1929, its function was to give a *post facto* veneer of democratic consent to the policies imposed by the Comintern and RILU. The Congress, originally planned for Dresden, was relocated to Berlin Wedding, where the party atmosphere was immersed in the after shocks of *Blutmai*.[236] In terms of the KPD's internal party development, the greatest significance of the Reich Congress was its ability to formally proscribe the organisation of factions as a means of challenging the party line.[237] In future no *faction* was able to present a political platform to a party meeting at variance with that handed down from Moscow: the coalition of communist views in the "course of concentration" had been replaced by the "course of the monolith".[238] However, at least in the case of Saxony, the Congress did not reflect a universal endorsement of party policy. The ZK did not trust in an ideological mobilisation of the membership to carry out the party's "left-turn". Instead, the policy was coordinated

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[234] SAPMO 2/2/12, Reichskonferenz der Polsekretaere der KPD. Die politische Lehren der Mai-Kaempfe, Berlin, den 10.5.1929, Bl.5-6; Rosenberg, *German Republic,* pp289-90; Weber, *Wandlung,* pp234-5.

[235] Wuenderlich, *Kommunalpolitik,* p65.

[236] Flechtheim, *Die KPD,* pp203-4.

[237] Weber, *Wandlung,* p225ff.

[238] There were cliques in the leadership with specific political views. However, the membership was kept in the dark until any policy debate had been resolved. There is no evidence of nation wide factions which were actively challenging the KPD leadership from within the party, see Weber, *Hauptfeind,* pp86f.

by the organisational channels of the party machine. The re-organisation of the three Saxon party districts into a single party district in December 1929 directly related to the use of organisational centralisation to overcome the membership's reluctance to implement the party line. The ZK's response to the membership's lack of political motivation was to tighten the central control over lower party organisational units. To organisational centralisation was added the political presence of a staff of Instructors, who coordinated the party's official line on the ground.[239]

Local political tendencies continued to express themselves in relation to the environment party members operated in. In the Saxon factory council elections of 1929/30 there was no enthusiasm among Communists in the factories to draw up independent communist candidate lists. By 1929/30 the number of strikes in Saxon industry had already passed the peak of 1927/8; more importantly for the KPD, it was unable to have "independent strike leaderships" elected to displace the leadership of the SPD.[240] Few members of the Saxon KPD wanted to take an active role in the development of the *RGO-politik*. At the campaign of meetings which elected delegates to the First Reich RGO Congress, which was held in Berlin in late 1929, almost all of the 150 delegates from Saxony were unemployed.[241] The Saxon KPD was also unable to attract sympathisers to purely party-political events, such as demonstrations to show solidarity with the Soviet Union.[242] There appears much truth in the criticisms of expelled right-wing Communists that the KPD's

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[239] Extensive details are contained in, SAPMO I 3/8-10/142, Vorbereitung der Vereiningung der saechsischen Bezirken. Dezember,1929, Bl.1ff.

[240] Ba.K., R45 IV/16, Vorwaerts zur Gewinnung der Mehrheit des Proletariats. Bericht der Gewerkschaftsabteilung (Dresden, 1929), Bl.16ff.

[241] St.Ha.D.,,MdI, Nr.11126/3, Monatsbericht (November 1929), Bl.65. This figure undoubtedly included many unemployed workers whom the KPD wanted to organise in the RGO.

[242] St.Ha.D.,,MdI, Nr.11126/3, Monatsbericht (August 1929), Bl.51; 'Rundschreiben des KPD(O) von 17.8.1929', (Manuscript, Leipzig), pp1-2.

ultra-Leftist policy was not primarily concerned with winning the support of a majority of the working, but instead prioritised absolute control over the party membership.[243]

In the neighbouring party district of North Bavaria, there was also grass roots opposition from right-inclined party activists in the local parliament. In mid 1929 the party leadership dealt with these "old" Communists' reluctance to put the "social fascist" doctrine into practice by purging them.[244] Gert Reuter also concluded, on the basis of interviews with former party members, that, although the leaders of the factions were purged, the currents that they had represented continued to exist latently as a basic tendency within the party.[245] Where Communists came from a social democratic family background, there was also a reluctance to accept that rank-and-file SPD members were "social fascists".[246] There had always been, and remained, limits to what directives from the KPD leaderships could achieve, if they contradicted the reality of the local conditions. The ultra-Left party line in Saxony, and in the Reich, was pushing the KPD away from its social constituency: between late 1928 and mid 1930 membership continued to contract.[247] The KPD's "left-turn" also did little to increase the communist vote before the electorate realised that the Great Depression was no ordinary cyclical down-turn.[248] Crucially, the Landtag elections of 1929/30 were more significant in identifying a "right-turn" in the electorate: the NSDAP was beginning its rise to political prominence.[249] Without the rise of the Nazis,

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[243] ibid.

[244] Neuhaeusser-Wespy, *Nordbayern*, pp223f.

[245] Reuter, *KPD-Politik*, p103.

[246] ibid.

[247] See section 6.4 below.

[248] 'Zu den Ergebnissen der Landtags und Gemeindewahlen', *Die Internationale*, XII (23) (23.12.1929), pp50-2.

[249] St.a.D.,MdI, Nr.11126/3, Monatsbericht (Oktober- November 1929), Bl.60.

and the mass unemployment of the Great Depression, the KPD's ultra-Leftism would have continued to push the party to the political margins.

6.4 A Tale of Two Parties?: The "Sociological Echo" and Party Support for ultra-Leftism.

At the KPD's 12th Reich Congress Thaelmann presented a sociological justification for the policies of the "3rd Period". The Weimar state's rationalisation of the productive process was alleged to have divided the working class into a "workers' aristocracy", the social basis of "social fascism", and the growing numbers of deskilled and impoverished workers who were "radicalising and revolutionising" on their way to the KPD. The KPD should consequently harness the unorganised workers, women and youths who represented the revolutionary component of the working class, to carry out the policies of the 6th Congress of the Comintern.[250] Among historians who pointed to the role of German social and economic conditions in explaining the KPD's "social fascist" political line, a broad consensus emerged: it was accepted that changes in the social composition of the KPD, towards the unskilled and unemployed sectors of the working classes, gave the KPD's policies a "structural echo" (Winkler), making the General Line relatively easy to carry out.[251] In the factories the *RGO-politik* was theoretically justified on the basis of winning over workers outside of the SPD's sphere of organisational influence, principally in heavy industry, to enable the KPD's policy of "independent" politically motivated strikes.

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[250] *Protokoll des 12. Parteitages der KPD*, Berlin,1929, pp72,74-8, quoted in Fowkes, *German Communism*, p155.

[251] Winkler, *Schein der Normalitaet*, pp438-9; Schoeck, *Arbeitslosigkeit*, 172ff; Heer-Kleiner, *Gewerkschaftspolitik*, p360. Stolle's case studies rejected these findings, see Stolle, *Betriebspolitik*, pp262ff.

The new General Line was a policy worked out by the Comintern for all Communist Parties. But what effect did this have on Saxony where the regional economy was based not on heavy industry but on the light industries of the finished consumer goods sector for the export market?[252] Did the KPD's political line attract the non-organised workers, women who featured prominently in the textile industry, and youths to a communist style industrial militancy? Did these social groups change as a proportion of the KPD's membership? Crucially, why should a party obsessed with organisation and discipline look to workers who were not part of the German workers' movement?

During the middle years of Weimar the KPD's inability to organise youth (ie 18 to 25 years of age) is illustrated by the statistics: only two per cent of party members had first been organised in the KJVD and only 12.3 per cent of the party membership had this age profile.[253] In Saxony the available figures are in broad agreement with the Reich trend: 2.3 per cent of members had been in the KJ and 15.72 per cent of members were between 18 and 25 years old.[254] The KPD's pulse beat in the 25 to 40 age group, which accounted for some 50 per cent of the Reich figure and 49.17 per cent of the figure in Saxony.[255] By spring 1932 the proportion of party members in Saxony aged between 25 and 40 years had increased to almost 70 per cent of the total membership.[256] The proportion of youths

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[252] See chapter 2.2 above.

[253] Unless otherwise stated all statistics for the Reich KPD come from the *Reichskontrolle* of 1927 which was published in, *Die kommunistische Internationale*, IX (19) (9.5.1928) by, Kaas, W., 'Die soziale Struktur der KPD', pp1050-67.

[254] SAPMO I 3/10/108, Bezirksparteitag der KPD Westsachsen am 10-11.12.1927, Bl.98.

[255] ibid.

[256] SAPMO I 3/8-10/144, Bericht der 2. Bezirksparteitag am 25-7.3.1932, Bl.23; Social structure of new recruits in April 1932, in SAPMO I 3/8-10/158, Struktur und Mitgliederbewegung 1926-32, Bl.82; SAPMO I 3/8-10/145, Bericht der 3. Bezirksparteikonferenz 3-4.12.1932, Bl.108.

probably also increased.[257] Importantly, the KJ was highly resistant to both carrying out the party line in the factories and joining factory cells: in 1927 six per cent of the Reich KJVD membership was organised in factory cells; by 1932 in Saxony the figure had, if anything, fallen.[258]

In the Reich an average of one in four women were in employment. In Saxony the figure rose to one in three.[259] Explanation for this lies in the predominance of the textile industry in Saxony, which accounted for 26.5 per cent of all regional employment in the 1925 census (424,133), of which 47.6 per cent were women (236,695).[260] However, women, who made up over 50 per cent of the electorate, were strongly under-represented in the KPD. In 1929, the Reich figure was 16.5 per cent; the figure for East Saxony in 1928 was 15.55 per cent and 13.29 per cent in West Saxony in 1927.[261] Women's relative non-politicisation was also reflected in the elections of factory councillors in the Saxon textile industry: by 1925 already 70 per cent of textile factories had no factory councillors who

[257] A statistical problem arises from the KPD imposing conditions on who was delegated to the conferences to meet targets set by the ZK. In this respect the influx of new members aged between 18-25 years in the sample for April 1923 was 8.1 per cent, see SAPMO I 3/8-10/158, Struktur und Mitgliederbewegung 1926-32, Bl.82. However, youths amounted to 21.8 per cent of conference delegates in March 1932, see SAPMO I 3/8-10/144, Bericht der 2. Bezirksparteitag am 25-7.3.1932, Bl.23.

[258] There is no actual figure given. However, there were 72 factory cells in Saxony in May 1932 and 6,979 members of the KJ. At an average of five members per cell the figure would be 5.1 per cent, see SAPMO I 3/8-10/145, Bericht der 3. Bezirksparteikonferenz 3-4.12.1932, Bl.73.

[259] Lapp, B., 'Political Polarisation in Weimar Germany: The Saxon *Buergertum* and the Left, 1918/19-1930', Ph.D. thesis (University of California, 1991), p12.

[260] *Zeitschrift des Saechsischen Statistischen Landesamt (ZSSL)*, 80/81 (Dresden, 1934/5), p116; ibid, 72/73 (Dresden, 1926/27), p248.

[261] Weber, *Wandlung*, p282. The figure of 15.5 per cent is given in, SAPMO I 3/8/21, Bericht der Bezirksleitung der KPD an den Bezirksparteitag Ostsachsen (April 1929), Bl.35; SAPMO I 3/10/108, The figure of 13.29 per cent is given in, Bezirksparteitag der KPD Westsachsen am 10-11.12.1927, Bl.80.

were members of the Free Trade Unions.[262] During the early 1930s the proportion of women party members remained broadly unchanged at 16-17 per cent of the total.[263] More relevantly to the KPD's proclaimed political ambitions, at most only ten per cent of the female membership was made up of employees, the remainder were housewives.[264] At the end of 1931 there were some 5,389 female members of the Saxon KPD. Even if all of these women had worked in the Saxon textile industry, then only 0.6 per cent of the female workforce during the Great Depression would have been Communists.[265]

In 1927 68 per cent of the Reich KPD's membership were industrial workers: 39.92 per cent in skilled trades and 28.18 per cent were unskilled workers. The figure of unemployed members was not given. The figures for West Saxon indicate that 69.7 per cent of the district party membership were industrial workers: 37.2 per cent of the membership worked in skilled trades and 32.5 per cent were unskilled workers; 16.4 per cent were unemployed.[266] By January 1932 10.7 per cent of the Saxon KPD were employed full-time, a further 8.3 per cent were employed part time, and 81 per cent were unemployed.[267] In 1927 62 per cent of the Reich KPD belonged to a trade-union. In West Saxony the figure was 74.63 per cent and in East Saxony 74.11 per cent.[268] Nationally the metal workers' union (DMV) accounted for 30 per cent of the membership followed by the building workers' union with 12 per cent, then a diversity of trades. In West Saxony

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[262] Peterson, B., 'The Politics of Working-Class Women in the Weimar Republic', in *CEH* 10 (2) (1977), p108.

[263] SAPMO I 3/8-10/144, Bericht der 2. Bezirksparteitag am 25-7.3.1932, Bl.38-9.

[264] Wuendelich, *Kommunalpolitik*, p262.

[265] Calculated from statistics in, *ZSSL* 72/73 (Dresden, 1926/27), p248.

[266] SAPMO I 3/10/108, Bezirksparteitag der KPD Westsachsen am 10-11.12.1927, Bl.99.

[267] SAPMO I 3/8-10/144, Bericht der 2. Bezirksparteitag am 25-7.3.1932, Bl.20.

[268] SAPMO I 3/8/21, Bericht der BL an den Bezirksparteitag der KPD Ostsachsen (April 1929), Bl.35; SAPMO I 3/10/108, Bezirksparteitag der KPD Westsachsen am 10-11.12.1927, Bl.100.

trade union membership broke down into the following groups: metal: 24.9 per cent; building workers: 17.51 per cent; transport: 6.62 per cent; wood working trades: 6.06 per cent; factory workers: 4.88 per cent; miners: 3.58 per cent; textile workers: 3.23 per cent; railways: 2.53 per cent; the printing trades: 7.19 per cent.[269] Metal workers were proportionately over represented in the KPD by some 4.9 per cent, while textile workers were massively under-represented by some 23.27 per cent.[270] The disinclination of textile workers for communism had been a feature since the foundation of the VKPD in 1920.[271] Exact figures for Saxony during the Great Depression are unavailable. However, at the District Party conference in March 1932, which had union membership, wherever possible, as a condition for delegation, only some 37.29 per cent of delegates did belong to a trade union.[272]

In Saxony, by late 1932 only 28 union payment offices had communist majorities.[273] Although the KPD during the 1930s never fully decided whether to leave the trade unions or to "destroy" them from within, the role of the RGO was given considerable weight. However, RGO also continued to organise skilled workers, who had been traditionally disposed towards organisation in a union. Nationally, the strength of the RGO according to industrial branch in January 1931 was: metal (78,000); building (42,000), local authority, transport and dock workers (42,000); post and city authorities (6,500); chemical industries (8,000); textiles (10,800); printing trades (6,500); railways (15,000); food and luxury goods (17,2000); leather (2,500); rural economy (4,500); mining

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[269] ibid, Bezirksparteitag der KPD Westsachsen am 10-11.12.1927.

[270] ZSSL, 72/73 (Dresden, 1926/27), p248.

[271] Wheeler, R.F., USPD und Internationale. Sozialistischer Internationalismus in der Zeit der Revolution (Frankfurt/M, Berlin, Vienna, 1976), pp239ff.

[272] SAPMO I 3/8-10/144, Bericht der 2. Bezirksparteitag am 25-7.3.1932, Bl.9.

[273] ibid, Bl.9.

(54,000).[274] In Saxony there is no figure for the numerical strength of the RGO. However,

the number of factory groups of the RGO is given. These were: textiles (150); metal (70);

mining (14); post and state authorities (12); rural and forestry (14); wood working trades

(6); warehouses (12); leather (2); local authorities and transport (60); railways (38);

factory (35); food and luxury goods (24); printing trades (16).[275] In the factory council

elections strong results for the KPD's "red unity lists" were the result of targeting factories

in which it was possible to draw up lists. In 1931, the last full year of factory council

elections, the KPD targeted 185 factories with independent candidate lists in Saxony

gaining 526 factory councillors.[276] In the heavy industrial sector of mining only one KPD

list was drawn up.[277] The inclination of Communist factory workers to be organised in

factory cells was weaker still. The implantation of factory cells in Saxon industry

accounted for: 0.35 per cent of metal workers; 0.19 per cent of textile workers; 0.31 per

cent of chemical workers; and 0.32 per cent of mine workers.[278] The figures indicate that

the KPD had not been significantly re-molded as a party of the "mass workers" sector of

the economy, which in Saxony was very slight. Instead the RGO-politik was restricting

the party's radius of action within those (skilled) workers, who were traditionally disposed

to political and trade-union organisation. This was compounded by the fact that the KPD

was a party of the unemployed. As 75 per cent of the RGO membership was unemployed,

it is quite conceivable that it served as a form of ersatz-organisation for unionised workers

who now felt abandoned by reformism. The KPD's obsession with the large factories was

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[274] Ba.K. R 134/67/1-48.

[275] SAPMO I 3/8-10/144, Bericht der 2. Bezirksparteitag am 25-7.3.1932, Bl.8.

[276] ibid, Bl.9.

[277] ibid

also not modified to account for Saxony's industrial structure, in which only one in ten

factories employed over 1,000 workers, and industrial production was overwhelmingly

located in small and medium sized factories.[279]

The membership growth of the Saxon KPD was also crisis related rather than an a

product of enthusiasm for ultra-Leftism. In Saxony membership contracted from 22,884 in

1928 to 18,396 at the end of 1930. In the 1930s the merger of the three Saxon party

districts into a single regional party, made Saxony the largest KPD district organisation

after Berlin-Brandenburg. The take-of point for the KPD's membership was autumn 1930:

by April 1931 membership had increased by 57 per cent.[280] Comparable figures for the

Reich and Saxony indicate the following organisational developments. The membership of

the Reich party rose from the first quarter of 1931 to the last quarter from 195,063 to

246,515 members. The growth in factory cells was from 1,524 to 1,983; street cells

increased from 3,395 to 6,193; and local groups declined from 7,736 to 5,437. In Saxony

factory cells fell from 249 to 201; street cells remained constant at 355; and local groups

expanded from 456 to 668.[281] Despite the absolute emphasis on the slogan that "The

conquering of the factory is the beginning of all organisational work", the KPD was

increasingly a residentially based party.[282] No significant numbers of unemployed party

members could be mobilised for work which did not have relevance to their daily lives.

The KPD's ultra-Leftism between 1928 and 1933 did not express a dynamic mobilisation

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[278] Calculated from statistical information in, ibid, Bl.8. There were 245 factory cells organising 2,135 members. Statistics relating to branch of production in, *ZSSL* 80/81 (Dresden, 1934/5), p116; ibid, 72/73 (Dresden, 1926/27), p248.

[279] Lapp, 'Political polarisation', pp11-12.

[280] Statistics in, SAPMO I 3/8-10/158, Struktur und Mitgliederbewegung der KPD 1926-32, Bl.81-3.

[281] BaK. NSDAP Hauptarchiv 26/810.

[282] Bahne, *Scheitern*, p16.

from below: the party machine found few members with an enduring commitment to the fuel the policy. The KPD's functionary core of Instructors operated like a re-chargeable battery: as the membership resistance to the policy wore out one cadre of regional functionaries, another was connected up to a weak Saxon supply. By December 1932, 50 per cent of all Saxon functionaries had joined the KPD in the course of 1931.[283] The rate of membership fluctuation, reaching in excess of 80 per cent in 1932, also made the open door policy more of a revolving door policy, as thousands simply momentarily passed through the KPD, leaving when their expectations of communism were disappointed. Indeed, by March 1932 only 55 of the 1,314 delegates to the 2nd District Congress had been in the KPD since it was founded, while 463 had joined in the last 15 months.[284] Support for the KPD grew as the legitimacy of the Weimar state declined among broad sections of the working-class population. However, the KPD did not respond to conditions in Germany, anchoring itself as a social as well as a political movement, reflecting the needs of its wider constituency. Without these bonds between the party and the membership, the KPD became like a huge red balloon: bloated, but with only a thin membrane holding it together. At the 2nd District Conference of the Saxon KPD the BL stated that: "the first prerequisite to fulfil the party's tasks is to ruthlessly break with social democratic traditions."[285] However, the more the KPD tried to build up a party politically and socially isolated from the political developments of German society, the more the KPD weakened its roots in Germany.[286]

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[283] SAPMO I 3/8-10/145, Bericht der 3. Bezirksparteikonferenz 3-4.12.1932, Bl.57.

[284] SAPMO I 3/8-10/144, Bericht der 2. Bezirksparteitag am 25-7.3.1932, Bl.23.

[285] ibid, Bl.21.

[286] In 1927 (ie before the ultra-Left General Line) the figures indicate that a total of 69.9 per cent of the Saxon KPD had at one time been organised in a socialist party: 34.88 per cent in the SPD and 35.02 per

The revolutionary upswing declared by the KPD at its 12th Congress, if measured by the traditional indicator of industrial radicalism, strikes, in reality began a period of an "employers' offensive". In Saxony during the years of "relative stability" strikes peaked in 1928 with a total of 810,245 day lost to industrial action; by 1929 the number had fallen to 335,531.[287] Ute Stolle's case studies of skilled (metal) workers and unskilled (chemical) workers points out that the demand for skilled labour remained above that of unskilled labour, with the consequence that strikes during the Great Depression were undertaken in the skilled trades rather than by "mass workers".[288] It seems reasonable to conclude that there was no industrial militancy based on "mass workers" in heavy industry, which could be channelled into the KPD's *RGO-politik*.

If the "structural echo" in the KPD for the ultra-Left General Line is measured in terms of the party's ability to *mobilise and organise* unorganised workers in heavy industry, women and youths, those who did not have a past political socialisation in the SPD, then the "echo" was more a signal lost in the void of the Great Depression. The policies of the "3rd Period" cannot be explained as a political response to changes in German socio-economic developments. The KPD itself pushed the boat out: not on a rising communist wave but with Moscow's helmsmen at the rudder and a course mapped by Soviet state interests.

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cent in the USPD, see SAPMO I 3/10/108, Bezirksparteitag der KPD Westsachsen am 10-11.12.1927, Bl.98.

[287] *Statistisches Jahrbuch fuer den Freistaat Sachsen*, Nr.49 (Dresden, 1931), p183.

[288] Stolle, *Bertiebspolitik*, 213f.

6.5 The Saxon KPD and ultra-Leftism: A Conclusion.

This case study of the origins and reception of the "left-turn" changes the emphasis of explanation from why the policy was accepted by the membership to why it quickly came up against so many political obstacles. Above all Saxony is an example of a region in which the "3rd Period" party policy was not welcomed as a "way out" of the earlier united front policy. Newly available documentation confirms the "Stalinisation" thesis that the change of policy was a product of political synchronisation: throughout the Comintern communist parties were brought into line with developments in the CPSU.[289] However, the documentation also modifies the traditional interpretation of developments inside the KPD. The "Thaelmann Affair" indicates that the factional struggle could still run against the grain of democratic centralism: once known to the membership it was transmitted through the lower organisations, finally forcing the convening of the 12th Reich Party Congress. The Comintern had learned from the head-on collision with the independent left-wing Communists during the mid twenties. The initial (secret) negotiation between the ECCI and the KPD's leadership anticipated a rolling "left-turn", taking the "course of concentration" coalition in the ZK on the way. However, the Thaelmann Group's acceleration and intensification of the "left-turn", and the unease inside the Left at the development of a Thaelmann entourage, ended the precarious balance in the KPD. The "Thaelmann-Affair" was less a "palace coup" than the last serious uprising in the membership against Moscow's domination. The "left-turn" was not a relatively frictionless

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[289] Draper, T., 'The Strange Case of the Comintern', in *Survey* 19 (1972), pp91-137; Kozlov, N. N. and Weitz, E. D., 'Reflections on the Origins of the 'Third Period': Bukharin, the Comintern, and the Political Economy of Weimar Germany', in *Journal of Contemporary History (JCH)* 24 (1989), pp387-410.

transition, taking only six week to oust the dissidents among the factional leaders: it was another one-and-a-half year feud in a different form.[290]

By the KPD's Reich Congress in 1929, which formally proscribed the organisation of factions, the main aim in Germany was not to win over the majority of the workforce for revolution, but political control over the whole party. Even the RFB, which had played a central role in carrying out political campaigning during the factional feuds, was regarded as too independent. The RFB's successor organisations were built up on the principle of central control rather than communist dynamism. The formation of the "ZK Cheka" was to ensure the separation between radical policy pronouncements and the reality of serving the CPSU cause first.

During the seventies and eighties historians developed histories from below: accounting for the KPD's "left-turn" in terms of socio-economic changes effecting political tendencies inside the working classes.[291] However, in Saxony the socio-economic and political prerequisites necessary to sustain the "left-turn" between 1928 and 1930 were absent. To overcome this, the party leadership looked to creating a mood among the membership which could accept the ideology of the "social fascist" thesis. The "3rd Period" policy was, however, not well received in Saxony. Many left-wing Communists in senior positions in the regional party criticised the tactic for placing too great a constraint on the party's political campaigns. During the campaign against the SPD-led Reich government's plans to build *Panzerkreuzer "A"*, the leadership's rejection of local "co-operation" between Communists and Social Democrats, pushed the KPD into a policy ghetto. In Saxony the KPD was faced with the reality that the left wing of the SPD was an

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[290] Cf. Weber, *Wandlung*, p220.

[291] See chapter 1.2 above.

alternative vehicle for the expression of workers' radicalism in these years. If the events of *Blutmai* in Berlin confirmed Saxon Communists in their antipathy towards the "betrayals" of the SPD leadership, it did not convince local Communists that all Social Democratic officials were also "social fascists". The immediate influences of local conditions continued to outweigh the ideology of the party leadership. Political opinion in the grass roots communist membership continued to reflect the locality, even after the leading exponents of right-wing communism were purged. The KPD's General Line was, in the words of Sigrid Bahne, an "ultra-Left isolationist" policy.[292] However, ideology and organisational centralisation could not shut out the world around the ordinary membership.

In explaining the inception of the *RGO-politik*, Schoeck argued that the KPD's isolation from the reformist-led workforce necessitated an independent communist organisation. Schoeck's documentation focused on heavy industry in the Ruhr.[293] In Saxony, however, the split in the workers' movement ran through the KPD. The policy was imposed from above, not inspired from below as an organisational answer to a communist conundrum in factory policy. The KPD membership after 1928 was not recast in the mold of "mass workers" in heavy industry, women and youths.[294] There was no "structural echo" among rank-and-file Communists for the "left turn" in Saxony. There could, however, have been a natural frequency integrating the political wings of Saxon communism; a left-wing variant of the united front policy as a radical protest against the structural unemployment and deskilling created as a product of the Weimar state's social and economic policies. In the factories there was a mood among Communists for industrial militancy: for a

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[292] Bahne, *Scheitern*, p12.

[293] Schoeck, *Arbeitslosigkeit*, pp172ff.

communist style radical trade unionism. However, flanked by the left-wing Saxon SPD, which dominated the local branches of most unions, there was no space for an "independent strike tactic". Saxon trade-union Communists wanted to push from within the ADGB, not subscribe to an untenable theoretical position claiming that "reformism" was a monolith in the service of the employers. In extra-parliamentary politics the Saxon KPD's heart beat in a left-wing interpretation of the united front policy. There was no love lost between the Saxon KPD's membership and the Reich leadership of the SPD: a policy of outright criticism of the SPD's national leadership, coupled with offers of "co-operation" addressed to the regional and local social democratic movement, could have provided some tactical flexibility. However, by 1929 at the latest, the KPD leadership identified with the "course of the monolith": a party in which control stretched from the centre in a bureaucratic spider's web, treating all local and regional autonomy as a fly in its parlour. The flagship policy of "international communism", introduced in the calm of 1928, became the KPD's white elephant in the crisis of the early thirties. The implications of the KPD's General Line during the rise of the Nazis is the subject of the concluding chapter.

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[294] Stolle's case studies in the chemical industry and metal trades also reached this conclusion, Stolle, *Betriebspolitik*, pp262ff.

7. Doppelgaenger or Deadly Enemies?: The Saxon KPD and the Nazis, 1930-1933.

7.1 Introduction

Hermann Weber's study of the political role of the KPD during the early thirties details the party's strategy and the nuances of tactical techniques used in working towards communist objectives in Germany.[1] While indicating that the KPD's German-policy was set in Moscow, Weber assumes that the "social fascist" policy would have been impossible without the support of the membership, functionaries and the electorate.[2] Later studies of the KPD focused more strongly on the conditions in Germany which made possible the party's General Line. Schoeck and Stolle began their examinations of the KPD's political strategy by asking: why was it possible for the NSDAP to come to power in Germany without resistance from the working class in the form of a general strike and civil war?[3] This case study of the KPD in Saxony does not regard the KPD as an explosive political charge that failed to go off. Instead, the chapter's starting point is the question: to what extent could a General Line, which identified the SPD as the "main enemy" of communist objectives, be carried out at grass roots level in the face of the meteoric rise of the NSDAP and its use of escalating street violence? In this respect it will also be asked: to what extent did the role of the Saxon SPD and Free Trade Unions at local level complicate the implementation of the KPD's attack on "social fascism"? The Reich leadership of the SPD and ADGB held to a strict legalism, which failed to appreciate that

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[1] See chapter 1.2 above.

[2] *ibid*, p78.

[3] Stolle, U., *Arbeiterpolitik im Betrieb: Frauen und Maenner, Reformisten und Radikale, Fach und Massenarbeiter bei Bayern, BASF, Bosch und in Solingen (1900-1933)* (Frankfurt/M,1980), p2; Schoeck,E.C., *Arbeitslosigkeit und Rationalisierung. Die Lage der Arbeiter und die kommunistische Gewerksschaftpolitik 1920-1928* (Frankfurt/M, 1977), p15.

the parliamentary "toleration" of Chancellor Bruenning's deflationary economic policies would not bring the return of Weimar democracy when the crisis again abated.[4] But did this policy hold at local level in Saxony?[5]

Central to Eve Rosenhaft's study of the KPD in Berlin is the thesis that, while ideological interpretation limited the KPD's understanding of the Great Depression, in practice its response was "tremendously vibrant and surprisingly responsive to the shifting needs of its actual and potential constituency".[6] This meant treating the NSDAP as the "main enemy" in the neighbourhoods, which, following the onset of mass unemployment, had become the environment replacing the factory as the *actual* location of political conflict.[7] Although Rosenhaft regarded the KPD's attitude to physical violence as "ambivalent", the party is presented as developing a response to the NSDAP's penetration of what the KPD believed to be its strongholds after 1929: both physical defence (*Abwehr*) and "ideological discussion" were used to beat back and win over the Nazi threat.[8] The Berlin KPD's treatment of the NSDAP as the "main enemy" is not, however, presented as marking a significant break with the policy of "social fascism". Instead the General Line's validity for

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[4] Dorpalen, A., 'SPD und KPD in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik', in *Vierteljahrshefte fure Zeitgeschicht (VfZ)* 31 (1988) (pp77-103), p100f; Aviva, A., 'The SPD and KPD at the End of the Weimar Republic: Similarity Within Contrast', *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung (IWK)* 14 (2) (1978) (pp171-86), pp172ff.

[5] In Saxony the strongest opposition to the SPD leadership's policy of "tolerating" the Bruening government was located in Erzgebirge-Vogtland. The SPD in Leipzig, comprising many former USPD members, was also critical but remained firmly within the party fold. The SPD *Landtag* faction, however, held to party discipline and voted for the Saxon administration's budget cuts in 1931/2. See, Schaefer, R., *SPD in der Aera Bruening: Tolerierung oder Mobilisierung? Handlungsspielraeum und Strategien sozialdemokratischer Politik 1930-1932* (Frankfurt/M, New York, 1990), pp85ff.

[6] Rosenhaft, E., *Beating the Fascists? The German Communists and Political Violence 1929-1933* (Cambridge, 1983), ppx-xi.

[7] *ibid*, pp7ff, 18ff, 26.

[8] *ibid*, pp15ff.

rank-and-file activists is explained in terms of a response to the role of the SPD in the institutions of state: party members' every day experience of the SA, the police and the *Sozialstaat*, the later two under SPD control, made a united front extending from the Nazis to the SPD seem possible.[9] In Saxony, where the SPD had left the regional government in the mid twenties, it will be asked: did the KPD respond to mass unemployment and the rise of political conflict and violence in the neighbourhoods, or was the party's principal concern to hold the General Line against the SPD at local level?

Conan Fischer has developed an explanation for the KPD's relationship and response to the NSDAP in terms of working-class nationalism within the Communists' own ranks and an overlap in the constituencies of the seeming polar opposites of German politics.[10] The following chapter will ask whether any such interaction between the political extremes took place and how the non-proletarian "working people" (ie peasants, the white collar and independent lower middle classes) responded to the KPD's nationalist policy? An attempt will also be made to assess what type of party activist would carry out a policy which saw the "Nazi workers" as potential communist recruits? Did long term structural unemployment produce a floating radical, who alternated between Bolshevism and the *Third Reich*, as a "way out" of the crisis?

The chapter is structured to place the Saxon KPD in the context of existing explanations for the party's political behaviour. Firstly the chapter outlines changes in the political and economic system in Saxony during the Great Depression: the impact of sustained mass unemployment in Saxony; the rise of the NSDAP; and the appointment of a cabinet of technocrats, which had no majority basis in the *Landtag*. The main body of the chapter

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[9] *ibid*, p211.

[10] See chapter 1.2 above.

begins by assessing whether the KPD's appeal to the nationalist lower middle classes could proselytise the social basis of the NSDAP. The following section deals with the so-called "Anti-Fascist Action" campaign, in which the KPD felt forced to modify its tactics in the face of the NSDAP's challenge. The chapter then deals with the KPD's attempt to re-impose a rigid interpretation of the "social fascist" party line after the 12th Plenum of the ECCI in autumn 1932. Finally, the chapter concludes by placing the experience of the Saxon KPD in the context of the historical debate. Above all it will be asked: to what extent could the KPD-leadership focus the party's fire on the SPD during the rise of the Nazis?

7.2 Saxony and the Crisis of the "System".

The final crisis of the Weimar Republic was induced by the coincidence of two turning points; one domestic: a crisis in the democratic party-state; the other international: the Great Depression and mass unemployment. An already underlying crisis of legitimacy in the Republic became an outright rejection of it by a majority of the electorate by the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections.

The Economy

By the end of 1929 the German economy showed key indicators of financial crisis: GNP had stagnated; unemployment rose on average by 35 per cent; and public revenues fell by the second half of the year.[11] The industries hardest hit by the collapse in world demand,

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[11] For details of the German economy, see, Petzina, D., 'Germany and the Great Depression', in, JCH (4) (1969) (pp59-74); For Saxony's structural economic problems, see, Bramke, W., 'Die Industrieregion Sachsen. Ihre Herausbildung und Entwicklung bis zum Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs, in Schulz, R. (ed.), *Industrieregion im Umbruch. Historische Voraussetzungen und Verlaufsmunster des regionalen Strukturwandels im europaeischen Vergleich* (Essen,1993), pp311-13. In Germany as a whole the ratio of consumer goods production to production goods was 50:50 while in Saxony the ratio was 63:27, see,

textiles and machine building, were precisely those industries which dominated production in Saxony.[12] The social cost of the dramatic fall in demand and production was mass unemployment: in Saxony the level of unemployment was the highest in Germany. If white collar workers are excluded from the figure, in May 1932, from a working population of 2.1 million, only 1.4 million remained in unemployment.[13] These underlying economic problems and their de-stabilizing effects on German society cannot be underestimated as factors reinforcing the political rejection of the Weimar compromise: their most prominent political product was the transformation of the NSDAP from a splinter party to the largest party in the Reich and in Saxony.

The Breakthrough of the NSDAP: An Extremist Current Joins the Mainstream.

The NSDAP in Saxony grew into a mass party out of the political seeds of a scattering of radical *voelkisch* organisations.[14] The foundation of the first Saxon local group of the NSDAP was in Zwickau in October 1921; it drew support from the *Deutschsozialistische Partei* and the *Voelkischer Schuetz und Trutzbund;* the two prominent Nazis, Martin

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Heyse, H., 'Das Problem der Arbeitslosigkeit in Sachsen', Dissertation (Dresden University, 1938), p27; For a summary on the debate on the "health" of the Weimar economy from the mid-20s, see, Lee, J. J., 'Policy and Performance in the German Economy: a Comment on the Borchardt Thesis' (pp131-50), in, Laffan, M. (ed.) The Burden of German History 1919-45. Essays for the Goetha Institute (London, 1988).

[12] Heyse, ibid, p32. The dependence of Saxony on textile and related production is underlined by the machine building industry's share in the manufacture of machines for textile production. This reached 63 per cent of the total production in machine building.

[13] Boelke, B., 'Wirtschafts und Sozialegeschichte Sachsens', in Gerlach, S. (ed.), *Eine politische Landeskunde* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Cologne, 1993), p155.

[14] The rise of the NSDAP in Saxony is dealt with in detail by, Szejnmann, C-C. W., 'The Rise of the Nazi Party in Saxony between 1921 and 1933', Ph.D. thesis (King's College, London University), esp. pp32-164.

Mutschmann and Fritz Tittmann, began their political activities in the latter party. By 1922 the NSDAP had extended into the neighbouring Vogtland towns of Plauen and Markneukirchen.[15] The Saxon NSDAP also benefited from the region's radical right-wing youth movement under Kurt Gruber, which formed the basis of the Hitler Youth (HJ) by the mid twenties.[16] The first surge of wider support for the Nazis in Saxony came during the social crisis of the hyper-inflation in 1923: the area of greatest party activity was in the southwestern areas close to the border with neighbouring Bavaria.[17] In the May 1924 Reichstag elections the *Deutschvoelkische Freiheitspartei* (DVFP), which was allied with the NSDAP, received 7.9 per cent of the vote in the Leipzig electoral district, 7.5 per cent in Chemnitz-Zwickau and 4 per cent in Dresden-Bautzen.[18] However, the level of support for the *voelkisch* right fell in the December 1924 Reichstag elections to a national average of 3 per cent and in Saxony to 2.4 per cent.[19]

After the near political implosion of the NSDAP in 1924, the party was reconstituted to win wider electoral support. Between 1926 and 1928 the Nazis adopted what Orlow called the "urban plan": a policy of recruiting support among working people in the industrial centres of Saxony, Thuringia, Berlin, Hamburg and the Ruhr.[20] However, Szejnmann's recent study of the NSDAP in Saxony indicates that, although the Nazis were very active in both urban and rural areas after 1925, the movement found it considerably easier to recruit in the countryside.[21] Despite the "urban plan's" inability to win the support

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[15] Lapp, B., 'Political Polarisation in Weimar Germany: The Saxon Buergertum and the Left, 1918/19-1930', PhD thesis (University of California, 1991), p249.

[16] Stachura, P.D., *Nazi Youth in the Weimar Republic* (Santa Barbara, 1975), pp13-23.

[17] Gross, R., 'Die Politische Geschichte Sachsens', in Gerlach (ed.), *Landeskunde*, p116.

[18] Falter, J, et. al., *Wahlen und Abstimmungen in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich, 1986), p69.

[19] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p249.

[20] Orlow, D., *The History of the Nazi Party, 1919-1933* (vol.1; Pittsburgh, 1969), pp76ff.

[21] Szejnmann, 'Nazi Party', p189.

of the organised working classes, the Saxon NSDAP by the mid 1920s had become the largest *Gau* in Germany, with 80 local groups in 1925.[22] By the May 1928 *Reichstag* elections the NSDAP's main success was to have become the dominant party on the *voelkisch* right both nationally and in Saxony.[23] Already in 1928, in the Nazi's south-western Saxon stronghold, the NSDAP vote was above the national average in the six administrative districts they came to dominate in the early 1930s.[24]

The Nazis' limited electoral impact in 1928 precipitated another policy shift: the party's tactics were adapted to make the NSDAP more "voter friendly" to the urban and rural *Mittelstand*, while by no means overlooking the need for support from the working-class electorate.[25] In line with these tactical policy changes, Hitler acted to end the policy of abstention from regional *Buergerblock* coalitions. Following the Saxon *Landtag* elections of 1929 the NSDAP's four seats enabled the party to become the king-maker between the blocks of the Left and Right. The Saxon NSDAP became associated with facilitating a government carrying out a pro-*Mittelstand* policy of fiscal probity and cuts in government social expenditure, despite an upswing in unemployment.[26] With this positioning on the political right-wing, the NSDAP, with its primed political machine and activist membership, was well placed to give expression to a growing grass roots protest

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[22] Fenske, H., *Wahlrecht und Parteiensystem: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Parteiengeschichte* (Frankfurt, 1972), p285.

[23] Bundesarchiv Koblenz (Ba.K.) R 134/40/97-170.

[24] Walter, .F., 'Sachsen - Ein Stammland der Sozialdemokratie?, PVS 32 (2) (1991) (pp207-231), p224; Schlesinger, W. (ed.), *Sachsen*, (Stuttgart,1965), pLXVII.

[25] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p252; Winkler, H.A., 'From Social Protectionism to National Socialism: the German Small Business Movement in Comparative Perspective', *Journal of Modern History (JMH)* 48 (1) (1976), pp1-18.

[26] For the example of Lower Saxony, see Noakes, J., *The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony, 1921-1933* (Oxford, 1971), p207; For Saxony see, Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p254.

movement. The Nazis' political positioning as a forum for social protest was given greater latitude by the structure of the traditional parties of the *Buergertum*, which represented a "weak coterie" of individuals without a developed bureaucracy or tradition of political campaigning outside of election campaigns.[27] All of these factors provided the backdrop for the Nazis' decisive electoral breakthrough in the Saxon *Landtag* elections of June 1930: the party gained 18.3 per cent of the regional vote, jumping from 5 seats to 14.[28] In Saxony, by the Reichstag elections of July 1932, the NSDAP gained 41.2 per cent of the vote, the SPD received 28.4 per cent and the KPD 17.4 per cent; all of the parties of the traditional right held less than 2 per cent of the vote, except the DNVP which, with 4.6 per cent of the vote, contracted to a narrowly based conservative party.[29] By 1932 the NSDAP had also absorbed the votes of the "special interest" parties, which had maintained their influence in Saxony at the 1930 Landtag election. These developments led Lapp to conclude that in the early 1930s the NSDAP had become the party of "bourgeois concentration", overcoming the political fragmentation which had taken place along the lines drawn by economic particularism.[30]

From Parliamentary Cabinet to Presidential Decree: Ein Systemswechsel.

The year 1930 also marked the transformation of the political system from government based on a parliamentary majority to a series of presidential cabinets. In summarising the

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[27] Hamilton, R. F., 'Hitler's Electoral Support: Recent Findings and Theoretical Implications', in *Canadian Journal of Sociology (CJS)* 2 (1) (1986) (pp1-28), p13.

[28] For an assessment of the June 1930 Saxon *Landtag* election see, Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p273f; Sjenmann, 'Nazi Party', p96f.

[29] *Statistisches Jahrbuch fuer den Freistaat Sachsen, 1931-1934* (Dresden, 1935) Nr.50, pp430-1.

[30] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p284.

debate on the breakdown of the Great Coalition in March 1930 and the change in the system of government Kolb wrote that:

"Opinions vary as to the causes, scope and effects of the decision taken for the solution of the government crisis in the spring of 1930 but no one disputes the appointment of the "Hindenburg cabinet" under Bruening was a far-reaching and dangerous transformation of the governmental system."[31]

Saxony was the first of the German *Laender* to experience the crisis of the party system, resulting from the jamming of the machinery of parliamentary government.[32] The centralisation of the political-decision making process in the early 30s meant that the Saxon technocrat government under Wilhelm Schieck, in Kretschmar's words, "administered rather than governed."[33] Political intransigence was endemic in Saxony in a process growing out of the Imperial era. The final phase in the demise of government by parliamentary consent in Saxony began to take shape by 1929. The 1929/30 *Buergerblock* government rested on the votes of a political spectrum ranging from the ASPD to the NSDAP. The administration fell when the Nazis withdrew their "toleration" after the Minister President, Buenger, a member of the DVP, signed the ratification of the Young Plan in the *Reichsrat*.[34] Thereafter no parliamentary basis for a coalition government could be found, and the SPD's motion of no confidence in the government, on 20 May, forced new elections in June 1930.[35]

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[31] Kolb, E., *The Weimar Republic* (London, 1988), p179.

[32] Fenske, *Wahlrecht*, p304.

[33] Kretschmar, H., *Saechsische Geschichte* (Frankfurt/M, 1965), p247.

[34] Gross, 'Politische Geschichte Sachsens', pp116-7.

[35] *Kommission zur Erforschung der Geschichte der oertlichen Arbeiterbewegung bei der SED in Zusammenarbeit mit den Sektionen Geschichte und Marxismus-Leninismus sowie dem Franz-Mehring-Institut der Karl Marx Universitaet Leipzig*: In der Revolution geboren - In der Klassenkaempfen

The outcome of the new Saxon elections did nothing to resolve the parliamentary stalemate. Instead, the regional upswing of the Nazis continued: the party increased its representation from five seats to 14. The increased political prominence of the Saxon NSDAP initiated an early trial run of the SPD's policy of "tolerating" a government which would exclude the Nazis from power.[36] Before the *Landtag election* the Saxon SPD had offered to "tolerate" a centre-right coalition, on condition that it was headed by the DDP, and the WP excluded. After the Nazis' electoral success the SPD moderated this demand, offering parliamentary support for an administration including the WP but excluding the NSDAP.[37] However, with the significant exception of the DDP, the parties of the Saxon *Buergertum* continued in their efforts to win the backing of the NSDAP. These intra-party negotiations collapsed after the failure to secure sufficient support for the appointment of Gregor Strasser as Minister of the Interior.[38] The party-political impasse then paved the way for the so-called "non-party" administration under the senior Saxon civil servant Walter Schieck, who headed a technocratic state government until the Nazis' seizure of power in 1933.[39] In assessing the causes of the breakdown of parliamentary government in Saxony, Lapp emphasised the culmination of a process of political polarisation which finally eliminated the common ground necessary for coalition government.[40] The contemporary DDP politician, Richard Seyfert, wrote that very significant sections of

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bewaehrt. Geschichte der KPD-Bezirksorganisation Leipzig-Westsachsen, Leipzig,1986, p255 (henceforthe: In der Revolution geboren); Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p263f.

[36] Local left-wing functionaries in Leipzig also supported the Reich SPD leadership's policy. The ADGB in Saxony continued to advocate SPD governmental participation. See, Klenke, D., *Die SPD-Linke in der Weimarer Republik* (vol.1; Munster, 1983), p215.

[37] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', pp280ff.

[38] Kuehnl, R., *Die Nationalsozialistische Linke, 1925-1930* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1966), pp291ff.

[39] Kretschmar, *Geschichte Sachsens*, p247.

[40] Lapp, 'Political Extremes', p282.

Saxon industry, the *Mittelstand*, the civil service and intellectuals could not see past the central objective of excluding the SPD from governmental power.[41]

The Reich policy of deflation by emergency decree was also carried into the regions by price commissioners in the *Laender*, in a manner transferring much of the financial burden of mass unemployment onto the cities and local authorities. In Saxony the price commissioner since April 1930 was the monarchist Carl Goerdeler, who ensured the implementation of the Reich "savings programmes" at regional level.[42] There remains historical debate on the range of policy options open to Chancellor Bruening in the financial and economic sphere.[43] However, as Feldman points out: "While the precise role of unemployment in bringing Hitler to power remains a subject of debate, its major contribution to undermining the Weimar Republic and paving the way for its destruction is beyond doubt."[44]

7.3 Bolshevism and German Nationalism.

The rise of the NSDAP to mass party status, and the KPD's response to it, took place under a General Line which above all consisted of an all out attack on the SPD.[45] However, by mid 1929 the KPD's ultra-Leftist policy was complicated by the return of the "National Question" to political prominence. In the second half of 1929 the German Nationalists and the Nazis initiated a campaign for a referendum to compel the national

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[41] ibid, pp286-7.

[42] Czock, K. (ed.), *Geschichte Sachsens (Weimar, 1989)*, p467.

[43] For a summary of the debate on whether Bruening's ecomomic policies served primarily economic or political objectives see, Kolb, *Weimar Republic*, pp179ff.

[44] Feldman, G. D., 'Saxony, the Reich and the Problem of Unemployment in the German Inflation', in *Archiv fuer Sozialgeschichte (AfS)* XXVII (1987)(pp103-144), p103.

[45] For details of the formation of Comintern policy see, Weber, *Hauptfeind*, pp17ff.

government to reject the Young Plan (a revision of the Versailles Treaty's provisions on reparations payments and the demilitarisation of the western bank of the Rhineland). The 10th Plenum of the ECCI interpreted the Young Plan as the worst of all foreign policy developments for the Soviet Union: a rapprochement between Germany and the Western Powers leading to Moscow being left out in the diplomatic cold.[46] The use of quasi-nationalistic propaganda was not new to the KPD's political campaigning: it had been exploited since the inception of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919.[47] However, the KPD's response to the negotiations surrounding the Young Plan were complicated by what Thaelmann conceded was "national fascism" having "got in first" and dominating the public debate. The Nazis joined the DNVP-led campaign for a referendum against the acceptance of the terms of the treaty.[48] In 1929 the KPD leadership was still not prepared to participate in a campaign led by the *voelkisch* far Right, as this would appear to be a united front action with them. Nevertheless, the scene was set for the KPD's re-adoption of the language of National Bolshevism.[49] One of the most enduring themes in communist ideology was the claim to represent the "true interests" of the whole nation.[50] East German histories of the KPD in the early 1930s, written as late as the mid 1980s, also stated that German communism amalgamated "proletarian internationalism and German patriotism."[51] However, these explanations are unconvincing. The process of Stalinisation

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[46] Degras, J., *The Communist International, 1919-1943* (vol.3; London, 1971), p40.

[47] Dorpalen, 'Endphase', p93.

[48] Degras, *Communist International*, p100.

[49] ibid, p101.

[50] Dorpalen, A., 'Marxism and National Unity: The Case of Germany', in *Review of Politics* 39 (1977) pp505-20.

[51] Schaller, K-H., 'Die Bezirksparteiorganisation Sachsen der KPD von ihrer Grundung im Dezember 1929 bis zum zweiten Bezirksparteitag im Maerz 1932', Dissertation (Karl Marx University, Chemnitz, 1984), p73.

completed the KPD's alienation from the German political scene: the party's first and foremost task was the defence of the Soviet Union; any countermanding influence from German political opinion through the membership had been excluded. In this respect Degras wrote that:

> It was the concentration of the KPD on Soviet affairs that largely explained the rise within its ranks of a "national bolshevist" trend, recalling in some respects the similar phenomenon of the early 1920s. These Communists argued that the object of the KPD appeared not to be to promote revolution, but to obstruct any anti-Soviet movement; it was part of the Russian not the German political scene.[52]

In other words, "national bolshevism" could be less ambiguously expressed as Bolshevik nationalism: the KPD's exploitation of the "National Question" in Germany to serve the interests of Soviet state policy.[53]

Rather than accepting the KPD's policy statements at face value, many historians have dismissed the party's revolutionary rhetoric by placing it in the context of events as they took place: the Soviet Union did not want a revolution in Germany because of the incalculable international implications and the possible interruption of the German industrial imports required for the First Five Year Plan.[54] Instead, the Comintern's German

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[52] Degras, *Communist International*, p100.

[53] This would also avoid confussion with the earlier, and more genuinely "National Bolshevist", movement under Laufenberg in 1918/19.

[54] Weber, *Hauptfeind*, pp64ff; Bahne, S., *Die KPD und das Ende von Weimar. Das Scheitern einer Politik 1932-35* (Frankfurt/M, 1976), pp70ff; Schueddekopf, O-E., *Nationalbolshewismus in Deutschland 1918-1933* (Frankfurt/M, Berlin, Vienna, 1973), p293; Depeux, L., *National Bolschewismus in Deutschland 1919-1933* (Munich, 1985), pp437ff; Pogge von Strandmann, H., 'Industrial Primacy in German Foreign Policy? Myths and Realities in German-Russian Relations at the End of the Weimar Republic', in Bessel. R., and Feuchtwanger, E.J. (eds.), *Social Change and Political Development in Weimar Germany* (London, 1981), pp241-67. The exception is Conan Fischer who accepts the KPD's official

policy was to de-stabilise the Weimar Germany. Winkler wrote that the Soviet Union's immediate objective was to smash the SPD and induce a shift in government to the right, including the possibility of a military dictatorship.[55] In this vein Duehnke convincingly argued that Stalin expected the collapse of the Weimar Republic and its replacement with some kind of national-military government which would favour Soviet foreign policy and domestic interests.[56] Niclaus identified the government under General Schleicher at the end of 1932 as Moscow's favoured German administration: it would ensure the best opportunities for trade, diplomatic and military relations.[57] These interpretations did not imply that Soviet Russia actually wanted to help bring the Nazis to power in Germany: instead Moscow had counted on the belief that neither the German military nor industry would tolerate such an administration, giving the Comintern leeway to exploit the movement's de-stabilising impact on Weimar.[58]

The KPD's "Programme for the National and Social Liberation of the German People", issued in *Die Rote Fahne* and the provincial communist press for the September 1930 Reichstag elections, claimed that Soviet-led international socialism could resolve Germany's territorial and national problems.[59] The *Liberation Programme* stated that in the event of the KPD coming to power in Germany the Versailles Treaty, the Young Plan

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pronouncements on a revolution launched from the factories and an armed uprising see, Fischer, *German Communists*, p138.

[55] Winkler, H. A., *Der Weg in die Katastrophe. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik, 1930-1933* (Berlin, Bonn, 1987), pp734ff; Id., 'Choosing the Lesser Evil: The German Social Democrats and the Fall of the Weimar Republic', in *JCH* 25 (1990) (pp205-27), p218.

[56] Duehnke, H., *Die KPD von 1933 bis 1945* (Cologne, 1972), pp60-1.

[57] Niclauss, K., *Die Sowjetunion und Hitlers Machtergreifung. Eine Studie ueber die deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen der Jahre 1929 bis 1935* (Bonn, 1966), p80.

[58] Bahne, *Scheitern*, p40; Schueddekopf, *Nationalbolshewismus*, p289.

[59] *Die Rote Fahne*, 24.8.1930.

and all international debt and reparations payments would be terminated; under the principal of "self-determination", with the co-operation of the working classes in Britain, France, Italy and Czechoslovakia, the German territories lost under the Versailles Treaty would have the right to return to the Reich; Germany would then establish a strong economic and political alliance with Soviet Russia. The Programme initiated an appeal to the "misled working people" (ie the urban *Mittelstand* and the peasantry) who supported National Socialism, to come to the KPD.[60] It is, however, highly questionable whether an attempt to whip up German national indignation with the West, by a political movement so tied to a foreign power, could have had any real impact in transforming right-wing extremism into support for Soviet communism.[61]

Instead of producing a communist re-think the rise of the NSDAP was integrated into the existing General Line, which identified the SPD as communism's "main enemy". The united front from below tactic was merely extended to the Nazis' "misled" supporters among the "working people" and nationalistic propaganda was pumped into the German body politic: not as an antidote to the attractions of Nazism to the working classes, but to corrode the fabric of Weimar democracy. The demands of the monolithic party meant that policy at national level must find its equivalent at local level, lest the seeds of dissent could grow into a widespread challenge to the leadership's authority. For this reason the KPD's grass roots organisations were instructed to win over Nazi support among the lower

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[60] Schueddekopf, *Nationalbolshewismus*, p286-7.

[61] Weingartner, *Stalin und der Aufsteig Hitlers: Die Deutschland Politik der Sowjetunion und der Kommunistischen Internationale, 1929-1934 (Berlin, 1970)*, p42. At the 7th World Congress of the Comintern (1935) it was stated in the *Materialen* that the KPD had refused to take part in the Young Plan referendum on the basis that "it could only promote Fascism", Degras, *Communist International*, p101.

middle classes and the peasantry: the threat of "Hitler-fascism" was to be overcome by turning its social basis from brown to red.[62]

The ZK's plenary meeting, which took place between the 15th and 17th of January 1931, set the KPD's political course during 1931. The policy declaration, *Volksrevolution* over Germany, was an appeal not to the proletariat, but instead addressed the "working people".[63] The KPD's official pronouncements maintained that the collapse of the bourgeois ideology had acted as the catalyst for defections from the lower middle classes to the KPD: but the NSDAP functioned as the last barrier preventing an exodus *en masse* to communism. With party propaganda so strongly emphasising winning over the *Mittelstand* from the Nazis, the need to recruit among Social Democratic workers was under-played. The KPD's local membership was instructed not to "overestimate" the Nazi threat and to avoid making a false distinction between bourgeois democracy and fascism.[64] During 1931, when the KPD's policy against the SPD peaked, calls to fight fascism as the "main enemy" disappeared from the party's press. The KPD even regarded parts of the middle classes as more suitable for a united front than social democratic workers.[65] However, it was one thing for communist leaders to make overtures to the NSDAP's "misled" supporters", but quite another to have this policy carried out at local level where Communists and Social Democrats exchanged blows rather than "ideological discussion" with an increasingly assertive Nazi movement.[66] For this reason the KPD by mid 1930

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[62] Ward, J. J., ' 'Smash the Fascists': German Communists' Efforts to Counter the Nazis, 1930-1931', *CEH* 14 (1) (1981) (pp30-62), p48.

[63] Thaelmann, E., *Volksrevolution ueber Deutschland* (Leipzig, 1931), pp1ff.

[64] Daycock, D. W., 'The KPD and the NSDAP: A Study in the Relationship between the Political Extremes in Weimar Germany 1923-1933', Ph.D. thesis (London School of Economics, 1980), p186.

[65] Fowkes, B., *Communism in Germany under the Weimar Republic* (London, 1984), p164.

[66] Degras, *Communist International*, p100; Daycock, 'Political Extremes', 186f; Ward, 'Smash the Fascists', p38.

looked for a form of organisation to underpin party policy at local level. The successor

organisations to the RFB, the various Abwehr-organisations such as the Kampfbund

gegen den Faschismus (KgdF), were envisaged by the ZK as the vehicles enabling party

policy to be carried out at local level.[67] The KPD, as ever, tried to extend its influence by

having non-communist delegates, elected at various meetings of the "working people",

take part in the grass roots implementation of party actions.

7.4 The Volksrevolution of 1931: Between the Sword and the Olive Branch.

The Struggle Congress Against Fascism

After the September *Reichstag* elections, and the introduction of the SPD's policy of

"tolerating" the Bruening government, the KPD began its *Volksrevolution* policy. The

Politburo meeting on 5 December issued both public statements and internal party

circulars which detailed the *Volksrevolution* policy as a response to a change in the system

of government: the radicalisation of the masses, as a result of the economic crisis and the

disintegration of the traditional bourgeois parties, meant that "half fascism" was no longer

enough to hold down the "working masses"; an early form of Fascism had arrived and the

SPD had been the "midwife at the birth."[68] The Politburo instructed the regional party

organisations that:

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[67] This field of study has been covered in detail by Rosenhaft, *Beating*, p86ff.

[68] St.Ha.D.(Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden) MdI, Nr.19086 Reichsminister des Innern. An die
Nachrichtenstellen der Laender, 19.1.1931. Abschrift. Runschreiben Nr.19 (KPD), Berlin 19.12.1930,
Bl.160-1.

The whole party must realise the changed situation. It is no longer a question of preventing the threatening Fascist dictatorship, but of unfolding a mass struggle for the overthrow of the existing, if not fully ripened, fascist dictatorship.[69]

The "higher stage of fascism" was, at least implicitly, the NSDAP. At this point the KPD appeared to identify the Nazis, who had already joined regional governments in Thuringia and Braunschweig, as representing the greatest danger of a war of intervention against the Soviet Union.[70] The party leadership now emphasised that, as the form of government depended on the constellation of forces outside of parliament, it was the communist movement's task to lead a broad mass struggle of the proletariat and the non-proletarian "working people."[71] At all levels of party activity the KPD's propaganda machine was to "unmask" not only the SPD as "social fascist", but in equal measure the NSDAP's claims to be "national and social", while presenting the KPD as the only party which struggled against capitalism, the Young Plan and reparations.[72]

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[69] ibid, Bl.162; Weber, *Hauptfeind*, p34.

[70] The Comintern, however, saw matters differently and intervened in the KPD's policy at the 11th ECCI Plenum. In early 1931 the Comintern believed that a Franco-German rapproachement was imminent and that the SPD would, accordingly, move nearer the Bruening government; the anti-western NSDAP would therefore be isolated from the Reich government. For this reason the KPD must focus its propaganda on the danger of social fascism. Weingartner, *op.cit.*, p53ff; Weber, *Hauptfeind*, p34. This conflict of policy between the KPD and the Comintern provides a good example of the "re-writing" of history practiced in the GDR. This literature blames the KPD's "revolutionary impatience" (ie the objective of "overthrowing" the German government) on figures such as Heinz Neumann. Thaelmann, and in Saxony Rudolf Renner, were credited with countermanding this "deviation". In fact even Ulbricht at this point followed the line of the Politburo's directive from 5 December 1930, for example see, Schaller, K-H., 'Saechsischer Kampfkongress gagen den Faschismus', in *Beitraege zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung (BzGdA)*, 28 (1986), p678.

[71] St.Ha.D., MdI Nr.19086, Reichsminister des Innern. An die Nachrichtenstellen der Laender, 19.1.1931. Abschrift. Runschreiben Nr.19 (KPD), Berlin 19.12.1930, Bl.162.

[72] Weber, *Hauptfeind*, p31f.

As part of a nation-wide campaign to implement the new policy, regional "Struggle

Congresses Against Fascism" were to be convened. The function of these conferences was

to apply the national party's policy at local level and to induce party meetings on the

Volksrevolution policy in the lower party organisations. In Saxony preparations began at

the BL Plenary Meeting on 7 December.[73] The campaign, which was essentially to act as a

boost to on-going party actions, was to begin with meetings in the factories, dole queues,

in the countryside and among the urban lower middle classes and professional groups. The

"delegate meetings" would then appoint representatives who would work, in co-operation

with existing communist units, for the creation of local "Struggle Committees". These

committees in turn would appoint delegates onto the "Action Committees" which, from

local to regional level, would co-ordinate communist campaigns. Communist councillors

in municipal councils would also use their position as a springboard for propaganda and

assist in the organisation of meetings.[74] This was the so-called "new higher form of the

united front tactic". In theory, at least, the "delegate movement" was to function as the

practical application of the united front policy, winning over non-communists and

including them in the party's campaigns, reaching a high point at a District "Struggle

Congress."[75]

The KPD's policy at local level aimed to reconcile the irreconcilable: party directives

instructed the membership to organise the tactics of both the olive branch, winning over

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[73] Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR (SAPMO) I 3/8-10/160, BL Sachsen. Sekretariat (Org.). Vorbereitung des Kampfkongresses gegen den Fascismus. Dresden, den 9.12.1930, Bl.122.

[74] ibid, BL Sachsen. Sekr.Org. Vorbereitung des Kampfkongresses gegen den Fascismus. Dresden, den 9.12.1930, Bl.122-4.

[75] St.Ha.D., MdI Nr.19086, Reichsminister des Innern. An die Nachrichtenstellen der Laender, 19.1.1931. Abschrift. Runschreiben Nr.19 (KPD), Berlin 19.12.1930, Bl.162.

opponents through "ideological discussion", and the sword, physically removing their presence from the factories and neighbourhoods.[76] The road to Damascus through "ideological discussion" was to be organised by the factory cells and local groups who were instructed to establish contacts with social democratic workers and to force their way into the "misled" Nazi supporters among the working and lower middle classes; discussion speakers were to attend all other parties' public meetings; communist leaflets were to be distributed at political rallies; and non-communists were to be invited to "discussion evenings".[77] However, despite the rise in street based politics, and violence, the KPD held to its factory-centred strategy. The fact that so many Communists were unemployed meant that most of this work was conducted from outside the factory gates. Inside the factories the KPD dissipated much of its energy trying, largely unsuccessfully, to enforce the "social fascist" party line of confrontation with the SPD.[78]

The increasing prominence and presence of the NSDAP in areas regarded as "proletarian" districts, and the force of the SA's attacks on workers' organisations, meant that the KPD had to respond to the immediate local impact of the rise of the Nazis.[79] After a short period during late 1929 of advocating street violence to "beat back" the Nazi movement, the KPD leadership presented such a policy as an inappropriate means of dealing with a mass party and a distraction from the main task of organising a general strike: the

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[76] For the Reich KPD see, Ward, 'Smash the Fascists', pp38ff.

[77] St.Ha.D., MdI Nr.19086, Reichsminister des Innern. An die Nachrichtenstellen der Laender, 19.1.1931. Abschrift. Runschreiben Nr.19 (KPD), Berlin 19.12.1930, Bl.164-5; SAPMO I 3/8-10/151, Referentenmaterial zur Discussion mit SPD Arbeitern. Liquidierung des Masseneinfluesses der SPD. KPD Bezirk Sachsen, den 15.4.1931, Bl.71.

[78] Staatsarchiv Leipzig (Sta.L.) Kap.3. Nr.38. Bd2, Rueckblick auf das Jahr 1931, Bl.25f.

[79] For the example of East Leipzig see, SAPMO I 3/8-10/154, Die Parteiarbeit. Funktionaerorgan des Stadtteils "D" (Maerz 1931), Bl.73.

factories not the neighbourhoods were to remain central to communist policy.[80]

Rosenhaft's study of the Berlin KPD at street level also accounts for the KPD leadership's suspicion of all areas of political activity outside of the its control.[81] However, the scale of the street violence, detailed in the reports of the Saxon Ministry of the Interior as *Zusammenstoesse*, meant that if the KPD did not respond in kind it would risk losing all influence in residential areas.[82] In Saxony the SPD's response to the rise of the NSDAP at local level, particularly after the September Reichstag elections, limited the plausibility of the KPD's "social fascist" policy. The Saxon SPD held public meetings and mass rallies, with well known speakers from Germany and abroad, who detailed the Nazi threat to the workers' movement. Furthermore, the Saxon SPD attracted considerably more workers to these events than attended the KPD's fratricidal meetings, which unconvincingly depicted the SPD as the principal danger to workers' rights.[83] The apparent passivity of the SPD's parliamentary policy of "tolerating" the Bruening government was parallelled on the streets of Saxony by an active policy to combat the growth of the NSDAP.[84] In October 1930 the Saxon SPD set up the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft zur Bekaempfung des Fascismus*, an

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[80] Rosenhaft, E., 'Working-Class Life and Working-Class Politics: Communists, Nazis and the Battle for the Streets', in Bessel and Feuchtwanger (eds.), *Social Change* (pp207-35), p234; Id., *Beating*, p66,86.

[81] Rosenhaft, E., 'The Unemployed in the Neighbourhood: Social Dislocation and Political Mobilisation in Germany 1929-33' (pp194-227), in Evans, R.J., and Greary, D. (eds.), *The German Unemployed. Experiences and Consequences of Mass Unemployment from the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich* (London, 1987), p200.

[82] By late 1930 political violence was given individual attention in the files of the Ministry of the Interior see, Monatsberichte ueber die politische und wirtschaftliche Lage im Freistaat Sachsen (1930) (henceforth: Monatsbericht), St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.11126/4.

[83] Details of these rallies are dealt with in, Monatsberichte (1930-1932), MdI, Nr.11126/4-6.

[84] St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.11126/4, Monatsbericht (November-Dezember 1930), Bl.353; Zeigs, D., 'Die Leipziger SPD im Kampf um die Republik' (pp318-29), pp325ff, in, Grebing, H., Mommsen, H. and Rudolf, K. (eds.), Demokratie und Emanzipation zwischen Saale und Elbe. Beitrag zur Geschichte der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterbewegung bis 1933 (Essen, 1993).

umbrella organisation uniting the party's auxiliary organisations, to systematise the party's response to the Nazis.[85] It was not only the KPD which engaged in street fighting with the SA: the SPD and the Reichsbanner were also drawn into physical clashes.[86] Political violence tended to occur largely when propaganda columns came in contact with their rivals.[87] Because the KPD's policy at local level continued to adhere to the united front from below tactic, whereby no organisational contact could be sanctioned between the SPD and KPD even at local level, when the scale of street violence surged the tide of united action often flowed in the SPD's direction. The BL of the Saxon KPD tried to present the readiness of the SPD's left wing, the SAP and the KPD(O) to co-operate with the KPD at local level as a "manoeuvre" to hold back radicalised workers from communism.[88] Crucially, however, a significant number of Communist activists in the neighbourhoods thought otherwise and joined the SPD's and Free Trade Unions' united actions, which were led by local militants, to counter Nazi terror against workers' organisations. One such prominent example was the co-operation between the SPD and KPD local party organisations in Radeberg in late January 1931.[89] The KPD chastised the local party in Radeberg for allowing itself to be drawn into a "block with the 'left' SPD" instead of applying the united front from below to bring them under communist

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[85] Already in October this included the Reichsbanner, which now had the affiliated *Schuetzformation*; the Jungbanner; the SAJ; and the Socialist Youth Cartel. See, St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.11126/4, Monatsbericht (Oktober-November 1930), Bl.345.

[86] ibid, For a representative example see, Monatsberichte (November-Dezember 1930), Bl.354.

[87] St.Ha.D., MdI,Nr.11126/4, Monatsbericht (Dezember 1930-Januar 1931), Bl.385.

[88] SAPMO I 3/8-10/160, BL (Sekretariat). An alle Ortsgruppen und Betreibsgruppen der Partei! Dresden, den 11.3.1931, Bl.13-4.

[89] St.Ha.D., MdI,Nr.11126/4, Monatsbericht (Dezember 1930-Januar 1931), Bl.387.

leadership.[90] As the KPD permitted no input in policy making from below, these incidents were dealt with as a "deviation": when the use of "organisational means" failed to enforce the membership's isolation from the wider workers' movement, expulsions were used to maintain an unpopular party policy.[91]

The unpopularity of the *Volksrevolution* policy meant that its was largely driven by the party machine. This was most particularly the case in the campaign to win over the "declassed" elements in the *Mittelstand* for Communism. Members *en masse* simply ignored the leadership's instructions for a policy which they knew to be impracticable.[92] The Saxon BL had set out to gear up the lower party units for the *Volksrevolution* policy by using the Party Workers' Conference of 13 and 14 December.[93] After the conference Instructors were sent into the lower party organisations to set up Hit Squads (Stossgruppen) of activists, which carried out the policy in Instructor Areas (*Instrukteurgebiete*): using this method the party leadership hoped to demonstrate its claim that where policy was "correctly" applied it would produce positive results.[94] However, these measures of centralised party control over policy could not overcome the membership's reluctance to become involved in policies which they felt to be unworkable. Nevertheless, the BL made no attempt to redress the direction of local party policy to take

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[90] Zur Ueberpruefung der Arbeit. UB Konferenzen im Mai 1931. Bezirk Sachsen (Abteilung-Org.) (Manuscript, Leipzig, 1931), p9 [in the Former Dimitrov Museum Leipzig, Bestandnummer: 12,383].

[91] SAPMO I 3/8-10/160, Often these expulsions involved activists described as "older" party members see, BL (Sekretariat). An alle Ortsgruppen und Betreibsgruppen der Partei! Dresden, den 11.3.1931, Bl.18.

[92] Die Instrukteursystem der KPD, Ba.K., NS Hauptarchiv NS 26/810.

[93] SAPMO I 3/8-10/160, BL Sachsen. Sekretariat (Org.). Vorbereitung des Kampfkongresses gegen den Fascismus. Dresden, den 9.12.1930, Bl.124.

[94] I 3/8-10/155, Stadtteil "F". Rundschreiben Nr.1, Leipzig, den 5.2.1931, Bl.332.

account of the membership's views: it was merely asserted at party meetings and conferences that the policy was "correct" and those disagreeing held "anti-party" views.[95]

When the "Struggle Congress Against Fascism" met in Dresden on 24 and 25 January its function was to provide a propaganda platform for the *Volksrevolution* policy. Rudolf Renner's main speech at the Congress presented the KPD's policy as the point of departure for a mass movement to "smash fascism and the Young Plan" by including the "broadest masses" of workers in a Communist-led united front.[96] Under the central direction of the District Action Committee, elected at the Congress, local Action Committees were expected to organise and carry out street rallies, tax strikes, preventing the unemployed from being evicted for non-payment of rent arrears, protecting small peasants from the state's compulsory auction of their land for tax debt, strikes of the unemployed in compulsory work schemes, and marches on Town Halls and other institutions of the state which were involved in the local implementation of welfare cuts.[97] The KPD's policy aimed at extending the party's sphere of influence on the streets.[98]

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[95] SAPMO I 3/8-10/153, KPD UBL Leipzig. Letzte Anweisungen zum Arbeitsplan bis Anfang Februar (Anfang Januar 1931), Bl.24.

[96] SAPMO I 3/8-10/151, Gewinnt die Massen zum Kampf gegen den Fascismus! Der Dresdner Kampfkongress und seine Ziele. Referentenmaterial Nr.1. Herausgegeben vom Landesaktionsausschuss. Dresden, den 1.2.1931, Bl.64f.

[97] SAPMO I 3/8-10/154, KPD UB Leipzig (Sekretariat). Rundschreiben fuer Betriebs und Strassenzellen und Ortsgruppen des UBs Leipzig. Auswertung des Kampfkongresses gegen den Fascismus (7.2.1931), Bl.26. The District Action Committee comprised of 33 members and included: 14 non-party members; 4 communists; four members of the SPD; two members of the Reichsbanner; one member of the SAJ; two peasants; the remainder were rural workers, the urban *Mittelstand*, and the intelligentsia. See, SAPMO I 3/8-10/151, Gewinnt die Massen zum Kampf gegen den Fascismus! Der Dresdner Kampfkongress und seine Ziele. Referentenmaterial Nr.1. Herausgegeben vom Landesaktionsausschuss. Dresden, den 1.2.1931, Bl.63.

[98] For example, SAPMO I 3/8-10/154, KPD UB Leipzig (Sekretariat). Arbeitsplan fuer Mai bis Juni 1931. Leipzig, den 11.5.1931, Bl.44.

However, the reality among the membership after the "Struggle Congress" was the same as before: increasing alienation produced by an inappropriate response to the rise of the NSDAP and the feeling of political apoplexy induced by a tactic reminiscent of a dog chasing its tail. This, however, did not deter the BL from continuing to organisationally anchor the policy by making it an integral part of the meetings in preparation for the sub-district party conferences to be held in May.[99]

The regional Communist press and internal party circulars presented the socio-political composition of the Congress as a testament to the policy's success. Out of 1,578 delegates only 354 were members of the KPD. The other delegates were made up of 42 members of the SPD; six from the SAJ; one anarchist; two anarcho-syndicalists; six members of the KPD(O); and one member of the DDP; the remainder were so-called "non-party workers". In social composition 187 delegates were women; 109 youths; 25 peasants and rural workers; 27 white collar workers; and one member of the urban Mittelstand.[100] However, even these figures are improbably high: in mid January the District leadership had registered only 500 delegates, 90 per cent of whom were unemployed, and, despite quotas being issued to predetermine the composition of the Congress, the "delegate movement" could not achieve its targets.[101] The KPD's policy of "ideological discussion" to win over the Nazis' social basis had failed to result in the delegation of a single "Nazi worker". Despite the KPD's inability to attract Saxon Nazis to change their political

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[99] I 3/8-10/155, Stadtteil "F". Rundschreiben Nr.1, Leipzig, den 5.2.1931, Bl.332.

[100] SAPMO I 3/8-10/151, Gewinnt die Massen zum Kampf gegen den Fascismus! Der Dresdner Kampfkongress und seine Ziele. Referentenmaterial Nr.1. Herausgegeben vom Landesaktionsausschuss. Dresden, den 1.2.1931, Bl.63; Monatsbericht (January-February 1931) MdI, Nr.11126/5, Bl.380.

[101] SAPMO I 3/8-10/160, For example the BL had wanted one-third of delegates to be women see, BL Sachsen (Sekr-Org.) Dringende Anweisungen zum Kampfkongress. An die UBL, Betriebszellen und Ortsgruppen. Dresden, den 19.1.1931, Bl.24.

clothes, the policy continued to pervade the leadership's policy directives.[102] The prospect does, however, beg the question: what would have happened if Nazis had attended a Communist party conference as invited guests, not least as the SPD already made much political capital out of presenting the KPD as "Kozis" (Kommunazis).[103]

The impact of the Saxon KPD's policies continued to exhibit sub-regional variations. In general, the higher the degree of organisation in the SPD the more the wider party was resistant to the KPD's overtures to take part in its "Struggle Congresses." In the Leipzig area almost no delegates to communist conferences were organised in the SPD.[104] In the southwestern Saxon sub-region the NSDAP made its earliest and deepest penetration of political life.[105] However, despite the BL's advocacy of a policy of winning over these Nazi supporters for participation in communist campaigns, there is absolutely no evidence it had any results or was even actively carried out by the membership or lower functionaries. Where the organisational hold of the KPD and SPD was weaker, the independent mindedness of the membership was greater. Erzgebirge-Vogtland was a centre of the SAP, a left-wing split-off from the SPD in spring 1931.[106] In this environment the KPD's rank-and-file membership became involved with other left-wing workers because of a common need to defend themselves against the overwhelming

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[102] Zur Ueberpruefung der Arbeit. Unterbezirkskonferenzen im Mai 1931. Bezirk Sachsen. Abteilung-Org, pp3-4, ibid.

[103] The KPD's internal party meetings countered the accusation of being "Kozis" with the counter charge of the SPD's "toleration" for Bruening. See, SAPMO I 3/8-10/151, Gewinnt die Massen zum Kampf gegen den Fascismus! Der Dresdner Kampfkongress und seine Ziele. Referentenmaterial Nr.1. Herausgegeben vom Landesaktionsausschuss. Dresden, den 1.2.1931, Bl.66.

[104] Monatsbericht (Januar-Februar 1931), St.a.D., MdI, Nr.11126/5, Bl.381.

[105] SJFS, 1931-34, Nr.50, pp430-1; Walter, 'Stammland', p221.

[106] Tubbesing, J., 'NKVD - Antifascistischer Block-Einheitspartei. Aspekte der Geschichte der antifascistischen Bewegung in Leipzig', Magisterarbeit (University of Bielefeld, 1993), p24.

strength of the Nazis in the industrial towns and villages which peppered the landscape.[107]

However, despite the membership's reluctance to carry out the KPD leadership's *Volksrevolution* policy, it continued to be forced through by means of the party apparatus during 1931 and early 1932. Above all this applied to the Saxon KPD's Sisyphusian task of winning over rural workers and small peasants, in a region where these sociological groups were strongly under-represented.[108]

Volksrevoultion in the Saxon Countryside?

At the ECCI's 11th Plenum, in the spring of 1931, the European communist parties were informed of the need to pay greater attention to winning over rural workers and peasant farmers.[109] The KPD tried to mobilise the party for this rural campaigning by announcing a Peasants' Aid Programme in May 1931. Thaelmann's national policy declaration, in the strongly rural state of Oldenburg where the NSDAP was in a coalition government, was complemented by declarations by Communist parliamentary factions in the *Landtage* and Town Halls throughout Germany. The KPD leadership envisaged party work in the countryside being carried out by "peasant committees", which would hold conferences to mobilise party workers. These committees would then publicise the KPD's Peasants' Aid Programme and undertake the organisation of communist campaigning.[110] At local level as well as nationally, the KPD's propaganda targeted the "wage cutting policy of the Bruening-Schiele government" and its SPD "lackeys", who continued to advocate "arbitration fascism."[111] In a blueprint of the KPD's policies in all other areas, rural policy

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[107] For example, SAPMO I 3/8-10/151, Liquidierung des Masseneinflusses der SPD. KPD Bezirk Sachsens, Bl.77.

[108] Only 8 per cent of the Saxon workforce was employed in the rural economy; the national average was 22 per cent, see *Zeitschrift der saechsischen statististischen Landesamt (ZSSL)*, 87/88. Jg., 1941/42. p85.

was also a recruitment drive punctuated by Reich Congresses: the "delegate movement" in the countryside was to culminate in a Reich Congress of Peasants in January 1932 in Berlin.[112]

The impact of the economic crisis produced differing results in the German countryside. In northwestern Germany the radicalisation of the *Landvolk* movement brought with it bombing attacks on local tax offices. One of the movement's prominent leaders was Bruno von Salomon, who joined the KPD's rural campaign.[113] In Saxony, however, the KPD gained no such assistance from any prominent rural political leaders. The radicalisation of the Saxon rural population benefited the NSDAP, at the expense of the DNVP and the *Saechsische Landvolk* (SLV).[114] The NSDAP's decisive political penetration of the Saxon countryside was reflected in the outcome of the elections to the Rural Economic Chamber (*Landwirtschaftskammer*). In the spring of 1930 the KPD's BL was involved in the reconstruction of the party's League of Working Farmers (*Bund schaffender Wirte*) as a vehicle to challenge the traditional organisations of the rural population, the SLV and after 1930 the NSDAP. However, by the KPD's own admission, the League of Working Farmers made no impact in Saxony.[115] The KPD's whole rural organisational structure

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[109] Depeux, *National Bolshevismus*, p462; SAPMO I 3/8-10/144, Bericht des 2. KPD Sachsens an der 2. Bezirksparteitag vom 25-17.3.1932, pp106-8, Bl.55.

[110] I 3/8-10/155, Bericht von der Landarbeiterkonferenz am 3.5.1931 in Leipzig, den 6.5.1931, Bl.79.

[111] St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.19092, Abschrift. Rundschreiben an alle BL Sekretaire und Landabteilung, Berlin den 7.10.1931, Bl.91.

[112] Depeux, *National Bolschevismus*, p463. *Institut fuer Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung (Bd.4: 1924-33;* Berlin (Ost), 1966), p315.

[113] Ward, 'Smash the Fascists', p53.

[114] Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', p227.

[115] Bericht des KPD Sachsens an der 2. Bezirksparteitag vom 25-17.3.1932, pp105-6, SAPMO I 3.1932, Bl.55.

was a skeleton staff of party functionaries.[116] In connection with the elections to the Rural

Economic Chamber, the KPD's Saxon leadership criticised the lower party organisations

for "turning their face away from the village".[117] Out of 40 election districts the KPD was

only able to put forward candidates in three: Bautzen, Chemnitz and Annaberg-

Marienberg-Stollenberg-Schwarzenberg.[118] Even in areas where the local rural population

did seasonal work in cottage industries, such as in Vogtland, their connection to craft

workers did not lead them to the KPD.[119] In the elections to the Economic Chamber the

NSDAP won 22 of the 40 seats, the remainder went to the SLV.[120]

The BL also began an internal party campaign to revive the village sponsorship schemes

(*Patenschaftssystem*), which had been used in the mid 1920s, whereby party organisations

in industrial areas "adopted" a rural area in which to conduct party work.[121] The

sponsorship scheme, in theory at least, was charged with organising meetings in the

villages; distributing literature and general agit-prop campaigns; and identifying areas in

which party and RGO cells could be built up as "bases" from which to launch communist

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[116] ibid.

[117] SAPMO I 3/8-10/163, BL der KPD (Landabteilung). Rundschreiben. An alle verantwortlichen Leiter der UBL, Ortsgruppen und Betreibszellen der KPD Sachsens, Dresden den 5.5.1931, Bl.1.

[118] SAPMO I 3/8-10/163, BL der KPD (Landabteilung). Rundschreiben. An alle verantwortlichen Leiter der UBL, Ortsgruppen und Betreibszellen der KPD Sachsens, Dresden den 5.5.1931, Bl.1.

[119] On the employment of small-scale rural producers in the handicrafts industries as a second seasonal job see, Lobmeier, K., 'Die sozioekonomische Lage und das politische Verhalten der "alten" Mittelschichten in Kreishauptmannschaft Chemnitz 1927 bis 1935', Dissertation (Leipzig University, 1989), p32.

[120] St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.11126/5, Monatsbericht (Mai-Juni 1931), Bl.416. In these elections only landowners could vote. It is possible, but difficult to establish beyond a small number of exceptional cases, that the KPD's gained occasional support from rural labourers who were already involved in disputes with small-scale land owners.

[121] This system had been used during the Congress of the Working People campaign in 1927, see chapter 5.3 above.

campaigns.[122] However, the Politburo's circulars indicate that central instructions rarely left the printed page: few members took part in the policy and there were insufficient functionaries to organise events.[123] It was clearly apparent that the KgdF was no substitute for the RFB: if the membership was less independent minded, they were also less politically motivated. The BL dealt with the crisis of confidence in the KPD's rural policy by using Instructors to enforce the party line.[124] The role of the Instructors was to extend the party's organisation and influence into the countryside. For these ends the lower party organisations were instructed that: "The main task is not the meeting itself but the creation of committees...Always remember that the party has not just sent you as an agitator but as an organiser."[125] The KPD's tactics, however, failed to take account of different interest groups in the rural population. The policy of causing both strikes among rural labourers and preventing forced evictions did not address the conflict of interests between rural labourers, small farmers and medium scale producers. Instead, party propaganda simplistically presented Chancellor Bruening, the "Green Front" which was associated with the political interests of "big agriculture", and the Nazis as a unified grouping which opposed the interests of the "ordinary" rural population.[126] The KPD's rural agitation, which was intended to act as a political solvent dissolving the barrier between the rural population and the party, only pushed them further into the arms of the

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[122] SAPMO I 3/8-10/155, BL Sachsen. An die UB und Ortsgruppenleitungen des UB Leipzig. Betr. Landarbeiterkonferenz in Leipzig am 21.3.1931, Bl.76; ibid, Der Bolshevik. Organ fuer die Mitglieder der KPD. Bezirk Sachsen, Nr.1,Jg.3, Leipzig, Anfang Januar 1932, Bl.212.

[123] St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.19092, Abschrift. Rundschreiben an alle BL Sekretaire und Landabteilung, Berlin den 7.10.1931, Bl.91.

[124] Ba.K, Hauptarchiv der NSDAP, NS 26/810, Die Instruktursystem der KPD.

[125] St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.19092, Abschrift. Sonderrundschreiben an alle Bezirks und UBen Leitungen. Bereitet den Bauerntag gruendlich vor, Berlin den, 15.10.1931, Bl.97.

[126] A typical example is, St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.19092, Deutsche Bauern Zeitung, Nr.7, Berlin,1931, Bl.102f.

NSDAP.[127] In Saxony there is no evidence of the KPD attracting "farmers' sons", whom Muehlberger identified as the strongest supporters of the NSDAP in western Germany.[128] During the spring and harvest months of 1931 the RGO tried to unfold a campaign of wage strikes among rural workers, whose pay had been cut by emergency decree. Instructions from the district and sub-district rural divisions called on the party's lower organisations to distribute pamphlets demanding wage strikes, which were to be followed up by a campaign of meetings electing "struggle committees".[129] In the sub-district of Greater Leipzig the first campaign of meetings since the mid 1920s was held in the countryside. In April 1931 some 33 meetings were held on rural estates, the RGO was active in six strikes involving a total of 80 rural labourers.[130] Not only was this an exception to the rural rule of disgruntled acquiescence to wage cutting, but the RGO had only become involved in strikes *post facto*, rather than organising and leading them.[131] More importantly, the organisation of strikes was not only impeded by heavy handed policing and the employers' ability to replace strikers with seasonal Polish workers, but party members living in close proximity to the striking estates rejected the party's "alliance-policy" as fundamentally misconceived.[132] The KPD's ideology devoted considerable space to the concept of mutual solidarity between industrial and rural workers. However, the reality of the policy's failure was conceded at the Saxon KPD's second regional conference in March 1932: only in the solitary case of a textile strike in

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[127] ibid, An die Nachrichtenstellen der Laender. Betr. KPD Landarbeit, Bl.74.

[128] Muehlberger, D., *Hitler's Followers. Studies in the Sociology of the Nazi Movement* (London, 1991), pp205-6.

[129] I 3/8-10/155, Rundscheiben. Der Landarbeiterstreik in Westsachsen (undated: 1931), Bl.80.

[130] ibid, An die BL Sachsen Abteilung-Land. KPD UB Leipzig, den 10.4.1931, Bl.77.

[131] ibid.

[132] ibid, Rundscheiben. Der Landarbeiterstreik in Westsachsen (undated: 1931), Bl.82-3.

Floeha in 1931 had peasants acted in solidarity by supplying food to strikers.[133] In no instance was the KPD able to broaden rural strikes by causing snowballing solidarity strikes in industrial areas.[134] Rural employers also settled disputes by payment in kind, in the form of milk and food: when hunger was abated so too was the inclination to strike. Furthermore, the SA and Nazis' tactic of achieving "class compromise" also appears to have been more attractive to all concerned, while the KPD's policy pushed small-and medium-scale rural employers more sharply towards their political rivals.[135]

Rural workers' antipathy towards communism was also reflected in the RGO's campaign to cause strikes during the harvest months. While the party's daily press proclaimed a wave of Communist-led activity, the reality was in stark contrast: frequently communist meetings had to be cancelled as only party organisers turned up.[136] The KPD also had too few speakers who were trained to address rural audiences.[137] The NSDAP, by contrast, had a cadre of activists who were well trained speakers and party propaganda took account of specific local peculiarities.[138] During 1931 the KPD experienced difficulties campaigning among industrial workers who were employed in factories in small industrial villages (Siedlungen), which were surrounded by the Saxon countryside.[139] The inability to

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[133] SAPMO I 3/8-10/144, Bericht des KPD Sachsens an der 2. Bezirksparteitag vom 25-17.3.1932, pp106-8, Bl.55.

[134] ibid.

[135] I 3/8-10/155, Rundscheiben. Der Landarbeiterstreik in Westsachsen (undated: 1931), Bl.80.

[136] Staatsarchiv Bremen (Sta.B) 4,65-1729 Monatsbericht (June-July 1931).

[137] St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.11192, An das MdI, Dresden. Betr. Landarbeiter-Versammlungskampagne der RGO. Kh Leipzig, den 20.6.1931, Bl.23-4.

[138] Noakes, Nazi Party, pp141ff.

[139] SAPMO I 3/8-10/155, Der Bolshevik. Organ fuer die Mitglieder der KPD. Bezirk Sachsen, Nr.1, Jg.3, Leipzig, Anfang Januar 1932, Bl.212. This stressed to functionaries the rural location of some large factories, especially in paper processing and wood working sectors of the Saxon economy.

include these workers in the KPD's campaigns further prevented the KPD from building up "bases" from which to agitate in the countryside. Despite the impact of the fourth emergency decree, which cut wages by some 10-15 per cent from January 1932, the ZK Rural Division's renewed policy drive in December failed to take off.[140] The greatest activity was in the *Landtag* and Town Halls, where Communist deputies forwarded motions for the amelioration of the poverty of the rural population. This was, unsuccessfully, intended to function as a propaganda focus for a wider extra-parliamentary campaign.[141]

The KPD's role in preventing farmers' property from being subject to compulsory auctions to clear tax arrears also feature prominently in the communist daily press, which claimed that a "small war" had been unleashed in the countryside under Communist leadership.[142] In this area of party activity, as in all others, "mass action" was stressed: the prevention of forced auctions was to involve village communities in Communist-led actions against the state as opposed to local Communists' acting to prevent the auctioning of an individual's possessions. This was made clear in the KPD's organ for functionaries, *Der Bolschevik,* which criticised party members who had acted as "individuals" by preventing a peasant's cow being sold to pay of his tax arrears. Party functionaries were told that the idea was not to "take struggles away from the peasants" but to use them to organise villagers in communist campaigns.[143] The only incidences of the Saxon KPD

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[140] St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.19092, Abschrift. Anweisungen an alle Bezirkslandesabteilungen!, Berlin, den 4.1.1932, Bl.116. Thaelmann's policy speech was published in the December issue of *Die Internationale,* ibid.

[141] ibid.

[142] *Die Rote Fahne,* Nr.5, 7.1.1932.

[143] SAPMO I 3/8-10/155, Der Bolshevik. Organ fuer die Mitglieder der KPDs. Bezirk Sachsen, Nr.1,Jg.3, Leipzig, Anfang Januar 1932, Bl.212.

forming "peasants' committees" to carry out the leadership's policy against forced auctions were in the localities of Bermsgruene, Gelenau and Hainichen.[144] Of the fifteen forced auctions which the KPD claimed to have prevented during the winter of 1931/2, only in one documented case did a "mass action" take place.[145] The incident occurred in the outskirts of Hainichen where some 100 local Communists turned up to prevent a fellow party member, a small peasant, from having his belongings auctioned.[146] Although the levels of rural indebtedness increased in the course of 1932, the KPD was involved in few "mass actions" to prevent forced auctions.[147] Later studies conducted by East German historians blamed the failure of the KPD's campaign on the negative propaganda made by the SPD and "bourgeois parties" which presented the forced collectivization of the Soviet rural economy as a state expropriation *en masse*.[148] However, the KPD was unable to present itself as a political hybrid, protecting the property of the rural population in Germany while enthusiastically supporting all thing Soviet.

The KPD also set out to maintain a visible presence in rural areas using what contemporaries called "propaganda journeys": columns of party activists on foot or in lorries taking propaganda to outlying areas.[149] This principally took the form of "Rural Sundays", which were another case of pouring old communist tactics into the new bottles of the early 1930s. After the second deflationary emergency decree of 5 June 1931

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[144] SAPMO I 3/8-10/144, Bericht des KPD Sachsens an der 2. Bezirksparteitag vom 25-17.3.1932, pp106-8, Bl.55.

[145] ibid.

[146] St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.19092, "Hundete von Arbeitern verhindern Zwangsversteigerung eines Kleinbauerns", *Saechsische Arbeiterzeitung* (SAZ), Nr.49, 2.3.1932, Bl.163; ibid, Stadtrat Hainichen, Polizeiwache, den 21.3.1932, Bl.165.

[147] SAPMO I 3/8-10/145, Bericht der BL der KPD Sachsen an der 3. Parteitag vom 3-4.12.1932, Bl.8.

[148] *In der Revolution geboren*, p293.

[149] St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.19097, An das MdI Sachsens. Dresden, am 20.7.1932, Bl.152.

increased general political tensions, the Saxon Ministry of the Interior detailed how scarcely a Sunday went by without these "propaganda journeys" from the NSDAP and to a lesser extent the SPD, in addition to the KPD. These events were conceived of as a political fanfare for the common man using music and marches adorned by flags, banners and placards to attract attention.[150] The transfer of urban political violence to the countryside, particularly when political rivals collided while spreading their message, brought with it the condemnation of the majority of the population. The Saxon state authorities cited this in its appeal for the use of the presidential decree of 28 March 1931 on preventing political excesses, thereby aiming to prevent the influx of non-locals into the proliferation of Saxon villages.[151] The KPD's reception in rural Saxony was more akin to a fox among the chickens than a harbinger of political revelation. This was all the more so when Communist activists trampled over peasants' crops, even playing football on them, and then asked the hard-pressed peasantry to buy their literature and discuss an "alliance" with the urban proletariat.[152]

The KPD's so-called Reich Peasants' Day, to be held on 15 November, illustrates the problems of a monolithic Bolshevised party presenting itself as housing a hyphenated political identity: advocating revolution on the model of the Russian Revolution while simultaneously representing the German nationalist interests of the "working people". The ZK in Berlin decided that the anniversary celebrations of the Russian Revolution were too confined to urban industrial areas: the KPD should therefore take its celebrations to the

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[150] St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.11126/5, Monatsbericht (June-July 1931), Bl.416,Bl.423.

[151] ibid, Monatsbericht (May-June 1931), Bl.423; An das MdI Sachsens. Dresden, am 20.7.1932, St.a.D., MdI, Nr.19097,Bl.152.

[152] Party functionaries were asked to prevent party workers from antagonising peasants' sensibilities. See, SAPMO I 3/8-10/155, Der Bolshevik. Organ fuer die Mitglieder der KPDs. Bezirk Sachsen, Nr.1,Jg.3, Leipzig, Anfang Januar 1932, Bl.212.

countryside and "popularise the socialist construction of the Soviet rural economy" (ie collectivization).[153] The Reich Peasants' Day was viewed by the ZK as a means of breathing life into the party's rural campaign and mobilising the City Districts, local groups and cells to carry party policy into their sponsored villages.[154] However, despite a flurry of directives from the rural divisions, the meetings in preparation for the event itself sunk like a lead weight in unfriendly political waters. The audience at Communist "peasants' meetings" frequent comprised only party members, who were often not from the locality, and in the small number of cases when farmers did come they often took issue with the KPD's speakers. The Saxon Ministry of the Interior concluded on the basis of local administrative district reports that the KPD's campaign had made no impact.[155] In the countryside around Chemnitz and Zwickau the membership made the greatest efforts to campaign in rural areas. However, here too meetings were more like a needle in a haystack than a concentrated campaign. These meetings were also organised by activists from neighbouring industrial areas, for example some 20-25 members of the KgdF walked out to agitate among the farmers in the environs of Oelsnits i.V. and Schneeberg.[156]

The ZK had intended the Peasants' Aid Programme campaign to reach a high point at a Reich Peasants' Congress in Berlin. The Congress was finally held on 23-24 January 1932: the delay of more than six months indicates the difficulties experienced in having small-

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[153] St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.19092, Abschrift. Rundschreiben an alle BL Sekretaire und Landabteilung, Berlin den 7.10.1931, Bl.92.

[154] ibid, Bl.94.

[155] ibid, An das MdI Dresden. Betr. KPD Landarbeit. Kh Bautzen, am 28.11.1931, Bl.110; ibid, An das MdI Dresden. Kh Zwickau, den 28.11.1931, Bl.111; ibid, An das MdI Dresden. Chemnitz, den 28.11.1931, ibid,Bl.112; ibid, An das MdI Dresden. Dresden, den 28.11.1931, ibid, Bl.113.

[156] St.Ha.D., MdI,19092, An das MdI Dresden. Dresden, den 28.11.1931, Bl.113; ibid, An das MdI Dresden. Kh Zwickau, den 28.11.1931, Bl.111; ibid, Abschrift. Anweisungen an alle Bezirkslandesabteilungen! Berlin, den 4.1.1932, Bl.116.

and medium-scale peasant producers delegated to the Congress. The number of delegates at the Congress was 145, 14 of whom were members of the KPD.[157] The participants were addressed by Bruno von Salomon, who spoke on the importance of the "alliance policy". Johannes Nau's speech detailed the reflections of peasants who had visited the Soviet Union.[158] The KPD's central organ, *Die Rote Fahne*, claimed in triumphalist tones that the delegates represented a movement of hundreds of thousands of rural workers; careless editing, however, meant that the same edition carried the ZK's lamentations on the back pages.[159] In Saxony the BL conceded that only 15 "peasant committees" had been founded during the immediate preparations for the Congress and the majority of these were "passive".[160] The campaign to elect delegates to the Congress was characterised throughout Saxony by a reluctance to participate.[161] No figure is given for the number of delegates from Saxony; the number, however, was certainly small, perhaps a handful.

The culmination of the Peasants' Aid Programme at the Reich Congress in Berlin gives the impression that the Saxon KPD's rural policy resembled pulling a lever which was connected to nothing: the internal party machinery was put in place but there were too few cogs to turn the wheels. The policy failed to win support among the rural population, and the KPD was unable to build up the organisational "bases" from which to oppose the

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[157] *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, p315.

[158] St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.19092, An die Nachrichtenstellen der Laender. Betr. KPD Bauernpropaganda. Reichs MdI, Bl.41.

[159] Dorpalen, 'Endphase', p95 and note 69, quoting, *Die Rote Fahne*, 24.1.1932.

[160] SAPMO I 3/8-10/144, Bericht des KPD Sachsens an der 2. Bezirksparteitag vom 25-17.3.1932, pp106-8, Bl.55.

[161] St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.19092, An das MdI Dresden. Kh. Zwickau, den 28.11.1931, Bl.111; ibid, An das MdI Dresden. Chemnitz, den 28.11.1931, Bl.112; ibid, Abschrift. Rundschreiben an alle BL Sekretaire und Landabteilung, Berlin den 7.10.1931, Bl.91f.

NSDAP. From 14,112 new recruits in Saxony between April and December 1931, all but 101 of them were industrial workers, the vast majority were unemployed; only 13 new recruits had defected from the Nazis.[162] The impact of the *Volksrevolution* campaign in the Saxon countryside gives no reason to believe that the KPD had any significant influence among the rural workforce or small producers. From Baden in the northwest to Saxony in the south east the countryside, to varying degrees, became a Nazi stronghold; the patent reality of this disinclined Communist activists from complying with a policy which was viewed at best as misconceived and at worst as damaging.[163] The ZK in Berlin, the Saxony BL and, more importantly the rank-and-file membership and mid and lower level functionaries, all knew that the countryside had turned brown; party documentation stating otherwise was contradictory and served as internal party propaganda to justify continuing a failing policy. The rural campaign was a policy which was largely conducted on the pages of the party press and circulars from the KPD's rural divisions. In the propaganda war between the NSDAP and the KPD both parties claimed to represent the "working people" of white collar workers and lower civil servants, those injured in the First World War, peasants and industrial workers.[164] This was compounded by the increasingly similar language of the political extremes and the KPD's adoption of much of the Nazis' political image, such as a leadership cult and (verbal) ultra-nationalism. The failure of the *Volksrevolution* policy to beat back the NSDAP by winning over its social basis among the "misled" working people did not correspond to the political reality in Saxony. It is only possible to explain why the policy was so enduring in terms of the

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[162] Ba.K. NS 26/810, Hauptarchiv der NSDAP, Entwicklung der Mitgliederschaft der KPD.

[163] Watts, D., 'Electoral Success and Political Failure: The KPD in Mannheim in the Last Years of the Weimar Republic', *EHQ*, 18 (4) (1988) (pp439-54), p443.

[164] For a typical example of Nazi propaganda see, St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.19099, "Rueckblick auf das Jahr 1931", *Voelkischer Beobachter*, Nr.4, 4.1.1932, Bl.57.

Comintern's objective of harnessing German nationalism in the interests of Soviet foreign policy.

7.5 The Anti-Fascist Action: A Crisis Disguised as an Opportunity.

Between the spring and autumn of 1932 the KPD carried out a tactical shift in emphasis, which became known as the "Anti-Fascist Action". Initially, the KPD leadership appeared to have finally seen the need to place the struggle against the rise of the Nazis at the centre of party policy. At first glance the KPD even seemed to be adopting a more flexible approach towards the SPD than the constraints of the "social fascist" policy had permitted.[165] On 25 April the ZK stated publicly to the Reich Executives of the SPD and ADGB that it was ready to "fight together with any organisation in which workers were united, and genuinely wants to carry out the struggle against cuts in pay and unemployment benefits"[166] The publication of the "Anti-Fascist Action" appeal, on 25 May 1932, continued to stress that the KPD's main aim was to prevent Hitler from coming to power.[167] However, already by 5 June the ZK insisted that the KPD's united front offers had been directed at the social democratic workers as individuals, not their "reformist" leaders.[168] What the Anti-Fascist Action did represent was an ephemeral episode in

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[165] Weber, *Hauptfeind*, pp49ff; 'Rundschreiben des ZK am 4.6.1932' in, Weber, H. (ed.), *Die Generallinie. Rundschreiben des Zentralkommittees der KPD an die Bezirke, 1929-1933* (Duesseldorf, 1981), pp492ff. This circular emphasises "halting the rising wave of Hitler Fascism and beating it back".

[166] Bahne, *Scheitern*, p23.

[167] Weber, H., *Kommunismus in Deutschland 1918-1945 (Ertraege der Forschung vol.198;* Darmstadt, 1983), p135.

[168] Bahne, *Scheitern*, pp23-4; Daycock, 'Political Extremes', pp285ff. The KPD's representatives, Torgler and Kasper, negotiated with the SPD during June 1932 on the possibility of "tolerating" an SPD-Centre Party government in Prussia.

experimenting with the united front from above (ie winning over social democratic workers by using conditional offers of co-operation to their leaders).[169]

Various factors had combined to trigger the KPD's change in tactics. The KPD leadership at national level had focused its fire on the SPD, but the violence on the streets made the membership identify the Nazis as the "main enemy".[170] It is also possible that Stalin had been temporarily put on the defensive in Moscow in what Guenter Reimann, in a recently published memoir, called the "Moscow Spring" of 1932. This allowed a change in the Comintern's German policy which took greater account of the situation that the KPD was faced with.[171] Crucially, the KPD was dressing up what was a party crisis as a political opportunity. The inflexibility of the Comintern's General Line had intensified a dispute within the KPD leadership over the negative impact it was having on the party.[172] The party conflagration culminated in the removal of two members of the three-man Secretariat, Neumann and Remmele, in the course of 1932.[173] The Saxon BL was also wracked with disputes on the detrimental effects of party policy. In early summer 1931 Renner was replaced as Political Secretary, and other prominent figures such as Herbert Wehner, were sidelined. The leadership of the Saxon KPD was put in the hands of the party *apparatchik*, Fritz Selbmann, who, as an outsider to the region, was less inclined to

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[169] Flechtheim, *Die KPD*, pp221ff.

[170] For the KPD in Berlin see, Rosenhaft, *Beating*, pp7ff,18ff,211ff.

[171] This thesis is without documentary evidence. See, Reimann, G., *Berlin-Moskau 1932. Das Jahr der Entscheidung* (Hamburg, 1993).

[172] Bahne, S., "Sozialfascismus' in Deutschland. Zur Geschichte eines politischen Begriffs', in *International Review of Social History (IRSH)* 10 (2) (1965), p283; Bahne, somewhat strangely, identifies the prime policy mover as Wilhelm Pieck with the temporary co-operation of the Thaelmann Group. See *Scheitern*, p24

[173] Weber, *Hauptfeind*, pp79ff.

respond to Saxon political peculiarities.[174] The changes in leading personnel were accompanied by a further centralisation in the Saxon KPD's organisation.[175] Meetings of the lower party organisations had openly referred to their lack of trust in and enthusiasm for the upper party leadership.[176] The Anti-Fascist Action was conceived of as a means of stabilising the party in the face of these wide-ranging difficulties. One example of the problems of rigidly continuing the *Hauptfeind Sozialdemokratie* General Line is illustrated by the campaign for a referendum against the Schieck administration in Saxony. The referenda, which parallelled policy in Prussia, were regionally distinct. In Prussia the referendum campaign aimed to oust the incumbent SPD-led administration, but in Brunswick, for example, the Communists were involved in trying to remove a regional government which was controlled by the Nazis.[177] In Saxony, however, the KPD's membership was disinclined to become actively involved in a *de facto* united front with the Nazis and DNVP, who also wanted to bring down the Schieck government.[178] If the ZK was to keep control of the membership some concession to the force of events on the streets was required.

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[174] St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.11126/5, Monatsbericht (Juli-August 1931), Bl.432f; Selbmann's and Wehner's memoirs also give accounts of this period in the Saxon KPD's history, see, Selbmann, F., *Alternative-Bilanz-Credo. Versuch einer Selbstdarstellung* (Halle, 1975), esp. pp189ff; Wehner, H., *Zeugnis. Persoenliche Notizen, 1929-42* (Cologne, 1982), esp. pp30ff.

[175] ibid, Monatsbericht (March-April 1931), Bl.399

[176] A representative example see, SAPMO I 3/8-10/154, Bericht ueber die Sitzung der erweiterten Stadtteilleitungssitzung A. Leipzig, den 9.4.1931, Bl.149-51.

[177] Reuter, G., *KPD-Politik in der Weimarer Republik. Politische Vorstellung und soziale Zusammensetzung der KPD in Hannover zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik* (Hannover, 1982), p119 and note 12.

[178] Sta.B., 4,65-1730, Monatsbericht (November-December 1931); ibid, (April 1932); B.A.P. RKO 15.07 Bd.2, Nr. 26061, Politischer Bericht, Bl.131ff.

In Saxony at least the "social fascist" policy was beginning to burn out against the friction of internal party opposition.[179] Furthermore, the "Anti-Fascist Action" was a necessary response to the formation of the SPD and ADGB's Iron Front, which had itself been founded as a response to the NSDAP-DNVP alliance, the Harzburg Front.[180] The SPD's united front offers to the KPD, such as that made by Rudolf Breitscheid in late 1931, while rejected as "manoeuvres" by the KPD's leadership, seemed increasingly relevant to many Saxon Communists.[181] More significantly, in a whole range of areas, such as the Ruhr, Wuerttemberg, Hamburg, Oberhausen and Nurenberg, communist sub-district organisations and local groups had co-operated with local organisations of the SPD against the NSDAP.[182] Saxony's political history as a region with a strong left-wing SPD and the recent surge of Nazi campaigning and violence combined to give the policy urgency at local level. The KPD leadership was concerned that to fail to respond to Nazi violence risked allowing the dam between the KPD and SPD to burst, creating a fertile meadow of proletarian unity under the hegemony of the left-wing Saxon SPD.[183] The pressure of political developments on the KPD, which threatened to implode many local party organisations, forced the KPD to present the crisis of party morale as an opportunity to combat "Nazi-terror".

The KPD's technique of mobilising the party did not differ from the *Volksrevolution* policy: the "Antifa" was a "delegate movement" which was intended to function as a coveyor belt to Communist-led campaigns by including non-communists in the so-called

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[179] For the impact of Nazi violence on the Berlin KPD's membership see, Rosenhaft, *Beating*, passim.

[180] Flechtheim, *Die KPD*, p223; Rosenhaft, *Beating*, pp79ff.

[181] Degras, *Communist International*, p213.

[182] Weber, H., 'Einleitung', in Flechtheim, *Die KPD* (2 edn; Frankfurt/M, 1969), p55ff; Bahne, *Scheitern*, p23.

[183] Ba.K, R 45 IV/22, Taetigkeitsbericht von Instrukteur Becker im UB IX (undated: probably July 1932).

"unity committees". The committees would then carry out "actions" as part of the KPD's on-going work in the factories, on the streets, and in rural areas.[184] What had changed was that Social Democrats were to be attracted by the promise of physical defence against Nazi violence. The KPD's MSS (Mass Self-Defence) was given the task of setting up commissions to organise party work at grass roots level. It was hoped that agitation and propaganda against the impact of the Reich government's emergency decrees on workers and the unemployed would give the Antifa Action wider support.[185] In reality the "Antifa Action" in Saxony was carried out by a staff of Instructors. The Instructors not only brought directives to the local groups and party cells but stayed to organise the policy's implementation. However, the overwhelming mood of despondency and despair among the Saxon KPD members meant that much of the Instructors' efforts were consumed by trying to break up large and inactive residential party units into "groups of five", which were expected to be more active and compliant.[186]

The subterfuge used in the KPD's calls to the SPD's membership for "joint" defence against the Nazis' street violence did not detract from the continued centrality of communist factory policy. The KPD's functionary core continued to dissipate vast amounts of energy in a campaign that the overwhelmingly unemployed party membership clearly regarded as both inappropriate and impracticable. At a meeting in Dresden between the BL and RGO factory functionaries, 22 of the 40 RGO officials were factory

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[184] SAPMO I 3/8-10/151, Rundschreiben der KPD Nr.12. Bezirk Sachsen. (undated: July 1932), Bl.110; B.aK. R 45 IV/28, Rundschreiben. An alle Strassen und Betreibszellen (undated: probably mid 1932); ibid, An die Ortsgruppen der KPD. Chemnitz, den 20.6.1932.

[185] Ba.K, R 45 IV/22, Taetigkeitsbericht von Instrukteur Becker im UB IX (undated: probably July 1932).

[186] B.aK. R 45 IV/28, Bericht ueber Grimmma von Instrukteur Rolf. Leipzig, den 30.5.1932; ibid, An die BL und UBL Riesa. Bericht vom Instrukteur Schiller ueber die Arbeit im Waldheim. Waldheim, den 2.6.1932; ibid, Bericht an die BL ueber die Taetigteiten im UB Reisa vom Instrukteur Rolf. Radeberg, den 15.6.1932.

Instructors.[187] A meeting in the Siedel and Neumann textile factory in Dresden, which held a meeting of some 100 workers and adopted a resolution in support of the "Antifa", was very much an exception to the rule.[188] In the factories of Vogtland, which were dispersed throughout the region, the weakness of the SPD did not allow a communist breakthrough. For example in Treuen in the four large factories employing 800 workers the RGO had only five members.[189] In Freital local party activists informed the Instructor that there would be no more strike calls until the RGO was strong enough.[190]

During the "Antifa" the KPD's greatest successes remained in achieving benefit increases from Town Halls to the unemployed and pensioners. The Saxon KPD used the long tried and tested technique of organising demonstrations of the unemployed on Town Halls when the question of benefit cuts was being debated in the chamber. Normally a delegation would then be brought into the local councils to represent the interests of the unemployed.[191] In this manner the Saxon KPD in mid-1932 attained concessions for the unemployed in Brand Erbisdorf, Heidenau, Koetzschenbroda, Radebeul and Doebeln.[192] In the main cities, however, it seems likely that the use of exclusion zones around the

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[187] SAPMO I 3/8-10/157, An die BL (Sekr.). Bericht ueber die Duerchfuhrung der Antifaschischen Aktion. UB Dresden, den 8.6.1932, Bl.63.

[188] ibid.

[189] Ba.K. R 45 IV/22, Instrukteurbericht fuer die Zeit vom 27.6 bis 30.7.1932. Plauen (undated).

[190] Ba.K. R 45 IV/28, Instrukteurbericht Freital. Sitzung der erweiterten Ortsgruppeleitung am 13.6.1932.

[191] Fischer, *German Communists*, pp138ff; Huber-Koller, R-M, 'Die kommunistische Erwerbslosenbewegung in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik', in *Gesellschaft. Beitraege zur Marxistischen Theory, X (1977)*, pp89-140; McElligott, A., 'Mobilising the Unemployed: The KPD and the Unemployed Workers' Movement in Hamburg-Altona during the Weimar Republic', in Evans and Geary (eds.), *The German Unemployed*, pp228ff.

[192] Ba.K. R 45 IV/28, An die BL der KPD Sachsens. KPD UB4. Freiberg, den 3.6.1932; ibid, Information ueber die Antifaschistische Aktion im UB 3 (19.7.1932).

Town Halls helped prevent this form of extra-parliamentary pressure.[193] The wider picture

is also complicated by the KPD's ability to attain these concessions by winning SPD votes,

and in some places also the votes of local NSDAP councillors, who also wanted to

influence the electoral predilections of the unemployed.[194] The KPD's work in this area

also failed to crystalise into the creation of a significant number of Committees of the

Unemployed; these continued to be run by a clutch of party members, sometimes by a

single activist.[195] The trend of research emphasises that the unemployed only took part in

Communist actions when these were explicitly in their own interests.[196] Conan Fischer

aptly described the KPD in this sense as a party but not a movement of the unemployed.[197]

In the other areas of party work, such as taking propaganda into the countryside,

campaigning to prevent the eviction of tenants who were in rent arrears and organising

payment strike against the utilities, there is no evidence of any campaign which made an

impact in Saxony.[198]

Despite the intentions of the KPD leadership, the organisation of defence against, and

indeed attacks on, the NSDAP became central to the "Anti-Fascist Action". The

ambiguous language of the policy's introduction produced a genuine uncertainty among

lower party functionaries concerning the extent to which the party line had changed.[199]

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[193] Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1730, Monatsberichte (1931-32).

[194] Ba.K. R 45 IV/28, Arbeitsplan zur Reichstagswahlkampagne des UB Dresden (undated).

[195] Ba.K. R 45 IV/28, Vorbereitung der Antifa Kampfwoche, Dresden (undated: July).

[196] Huber-Koller, 'Erwerbslosenbewegung', pp89ff.

[197] Fischer, *German Communists*, p144.

[198] In the files Ba.K. R 45 IV/22 and R 45 IV/22 there are extensive details on the Anti-Fascist Action in 1932. Documentation in the SAPMO archive is surprisingly sparse. For cases of preventing eviction and the KPD's role in the neighbourhoods see, Rosenhaft, *Beating*, pp86ff.

[199] Ba.K. R 45 IV/22, Aufruf der Antifa Aktion (leaflet), Dresden, den 3.6.1932; Stadtarchiv Leipzig (Stad.L) Ah. Leipzig Nr.1720, Der Eiserne Besen. Zeitung der KPD Zwenkau (undated: 1932), Bl.2.

One Political Leader of a local group wrote to the sub-district leadership asking whether the "Antifa" policy was a united front from above, including negotiations with the local leaders of the social democratic workers' movement, or continued the policy of addressing only the workers organised in the SPD and ADGB.[200] Furthermore, in this particular case, the lower functionary made it clear that he believed there was a mood in the KPD and the wider workforce for genuine joint action.[201] This type of uncertainty among rank-and-file members and local functionaries was intensified by widespread knowledge of developments in the Prussia *Landtag*, where the KPD had conducted negotiations with representatives of the SPD parliamentary fraction. The Berlin KPD had also called on the Iron Front to take part in a joint demonstration.[202] Examples of genuine co-operation between the workers parties' were also being published in *Klassenkampf*. One such example was in the giant Leuna chemical plant in neighbouring Halle, where the Communists, Social Democrats and the Christian trade unionists had made a joint proclamation in the factory council.[203] However, central to the response of local KPD organisations to the NSDAP in mid 1932 was the influence of immediate local conditions. In Saxon Town Halls, an earlier centre of right-wing Communism, "deviation" from the party line had followed on from the factionalism of the 1920s. Close proximity to the SPD

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[200] Ba.K. R 45 IV/22, Bericht von der Einleitung der Antifaschistischen Aktion in Plauen. Plauen, den 1.6.1932.

[201] ibid, Bericht von der Einleitung der Antifaschistischen Aktion in Plauen. Plauen, den 1.6.1932.

[202] Circulars of the Saxon BL, however, insisted that this was not possible in Saxony because the party did not have the same key position in the *Landtag*, which could be used to "exploit differences within the bourgeiosie". See, SAPMO I 3/8-10/151, Rundschreiben der KPD Nr.10. Bezirk Sachsens (undated: July 1932), Bl.104-5.

[203] *Klassenkampf* (4.7.32) quoted in ibid, Rundschreiben der KPD Nr.10. Bezirk Sachsens (undated: July 1932), Bl.105.

and the identification of certain joint interests had, since the turn of the year, led to Communist deputies voting with the SPD.[204]

The main cause of the increase in political violence in 1932 was Saxony's bombardment with one election campaign following another: two presidential elections, the referendum to dissolve the *Landtag*, two *Reichstag* elections and the communal elections in November.[205] It was in the "small war" of political campaigning that the majority of clashes between the parties took place: in 1932 seven deaths occurred, four by gun shots and three by stabbings.[206] If this did not represent a bloodbath, then the wider perception of civil society breaking down was heightened by the continual discovery of arms caches. Equally, when unemployment soared to its peak in 1932 and wages and benefits were cut by presidential decree, almost every Saxon citizen was affected either directly or indirectly.[207] There was also a widespread anticipation that, if Hitler won the presidential election, the SA would "march on Berlin". The Iron Front and KPD were also reported to be on alert in case of a Nazi putsch.[208] The NSDAP's campaign of violence did not discriminate between the SPD, KPD or the left-wing splinter parties. The SPD's Iron Front, which had been organised at Reich level to defend the system of parliamentary democracy, behaved at grass roots level as an *Abwehr* organisation in the face of Nazi attacks. On occasion, particularly in Leipzig, the Iron Front even undertook attacks on the NSDAP, especially when it campaigned in SPD strongholds.[209] The Iron Front also gave

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[204] ibid, Rundschreiben der KPD Nr.10. Bezirk Sachsens (undated: July 1932), Bl.104.

[205] Stadtarchiv Leipzig (Stad.L) Kap.3. Nr.38. Bd.2, Rueckblick auf das Jahr 1932, Bl.62.

[206] ibid.

[207] ibid, Bl.62-3.

[208] St.Ha.D., MdI Nr.19088, An das Ministerium des Innern, Dresden. Polizeipresidium Leipzig. Leipzig, den 19.3.1932, Bl.277.

[209] Sta.L., Kh. Leipzig Nr.1721, An die Ah Leipzig. Polizeipresidium Engelsdorf, den 17.7.1932.

the Saxon SPD's opposition to the NSDAP a mass presence on the streets. The organisation's first demonstrations numbered some 18,000 participants in Leipzig, 11,000 in Dresden and 10,000 in Chemnitz.[210] It was in this climate of political violence that in the aftermath of the re-election of Hindenburg as Reich president, Chancellor Bruening imposed a ban on the SA and SS between 13 April and 16 June.[211] However, although the Saxon Ministry of the Interior felt that the SA ban had done something to limit political violence, the NSDAP almost openly used the front organisation, the *Notschuetz*, to take over the SA's role.[212]

The impact of the KPD's "Anti-Fascist Action" varied across Saxony in relation to local conditions. In Greater Leipzig the city's more concentrated industrial structure and the high degree of organisational stability in the social democratic workers' movement restricted the NSDAP's ability to dominate the streets. The SA blamed the limitations on its local influence on the activism of the Iron Front and its attraction to younger workers.[213] The SPD in Leipzig also carried out demonstrations which were explicitly against the NSDAP. In July 1932 the Leipzig SPD marched through the centre of the city, a middle-class residential area, shouting anti-Nazi slogans into megaphones. According to

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[210] Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1730 Monatsbericht (February-March 1932); B.a.P., RKO 15.07, Nr. 25900, Bericht ueber Sachsen, Bl.274.

[211] The deeper reasons for this lay in the National Opposition's campaign to unseat Chancellor Bruening. This belated measure, however, backfired giving amunition to General Schleicher's behind the scenes intrigues to install a government of "national concentration" under Franz von Papen in June 1932. For the sequence of events see, Kolb, *Weimar Republic*, pp116ff.

[212] St.Ha.D., Nr.19088, Polizeipresidium Dresden am 6.7.1932, Bl.250.

[213] St.Ha.D., MdI, Nr.19088, Dienstbefehl. Polizeipresidium Dresden (undated: Februar 1932), Bl.270. Conditions in Leipzig also caused conflict between the sub-district (*Gau*) leadership and the Saxon leadership under Martin Mutschmann. There was no leadership of the Leipzig SA throughout most of 1932 and control was exercised through a party commissioner. See, ibid, *Freiheitskampf*, Nr.53, 3.3.1932, Bl.320; ibid, *Freiheitskampf*, Nr.197, 23.8.32, Bl.331.

the police reports the uproar caused considerable alarm among the residents.[214] The Leipzig SPD's militant opposition to the NSDAP also greatly limited the KPD's ability to carry out the "Antifa" campaign by building up the MSS against Nazi violence in working-class districts. There is also no evidence of organised co-operation between rank-and-file members of the KPD and the KPD(O), which comprised some 500 members in Leipzig's skilled textile and printing trades.[215] Co-operation between Social Democrats and Communists did, however, happen on an *ad hoc* basis, spontaneously responding to the activities of the local NSDAP. One such example was in Leiberwolkwitz, where a local slater held a meeting of seven Nazis in his house on 27 July. Some 20 Communists and members of the *Reichsbanner*, who had been drinking together in the *Schwarze Rose* public house, prevented the Nazis leaving the meeting, which had ended at around midnight. It required the arrival of a police van with ten officers to clear the street.[216] It must, however, be noted that Leipzig was not an exception to the Nazis' ability to hold political meetings in 1932, a year in which all political activity rose on a tide of one election campaign flowing into another. Nazi meetings in Greater Leipzig increased from 1,157 in 1931 to 2,386 in 1932; meetings held by the SPD, and its affiliated organisations, increased from 240 to 1056; meetings held by the KPD, and its auxiliary organisations rose from 695 to 1,575.[217]

SPD organisational predominance in the administrative districts of Leipzig and neighbouring Grimma, and the activism of the Iron Front, the *Reichsbanner*, the Sport organisations and the *Hammerschaften* in the factories, prevented Nazi violence

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[214] Stad.L., Ah. Leipzig Nr.1721, Polizeipresidium Leipzig Abteilung IV am 20.7.1932.

[215] Tubbesing, 'Antifaschistischer Block', p23.

[216] Of the 5 arrests four were communists and one was a *Reichsbanner* member. See, Stad.L., Ah. Leipzig Nr.1721, Polizeiwache Leibewolkwitz am 28.7.1932.

[217] Stad.L., Kap.3.Nr.38.Bd.2, Rueckblick auf das Jahr 1932, Bl.63.

increasing Communist influence on the streets.[218] However, in the smaller industrial towns of northwestern Saxony the KPD's campaign had a relatively greater impact. In the administrative districts of Oschatz, to the east of Leipzig, and Doebeln to the south, the KPD's Antifa rallies and demonstrations included the participation of members of the *Reichsbanner* and the SAJ. A small number of these Social Democrats were included in the KPD's Unity Committees, above all in small towns and industrial villages. The KPD leadership noted that it was the force of Nazi violence which had increased party activity.[219]

In Dresden the strength of the SPD organisations also restricted the KPD's campaign. However, there was one significant difference from Leipzig: in the Dresden area the SAJ had defected to the SAP's youth organisation, the SJV, almost *en masse*.[220] In the context of the rise in Nazi violence, local conditions were created in which there was genuine co-operation between the SJV and the KPD's youth organisation, the KJVD. This was not least because the SJV insisted that it wanted unity but not "under the ZK of the KPD."[221] Developments took a similar shape in the smaller towns of central and eastern Saxony. In Freital the KJVD carried out direct negotiations with the SJV not to "unmask" the organisation's leadership, but to co-operate against the NSDAP and SA. In mid June the KJVD's local leadership refused to accept that this represented a "deviation" from party policy.[222] In Meissen and Freital there was also some participation of Social Democrats in Antifa demonstrations and rallies. In Meissen three members of the SPD were included in the Unity Committee. It appears, however, that this co-operation was above all carried

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[218] Ba.K. R 45 IV/28, Bericht ueber Grimmma von Instrukteur Rolf. Leipzig, den 30.5.1932.

[219] Ba.K. R45 IV/28, Information ueber die Antifaschistische Aktion im UB 3 (19.7.1932).

[220] Tubbesing, 'Antifaschistischer Block', p21.

[221] ibid, Berichterstattung der UB Sekretariat zur Antifaschistischen Aktion am 9.6.1932.

[222] ibid, Instrukteurbericht Freital. Sitzung der erweiterten Ortsgruppeleitung am 13.6.1932.

out by the unemployed and the KPD's official propaganda continued to attack the SPD leadership.[223] The KPD's itinerant instructor in Freiberg informed the BL that, with the exception of spontaneous responses to Nazi violence, "one gets the impression that there is no Antifa campaign".[224] A similar report from Freiberg in late July observed that even party members who accepted the KPD's leading role regarded the SPD as a "big brother."[225] In Bautzen the local KPD informed the sub-district leadership in Dresden that because of the extent of Nazi violence they should be "spared from ideological discussion" with the SA, which remained part of the party's official policy.[226] In Dresden one Nazi worker actually took up the Antifa call to join the struggle against the Papen government, which communist propaganda described as a "fascist dictatorship."[227] Leading regional functionaries continued to report that the "worker elements" in the NSDAP were on the verge of defecting to the KPD. A small number of highly unrepresentative reports were made during the Antifa Action. For example, one Instructor detailed how two Nazis had informed a Communist that Hitler had betrayed 23 of the party's 25 point programme and if he abandoned the remaining two they would go over the Communists.[228] However, the reality was that Nazi violence against organised workers was creating *ad hoc* co-operation between Social Democrats and Communists outside of the KPD leadership's immediate

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[223] ibid, An die BL der KPD Sachsens. KPD UB4. Freiberg, den 3.6.1932; ibid, An die BL (Org.). Bericht ueber Meissen von Instrukteur Rolf. Meissen, den 2.7.1932; ibid, Aufruf zur Antifa Aktion. Freiberg June 1932 (leaflet).

[224] ibid, An die BL der KPD Sachsens. KPD UB4. Freiberg, den 3.6.1932.

[225] ibid, Bericht des UB 4 ueber die Antifaschistische Aktion und Reichstagswahl am 31.7.1931 auf Grund des Frage Bodens der BL (undated).

[226] ibid, Berichterstattung der UB Sekretariat zur Antifaschistischen Aktion am 9.6.1932.

[227] ibid, An die BL (Sekr.). Bericht ueber die Durchfuehrung der Antifaschistischen Aktion. Dresden, den 8.6.1932.

[228] ibid, Berichterstattung der UB Sekretariat zur Anyifaschistischen Aktion am 9.6.1932.

control. Indeed, the extent of genuine cooperation on the streets led to the abandonment of the Antifa Action as anything more than an empty slogan.[229]

Perhaps the most interesting KPD district was Erzgebirge-Vogtland. In this area the KPD suffered significant competition from the SAP. The SAP's strongholds were in the areas of small-scale production and cottage industry, which had been devastated during the Great Depression.[230] In this Saxony sub-region the once vibrant textile industry was now in terminal decline: the textile towns of Plauen and Chemnitz were the two cities worst hit by the impact of the world economic crisis.[231] Below the level of the political overviews supplied by electoral results, left-wing *activists* in this area were frequently members of the SAP. Throughout the sub-region there were whole areas where the SAP had absorbed the SPD's membership and there were no KPD local group.[232] Secondly, the NSDAP's political domination in these areas did not just preside over the small farmers in Erzgebirge but extended throughout the whole sub-region's small-scale and cottage industries. KPD reports show the strength of workers' support for the Nazis where there were no communist factory cells and few members of the RGO.[233] In Markneukirsch and Klingenthal, where the textile workers had never been organisationally integrated into the workers' movement, the NSDAP became so strong that the KPD was unable to conduct agitation and propaganda for fear of being assaulted by the SA, which was over-proportionately strong in these border regions.[234]

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[229] ibid, Rundschreiben der BL Sachsen. An alle Zellen und Ortsgruppen. Dresden, den 1.7.1932.

[230] Tubbesing, 'Antifascistischer Block', p21.

[231] Wuenderlich, V., *Arbeiterbewegung und Selbstverwaltung. KPD und Kommunalpolitik in der Weimarer Republik. Mit dem Beispiel Solingen* (Wuppertal, 1980), p19. Solingen rated directly behind these Saxon cities.

[232] Ba.K., R 45 IV/22, Bericht der Wahlinstrukteur (Becker). Sachsen UB 9, Plauen (undated: July).

[233] ibid, An die BL und UBL. Instrukteurbericht vom UB 9 am 21.7.1932.

[234] ibid, Bericht der Wahlinstrukteur (Becker). Sachsen UB 9, Plauen (undated: July).

The political domination of the NSDAP combined with the active presence of the SAP, and to a lesser extent the KPD(O), to produce a disposition in the local KPD organisations in favour of genuine co-operation with the wider workers' movement to combat the Nazi threat. The driving force behind this came from Communists who had been long organised in the party but put in first place the immediate reality of the Nazis rather than the party leadership's convoluted ideological definition of the SPD left-wing and the socialist splinter groups as the most dangerous enemy of Communism. In other cases genuine confusion about the party line was responsible for the flurry of letters addressed to the leaderships of the local SPD and SAP which called on joint action.[235] These so-called "false" united fronts were constructed throughout the area, in places such as Plauen, Treuen, Chrischwitz, Falkenstein, Rodewitz and Klingenthal.[236] The KPD's principal means of "correcting" these "deviations" in local party organisations was to send Instructors from Plauen and Chemnitz. The Instructors then had the thankless task of detailing that the tactic involved a mobilisation of the lower party units in the factories, on the streets, and in the countryside, with the objective of including non-communists in Communist-led campaigns: genuine co-operation against the NSDAP on a party political level had not been envisaged.[237] In southwestern Saxony the dividing line between the SPD and the KPD remained strongest in the larger cities, such as Plauen, where Social Democrats remained suspicious of communist motives.[238] The inclusion of social

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[235] ibid, An die BL (Pol.). Bericht ueber die Antifaschistische Aktion. Plauen, den 23.6.1932; ibid, Bericht von der Einleitung der Antifaschistischen Aktion in Plauen. Plauen, den 1.6.1932.

[236] ibid, An die BL und UBL. Instrukteurbericht vom UB 9 am 21.7.1932; ibid, Instrukteurbericht fuer die Zeit vom 27.6 bis 30.7.1932. Plauen (undated); ibid, An die BL Sachsen (Org.). Einschaetzung des Wahlergebnis der Reichstagwahl Juli 1932 im UB Plauen. Plauen, den 6.8.1932.

[237] ibid, Instrukteurbericht fuer die Zeit vom 27.6 bis 30.7.1932. Plauen (undated).

[238] ibid, An die BL Sachsen (Org.). Einschaetzung des Wahlergebnis der Reichstagwahl Juli 1932 im UB Plauen. Plauen, den 6.8.1932.

democrats in the KPD's MSS was predominantly in the smaller towns and industrial villages.[239] The KPD's difficulties in including non-communist workers in the Antifa Action is illustrated by the District Anti-Fascist Conference in Chemnitz on 18 June: out of 264 delegates only three were members of the SPD, two were *Reichsbanner* members, five were in the SAP and three in the SJV; one unemployed Nazi worker represented the other prong of Communist tactics.[240] Attempts to organise similar conferences to mobilise the local party organisations in the Limbach area came to nothing.[241] Crucially, in Plauen, a stronghold of the NSDAP, the urgency of political developments and the BL's sectarianism allowed the united front to come under the SAP's direction. Hundreds of Communists from Plauen and its environs attended SAP meetings, at which the SAP's local leadership derided the Saxon KPD's leader, Fritz Selbmann, as a "saboteur of the united front."[242] By early August the sub-district leadership was conducting party workers' conferences in Plauen, Oelsnitz and Falkenstein to impose the official party line.[243] In Falkenstein the KPD's local groups continued to reject the upper leadership's insistence that their efforts to form united fronts had been "false" and that physical defence against the Nazi movement was less effective than "mass" action (ie work in the factories).[244] The fear of genuine co-operation quickly became so acute that the leadership in Chemnitz instructed local groups to end their discussions with the KPD(O) and the SAP and to

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[239] ibid, An die BL Sachsen (Org.). Einschaetzung des Wahlergebnis der Reichstagwahl Juli 1932 im UB Plauen. Plauen, den 6.8.1932.

[240] Ba.K., R 45 IV/28, An die BL. Bericht ueber die Einheitskonferenz am 18.6.1932 in Chemnitz.

[241] ibid, An die Ortsgruppen der KPD. Chemnitz, den 20.6.1932.

[242] Ba.K., R 45 IV/22, An die BL. Bericht ueber die Parteiarbeiterkonferenz in Plauen. Plauen, den 3.8.1932.

[243] ibid, An die Ortsgruppen der KPD. Chemnitz, den 20.6.1932; ibid, Parteiarbeiterkonferenz am 3.8.1932 in Oelsnizt; ibid, Bericht ueber die durchgefuehrte Parteiarbeiterkonferenz am 3.8.1932 in Falkenstein.

concentrate on "unmasking" the SPD leadership. The KPD leadership even alleged that the KPD(O) were police spies who often acted as strike breakers.[245]

The Antifa Action had failed to re-invigorate the KPD's political strategy by using a more direct response to the rise of the NSDAP as a gateway to the inclusion of Social Democrats in the party's campaigns. Furthermore, instead of putting cement back into the crumbling wall dividing the KPD locally from the wider German workers' movement, it had inadvertently brought about greater co-operation. This meant that for most of the campaign the KPD leadership concentrated on closing the stable door after the horse had bolted. The KPD's policies were also complicated by the *Reichstag* elections in July 1932, which followed the fall of the Bruening government and its replacement on 30 May by Chancellor Papen's "cabinet of barons": the SPD abandoned its policy of "tolerating" the system of government by emergency decree.[246] Particularly after the election campaign had begun the KPD's directives to the lower party organisations insisted that the Antifa Action was addressed exclusively to socialist workers not their political organisations. For this reason all "letter writing" to the Iron Front, in order to bring about negotiations between the SPD and KPD at local level, were to stop.[247] The tactic of treating the Nazis as the "main enemy" was abandoned because it threatened to dissolve the political border between KPD and SPD activists at local level. The BL's directives returned to a strict definition of the "social fascist" policy; above all the left-wing of the SPD, which favoured

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[244] ibid, Bericht ueber die durchgefuehrte Parteiarbeiterkonferenz am 3.8.1932 in Falkenstein.

[245] Ba.K., R 45 IV/28, An die Ortsgruppen der KPD. Chemnitz, den 20.6.1932.

[246] Initially the KPD simply continued to accuse the SPD of "tolerating" the Papen government, despite the fact that the SPD administration in Prussia had been deposed by Papen. The KPD even claimed that the "Papen coup" had really been against the KPD and that the SPD now hoped that the KPD would be banned. See, SAPMO I 3/8-10/151, Rundschreiben der KPD Nr.10. Bezirk Sachsens (undated: July 1932), Bl.105.

[247] ibid.

co-operation against the Nazis, was singled out as Communism's "most dangerous opponent".[248] By the time of the announcement of the Papen government's emergency decree on "reanimating" the economy, the KPD had returned to a policy prioritising attacking the SPD at all levels of party work. The KPD's membership was instructed to oppose Papen's emergency decree by "taking the Anti-Fascist Action into the factories", where few Communists were organised and fewer still were prepared to carry out party work.[249] The change in the KPD's tactics acted like a soporific on an already drowsy membership.

7.6   The Gotterdaemmerung

The 12th Plenary meeting of the ECCI, held during August and September 1932, had not been called to deal with developments specific to the KPD. The meeting's function was to shore up the "social fascist" General Line throughout the Comintern. At the ECCI Plenum both Thaelmann and Manuilsky warned against "false" co-operation with the SPD, the Renegades (the SAP and KPD(O)) and the "counter-revolutionary" Trotskyists. According to ECCI resolutions the calls by non-communist organisations for united action at leadership level served only as a "manoeuvre" to give the "illusion" that the SPD was an anti-fascist party. The KPD was instructed to respond by "combating all tendencies for weakening the principal struggle against" 'social fascism' in all of its forms."[250] The ECCI gave no meaningful analysis of the course of developments in Germany: they were merely defined in the context of the General Line. The Papen government was part of the continued "fascist development" of the state, it was assisted by the *Reichswehr*, the

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[248] ibid, Rundschreiben der KPD Nr.12. Bezirk Sachsens (undated: July 1932), Bl.106.

[249] ibid, Rundschreiben der KPD Nr.18. Bezirk Sachsens (undated: September 1932), Bl.111.

[250] Degras, *Communist International*, p213.

Stahlhelm and the NSDAP; the SPD and the Catholic Centre Party had prepared the path for this form of "fascist dictatorship."[251] When the Schleicher government replaced the Papen administration on 2 December, Fowkes aptly stated that the "game with the word fascism" continued: this administration was said to be merely a further development of fascism.[252]

The tightening of the General Line was pumped through the KPD at the 3rd Reich Party Conference in mid October 1932. At the Reich Conference Thaelmann stated that: "Only if the main blow is directed against the SPD, the social mainstay of the bourgeoisie, can the main enemy of the proletariat, the bourgeoisie, be beaten and destroyed".[253] The KPD's leadership again played down the role of the Nazis, presenting them as only one form of fascism, denying that there was any "difference of principle" between bourgeois democracy and "Hitler Fascism".[254] With the KPD's return to a policy of strict organisational isolation from the SPD, came a re-orientation in the social groups targeted for communist recruitment: without winning over the Nazis' mass basis among workers, small farmers, white collar workers and the lower middle classes, it was alleged that there could be no proletarian revolution in Germany.[255]

The national conference was followed up by conferences in the regional party organisations. At the 3rd Conference of the Saxon KPD (3-4 December) the leadership asserted that the struggle against the SPD's "left-wing" had particular significance because of the region's political traditions. The leftist "manoeuvres" of the Saxon SPD leadership were preventing the workers coming to the KPD, requiring an all out attack on "social

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[251] Weber, *Hauptfeind*, pp57-9.

[252] Fowkes, *German Communism*, p168.

[253] Weber, *Hauptfeind*, p58.

[254] ibid, p59.

[255] Thaelmann at the 3rd Reich Conference, quoted in Weber, *Hauptfeind*, p59 and note 286.

fascism".[256] This policy continued to characterise the Saxon KPD's leadership up to and following Hitler's appointment as Chancellor on 30 January 1933. In February 1933 Fritz Selbmann informed a public meeting that the SPD had "paved the way" for Hitler and the KPD rejected the SPD leadership's offer of a "non-aggression pact" to oppose the *Third Reich* as this would prevent struggles under communist leadership.[257]

Central to the KPD's tactics after the 12th ECCI Plenum was a renewed effort to concentrate party work in the factories, where communist influence was weakest.[258] By implication the policy aimed to overcome communist contact and co-operation with the wider workers' movement in residential districts. Internal party circulars were couched in terms of an "ideological offensive" to "win back" Nazi workers.[259] The Anti-Fascist Action was increasingly depicted as a "struggling red united front", which placed particular emphasis on extending the united front from below to win over Nazi workers by including them in the KPD's actions.[260]

A Saxon Strike Wave?

In the autumn of 1932 the KPD's political line envisaged devoting considerable energy to causing economic and political strikes.[261] The KPD leadership alleged that because the

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[256] SAPMO I 3/8-10/145, Bericht der BL der KPD Sachsens an der 3. Parteitag vom 3-4.12.1932, p8, Bl.160.

[257] *KPD oder SPD. Nichtangriffspakt oder proletarische Einheit* (Leipzig, 1933), pp4,15, in, SAPMO I 3/8-10/151, Bl.131; For details of the SPD's offers of a "non-aggression pact" see, Bahen, *Scheitern*, p30ff.

[258] ibid, Bericht der BL der KPD Sachsens an der 3. Parteitag vom 3-4.12.1932, p75.

[259] SAPMO I 3/8-10/151, Rundschreiben der KPD Nr.18. Bezirk Sachsen (undated: September 1932), Bl.114.

[260] SAPMO I 3/8-10/145, Bericht der BL der KPD Sachsens an der 3. Parteitag vom 3-4.12.1932, p8.

[261] Weber, *Hauptfeind*, p61.

trade union "bureaucracy" did everything possible to prevent strikes and to obstruct the communist trade-union opposition, the RGO's mobilisation against wage cuts must also be directed against the reformist union leaderships.[262] Behind the propaganda, however, the Saxon KPD knew only too well that the reformist unions continued to dominate workers' opposition to wage cuts.[263] The re-emphasis of the KPD's policy coincided with an increase in the NSBO's influence in factories throughout Germany.[264] The Saxon KPD also noted an upsurge in activity by the NSBO in the factories. In Chemnitz there were NSBO cells in the metal industry, local authority factories, textile works and among warehouse workers. In Dresden the NSBO was strongest among tram drivers and local authority factory workers.[265] Furthermore, by late 1932 the NSDAP had placed increasing stress on expanding its working-class electoral support. This included the NSBO's support for strikes and the creation of a strike fund.[266] In the autumn of 1932 the KPD leadership's directives to lower party units also took on a significant change. In August Communists had been instructed to eject Nazi "strike-breakers" from the factories.[267] However, at the 3rd Reich Party Conference the RGO policy stated that: "Joint actions must be carried out with the Nazis' working-class supporters in the factories against cuts in pay and

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[262] SAPMO I 3/8-10/146, Bericht der BL an die Parteiarbeiterkonferenz ueber die Textilarbeiterbewegung (Oktober 1932), Bl.4.

[263] SAPMO I 3/8-10/145, Bericht der BL der KPD Sachsens an der 3. Parteitag vom 3-4.12.1932, p75.

[264] The industrial branches principally affected were metal working, mining and transport and the smaller factories on the "fringes" of industry, where the NSBO and RGO were relatively better represented. See, Daycock, 'Political Extremes', pp228ff.

[265] SAPMO I 3/8-10/155, *Der Bolschevik*, Nr.20, Jg.3., Leipzig, Mitte Dezember 1932, p390-3, Bl.231.

[266] It is likely that Hitler had convinced his supporters in industry that the NSBO policy was a tactical consideration. See, Daycock, 'Political Extremes', pp228ff. In NSDAP *Gau*, such as Upper Bavaria, the party threatened employers, who were party members, with expulsion if they cut workers' pay. At the same time the NSBO declared its support for strikes. See, Dorpalen, 'Endphase', pp102-3.

unemployment benefits and against the Papen dictatorship".[268] At an *agit-prop* conference in September it was even suggested that the slogan, Anti-Fascist Action, should be changed to United Action to avoid deterring Nazi workers.[269]

In Saxony the KPD set out to use the "strike strategy" in the textile industry, where wage agreements had expired in the course of the summer.[270] However, the Saxon KPD had not responded to a mood within the party membership or the workforce and the "mobilisation" was imposed from the BL downwards using the party apparatus. In the course of August the BL decided to send a group of 30 Instructors into 26 Instructor Zones. These functionaries were to mobilise the lower party by organising, firstly functionary, and then delegate conferences, to broaden the KPD's influence in the factories.[271] The functionary conferences involved a total of 159 functionaries from 53 factories; the delegate movement attracted 188 delegates from 75 factories.[272] According to the 1933 census there were 34,900 Saxon textile factories employing a total of 275,805 workers.[273] It was the KPD's weakness in the textile factories, where a large proportion of workers were women and youths, that forced the party to focus its work on "concentration points": namely the 246 factories which were likely to offer the best results

[267] SAPMO I 3/8-10/158, Saechsischer Betriebspressedienst, Mitte August 1932, Bl.187; ibid,

Saechsischer Betriebspressedienst, August 1932. 2. Sondernummer zum Textilkampf im Sachsen, Bl.198.

[268] Weber, *Hauptfeind*, p47.

[269] Fischer, *German Communists*, p160.

[270] SAPMO I 3/8-10/146, Bericht der BL an die Parteiarbeiterkonferenz ueber die Textilarbeiterbewegung (Oktober 1932), Bl.4.

[271] SAPMO I 3/8-10/146, Bericht der BL an die Parteiarbeiterkonferenz ueber die Textilarbeiterbewegung (Oktober 1932), Bl.5-6.

[272] SAPMO I 3/8-10/146, Bericht der BL an die Parteiarbeiterkonferenz ueber die Textilarbeiterbewegung (Oktober 1932), Bl.5-6.

[273] *ZSSL*, 80/81, 1934/5, p116.

from available resources.[274] The KPD's campaign was overwhelmingly conducted from the streets using discussion troops made up of unemployed activists with placards, leaflets and megaphones, who paraded in front of the factories.[275] Reports made by the Instructors indicate that in most "concentration areas" there were no factory cells in the textile industry.[276] Functionaries from the BL informed party workers' conferences that: "A mood for struggle in the workforce cannot be expected if we are not convinced of the necessity of causing and mobilising struggles".[277] However, in its report to the ZK the BL conceded that: "The mood in the individual factories is such that the workers are perhaps prepared to accept the wage cuts."[278] The BL blamed the KPD's inability to lead the 64 strikes, which took place between September and November in the textile industry, on the membership's refusal to "unmask the union bureaucracy's leftist manoeuvre", which "deceived" the workforce and aimed to limit the extent and objectives of any strike.[279] More seriously for the KPD's ability to carry out the official party line was the membership's refusal to organise joint struggles with the working-class members of the NSBO, while there continued to be a tendency to co-operate with left-wing Social Democrats against the Nazis.[280] Indeed, where the KPD did have factory councillors, such

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[274] SAPMO I 3/8-10/145, Bericht der BL der KPD Sachsens an der 3. Parteitag vom 3-4.12.1932, p21-1.

[275] SAPMO I 3/8-10/151, *Kampferfahrung*, Nr.3 (January 1933), p60, Bl.138.

[276] SAPMO I 3/8-10/155, *Der Bolschevik*, Nr.15, Jg.3, Leipzig Anfang September 1932, p239, Bl.219.

[277] SAPMO I 3/8-10/146, Bericht der BL an die Parteiarbeiterkonferenz ueber die Textilarbeiterbewegung (Oktober 1932), Bl.7.

[278] SAPMO I 3/8-10/158, BL Sachsen (Org.). Bericht an das ZK ueber den Stand der Textilarbeiterbewegung im Sachsen (19.8.1932), Bl.92.

[279] SAPMO I 3/8-10/145, Bericht der BL der KPD Sachsens an der 3. Parteitag vom 3-4.12.1932, pp12,22.

[280] SAPMO I 3/8-10/152, Entwurf Resolution zum 3. Bezirkskonferenz von den Unterbezirken (Dezember 1932), Bl.5.

as in Limbach, the leadership complained they behaved little differently from the social democrats.[281]

One departure from the Saxon trend of *de facto* co-operation between Communists and Socialists in the trade unions was a Nazi-led strike in the Leipzig textile factory Tittel and Kruger, which employed some 1,000 workers.[282] When the strike broke out in late October there were only four Communists in the factory, while the NSBO organised 76 workers. Directly before the strike the KPD was able to form an RGO factory group of 13 members. Following this the BL instructed the factory group to act jointly with the NSBO at strike meetings and on the picket line, using "ideological discussion" to win them over.[283] The admittedly limited documentation on the KPD's involvement in the strike points to the role of new party members, who had no political socialisation in the workers' movement, in accepting the policy *vis a vis* Nazi workers.[284] Conan Fischer is technically correct that this type of incident demonstrates that the Berlin transport workers' strike in early November was not an isolated case.[285] It is certainly correct that the KPD leadership did advocate co-operation with the Nazis. However, the important question is the extent to which the ZK could impose this policy on the membership. There are no exact figures detailing the extent of RGO-NSBO joint strikes for either Saxony or the Reich. However, the NSBO was involved in perhaps 26 strikes of note in 1932.[286] The KPD, according to its own figures, was involved in 447 strikes, 138 of which were in Saxony.[287] During

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[281] SAPMO I 3/8-10/155, *Der Bolschevik*, Nr.15, Jg.3, Leipzig Anfang September 1932, p239, Bl.219.

[282] SAPMO I 3/8-10/151, *Kampferfahrung*, Nr.1 (undated: late 1932), p2, Bl.122.

[283] ibid.

[284] ibid.

[285] Fischer, *German Communists*, p186.

[286] Daycock, 'Political Extremes', p228.

[287] SAPMO I 3/8-10/145, Bericht der BL der KPD Sachsens an der 3. Parteitag vom 3-4.12.1932, p18.

October and November 1932 the Saxon KPD won over 11 Nazi workers and three members of the SPD.[288] In Saxony the manifest reality was that the BL could not impose either its strike strategy, or the campaign for an "ideological" conversion of the NSDAP's working-class supporters, on a reluctant membership. The KPD was able to make even less impact on a successful strike movement led by the Leipzig branch of the Metal Workers' Union (DMV) in late 1932, which ended with a three pfennig pay rise.[289] One illustration of the policy's reception among Communists who were still employed and organised in the trade unions was in a strike of quarry workers in Luepitz, in the administrative district of Wurzen. At a union strike meeting Communists and Socialists acted together to throw Nazi workers out of the room.[290] In a series of KPD party organisations in Meissen, Doebeln and Freital local groups continued to co-operate with the members of the SPD and socialist splinter groups against spiralling Nazi violence in workers' neighbourhoods, where the real focus of party work continued to be centred.[291] Despite the resistance of the Saxon KPD's membership the party fought to continue the "social fascist" policy into the *Third Reich*.[292] At no point did the Reich Ministry of the Interior see the KPD as an economic threat.[293] The policy, however, should not be seen as a failure in terms of isolating local Communists and Social Democrats: the ZK's and BLs' policy towards the NSDAP maximised the antagonisms between the two parties.

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[288] ibid, p77.

[289] Stad.L., Kapp3. Nr.38. Bd.2, Rueckblick auf das Jahr 1932, Bl.70; *Kampferfahrung*, Nr.1 (undated:late 1932), p2, SAPMO I 3/8-10/151,Bl.122.

[290] SAPMO I 3/8-10/155, *Der Bolschevik*, Nr.20, Jg.3., Leipzig, Mitte Dezember,1932, p392, Bl.231.

[291] ibid.

[292] The campaign for the factory council elections in spring 1933 continued to adhere to the "social fascist" party line. See, SAPMO I 3/8-10/151, *Kampferfahrung*, Nr.3 (January 1933), p3-4, Bl.138.

[293] Dorpalen, 'Endphase', p98.

Holding the Line in Communal Politics

During 1932 the Saxon KPD was also burning up considerable energy in order to maintain the social fascist General Line in municipal politics. An open letter from the ZK to the party membership published in *Die Rote Fahne* on 5 January 1932 was a tirade against the lower party organisations' inclination to take up local SPD and SAP offers of united action again the NSDAP. The ZK dismissed these as an attempt to prevent unity *under* the KPD. The party leadership insisted that there could be no "moderation" of the party's attitude towards the SPD and criticised the lower party organisations' "false and undialectical" distinction between fascism and bourgeois democracy.[294] In early 1932 the ZK acted against party organisations in Wuerttemberg which had gone into the municipal elections using "joint lists" with the SPD; in Leipzig a "group" had been expelled for continuing to stress the differences between the SPD and the NSDAP.[295] In May a series of party conferences for functionaries in municipal politics were held to enforce the party line, which explicitly precluded any co-operation with the SPD in local councils.[296] The use of specifically local conditions as election issues was only to be conducted within the framework of the General Line.[297]

The issue of co-operation with the SPD at local level against the Nazis came close to forcing a debate on policy in the membership. The motivation for a party discussion came from conditions on the ground in Saxony: from the 3,000 Saxon municipalities the NSDAP was the largest party in 1,597 localities, dominating especially the smaller

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[294] Degras, *Communist International*, p214.

[295] ibid.

[296] SAPMO I 3/8-10/145, Bericht der BL der KPD Sachsens an der 3. Parteitag vom 3-4.12.1932, Bl.292-4.

[297] SAPMO I 3/8-10/151, Rundschreiben der KPD Nr.19. Bezirk Sachsen (undated: September 1932), Bl.121.

administrative areas, while the KPD had only 800 local groups in Saxony.[298] The question of "joint lists" with the SPD in the municipal elections of November 1932 was discussed in the pages of the functionaries' organ, *Der Bolschevik*. An article by Leo Zimmermann, a party functionary in Wurzen, called for the use of "joint lists" with the SPD to prevent a NSDAP-*Mittelstand* majority in the local councils. Central to Zimmermann's argument was that if the Nazis ran the local administration the SPD would have effective propaganda against the KPD, but if the KPD agreed to "joint lists" it would be possible to use discussions to win over SPD workers.[299] Fritz Selbmann, however, made clear that these views were regarded by the BL as part of an effort to revive factionalism in the KPD: the official party line precluded all co-operation with the SPD at local level and the policy of treating co-operation with the SPD as a "lesser evil" would make the KPD look like the SPD's "little brother". Selbmann emphasised that the ZK regarded the SPD and NSDAP as "two shades of one and the same social support for the bourgeois dictatorship".[300] In order to prevent "deviation" from the party line the BL conducted a policy of close supervision of the process of drawing up the party lists for the local elections.[301]

The BL's methods did restrict the extent of any electoral co-operation with the SPD. However, on 15 November the West Saxon SPD published an appeal for the KPD's co-operation in the municipal elections to limit the rise of the Nazis.[302] The SPD's united front offer made the crisis in the KPD acute. The core of opposition to the KPD's General Line was again among the "old" party functionaries, who acted out of a genuine

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[298] SAPMO I 3/8-10/155, *Der Bolschevik*, Nr.15, Jg.3, Leipzig Anfang September 1932, p243, Bl.219.

[299] SAPMO I 3/8-10/155, *Der Bolschevik*, Nr.15, Jg.3, Leipzig Anfang September 1932, p255-6, Bl.219.

[300] ibid, pp256-7.

[301] ibid, p258.

[302] *Leipziger Volkszeitung (LVZ)*, 15.11.1932, quoted in Tubbesing, 'Antifaschistischer Block', p11.

conviction that the rise of the NSDAP must be resisted. In the administrative districts of Crimmitschau, Meerane, Wurzen and Aue, where the NSDAP was dominant, local party functionaries broke the party line and drew up "joint lists" with the local SPD leaderships.[303] The tragic irony of the situation was that the KPD's vote continued to rise, in the November *Reichstag* elections as well as in the Saxon local elections, enabling the party leadership to justify their tactics.[304] The "old" dissident party functionaries were expelled for breaking the party line with the admonition that their "errors" were the result of "social democratic traditions".[305] At leadership level the continued gulf between the Saxon SPD and KPD meant that the new "left majorities" in a series of local parliaments, including Leipzig, Doebeln, Mittweida and Wurzen, were duds against the explosive charge of the NSDAP.[306]

"New Functionaries for Old": The Enemy Within in January 1933.

Immediately before the Nazis' "seizure of power" on 30 January 1933, the Saxon KPD's highest profile action was the "Winter Aid Campaign", which involved demonstrations of the unemployed on Town Halls.[307] During the KPD's "Week of Struggle against Unemployment", between 11-17 January, there were demonstrations on Town Halls throughout Saxony under the slogan "Salvation from Hunger and Frost".[308] However, the actual centre of gravity of the Saxon KPD's activity was an internal mobilisation: the purge of those leading "old" functionaries who had opposed the rigid continuation of the

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[303] SAPMO I 3/8-10/145, Bericht der BL der KPD Sachsens an der 3. Parteitag vom 3-4.12.1932, p77.

[304] ibid, pp12ff.

[305] Bericht der BL der KPD Sachsens an der 3. Parteitag vom 3-4.12.1932, ibid, p77.

[306] Stad.L, Kap.3. Nr.38. Bd2, Rueckblick auf das Jahr 1932, Bl.64-5.

[307] Sta.B., Sig. 4,65-1730, Monatsbericht (December 1932-January 1933).

[308] ibid.

General Line because of the threat to the party and its membership posed by the Nazis. The KPD's 3rd Reich Conference set in train the third centralisation of the Saxon KPD's party organisation, changing the structure of sub-districts from nine to 26.[309] Although this was justified in terms of the party's alleged impending illegality, it represented a renewed policy of bringing dissidents in the membership to heel.[310] The BL was also concerned that dissatisfaction with party policy was boiling over in many local party organisations; Chemnitz and Meissen were referred to specifically. The means used to overcome this restiveness in the membership was to atomise the concentrations of dissidents in the street cells, which often numbered some 50-60 members, into groups of five, which an Instructor could more easily supervise.[311] Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of party members were organised in residential districts, the BL insisted that they should act as a "way into the factories" by winning over new members from among those who were still in work.[312] Crucially, in January 1933 the Saxon KPD initiated a campaign to re-elect the leaderships of all street and factory cells, local groups and city districts, which was to be completed by 30 January, the day Hitler was appointed Chancellor.[313] The BL stressed that these were not elections on the model of the SPD but Bolshevik style elections: new functionaries could only be elected if they unconditionally supported the decisions of the 12th Plenum of the ECCI.[314] One consequence of the continuation of the social fascist policy was that directives were simply not carried out

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[309] SAPMO I 3/8-10/145, Bericht der BL der KPD Sachsens an der 3. Parteitag vom 3-4.12.1932, pp50ff.

[310] The functionaries and active membership were long since known to the police throughout Germany: organisational changes would, and did, not prevent their arrest. See, Peukert, D., *Die KPD im Wiederstand*. (Wuppertal, 1980), p190.

[311] SAPMO I 3/8-10/151, *Kampferfahrung*, Nr.4 (undated: January 1933), pp65-8, Bl.199.

[312] ibid, p73.

[313] ibid, p68.

[314] ibid, *Kampferfahrung*, Nr.5 (undated: January 1933), p81, Bl.250.

when they did not correspond to what the influx of new party members experienced at local level.[315] However, the purge of local dissidents was primarily concerned with removing the "old" functionaries who were actively opposing the party line. The BL's directives stated that the policy was not one of "new functionaries for old" but "old functionaries should only be elected on the basis of political quality" (ie compliance with party policy).[316] During the rise of the NSDAP the "Stalin Letter" of late 1931 had lambasted the tradition of "Luxemburgism" in the KPD (ie a German strand of revolutionary socialism).[317] The ultimate consequence of the KPD's Stalinisation was that on the eve of the *Third Reich* the party in Saxony was involved in removing lower functionaries to maintain a General Line that ultimately led to the party's collapse and had prevented an adequate response to the Nazis' rise to power.

7.7 Conclusion: Who was the "Main Enemy"?

The consensus of previous research has been that during the Great Depression the KPD was able to carry out the "social fascist" General Line despite the meteoric rise of the NSDAP.[318] In Saxony, however, the SPD at local level did not behave in the Reich leadership's detatched parliamentary manner. Consequently, the validity of the "social fascist" thesis was challenged by the experience of local political life. The ADGB was involved in paying out welfare benefits to unemployed members and leading strikes, whenever possible, in defence of workers' living and working conditions. On the streets of Saxony the SPD's local leaders and rank-and-file activists were also active in combating

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[315] ibid, p81.

[316] ibid, pp82-3.

[317] Weber, H., 'Zur Ideologie der KPD in der Weimarer Republik. Neue Literatur', in *IWK 2 (1985)*, p205.

[318] See chapter 1.2 above.

the rise of the NSDAP. These conditions on the ground generated considerable tensions

between the Saxon KPD's BL and party members, who frequently co-operated with

members of the wider workers' movement against the NSDAP. The so-called "Anti-

Fascist Action" in mid-1932 was not just a response to the rise of the NSDAP; it was also

an attempt to shore up the General Line against the SPD in the face of the creation of the

Iron Front, which at grass roots level was proving to be popular and effective. It was

when the policy failed to maintain the organisational wall between the two parties, as *ad*

hoc co-operation developed against Nazi violence outside of the KPD's control, that the

KPD leadership and the Comintern acted to isolate the party membership from local

Social Democrats. The 12th ECCI Plenum rejected even a "non-aggression" pact with the

SPD to combat the NSDAP. When the KPD advocated a rigid interpretation of the "social

fascist" policy, the united front from below was presented as a tactic to beat back the

Nazis by winning over its social support: the policy failed to win over the so-called "Nazi

workers"; its actual purpose was to repel local co-operation with Social Democrats. By

late 1932 the reality of the rise of the NSDAP meant that those who were still active in the

KPD continued to co-operate with the wider workers' movement against the Nazis in the

neighbourhoods. Where activists would no longer yield to the leadership's directives, the

BL reacted by furiously rooting out all deviation using an ever tightening knot of

organisational centralisation and purges of the "older" leaderships in the lower party units.

While Weber identified seven phases of tactical re-orientation, the Saxon documentation

indicates that these policies were only carried out if they corresponded to local

conditions.[319] The function of the General Line, which identified the SPD as the "main

enemy", was to organisationally institutionalise the Comintern's policy at all levels of the

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[319] Weber details the tactical changes of policy in, *Hauptfeind*, pp20ff.

KPD, from the *Reichstag* to the streets of Saxony. At national level the party line could be held more easily among senior party functionaries. However, Nazi violence in the neighbourhoods forced lower functionaries and rank-and-file members into co-operation with the SPD. The Stalinisation of the KPD meant that the experience of party members, who were at the front line of political campaigning, was ignored. Mallmann states that the KPD's "Stalinisation" was not merely the result of Stalin, but was a consequence of the party's vanguardist ideology.[320] However, this does not sufficiently emphasise that the decision-making process was located in a small group of leaders in Moscow, who used party organisation and purges to plaster over what were fault lines in the communist monolith running between the senior leadership and grass roots activists. In Saxony the membership did respond to the influences of immediate local conditions, but the emphasis must be placed on the limited life span of dissidents rather than the creation of a wider communist "milieu" within the party.

Rosenhaft's study of the Berlin KPD deals with the KPD's response to political violence in the neighbourhoods. It is made clear that the topic illustrates and assesses an area of party work (ie the use of political violence) as another dimension to the leadership's central policy of agitating in the factories. Rosenhaft's work regards most Communists as reluctant to break the party line. The membership is depicted as continuing to accept the "social fascist" policy, while responding to the Nazis as the actual "main enemy" on the streets.[321] In Saxony, however, "deviation", not party discipline, characterised the membership's relationship to a party line imposed from above, without regard to regional politics. The party machine continued to burn up huge reserves of energy trying to impose

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[320] Mallmann, K-M., *Kommunisten in der Weimarer Republik: Sozialgeschichte einer Revolutionaeren Bewegung* (Darmstadt, 1996), p67.

[321] Rosenhaft, *Beating*, pp25ff,211ff.

the centrality of work in the factories: but with almost 90 per cent of the Saxon membership unemployed there were no cogs to turn the policy's wheels. Rosenhaft explained this "false understanding" as a consequence of communist ideology, but contrasted the limitations of theory with the responsiveness of the KPD to the needs of its supporters in the neighbourhoods.[322] In Saxony, however, the whole policy of Communist "committee building" and the construction of *Abwehr* organisations was related to preventing "deviation" from the party line and maintaining the KPD's ideological claim that "unity" could only occur under the KPD. The movement of delegating local representatives to communist conferences and constructing *Abwehr* organisations did not act as a conveyor belt to the KPD: only a handful of Social Democrats defected to the KPD. Instead the rank-and-file KPD membership often spontaneously co-operated with members of the SPD, SAP and KPD(O) in response to immediate events. The BL's response was to characterise this as "individual terror" (ie it was outside of the KPD's control) and to send directives calling on a "mass response", which meant including non-Communists in the KPD's on-going party work. The membership's response to the ZK's instructions for "ideological discussion" to win over Nazis "workers" was minimal: in reality direct action not discussion characterised the Saxon KPD's relations with the NSDAP. Leading figures in the KPD spoke from the same platform as Nazis and attended their meetings, but they did not succeed in winning over "Nazi-workers" as party members: the political border between the Left and Right was not ready to burst in the manner claimed by the ZK, whose public statements served only to justify an otherwise untenable policy. The KPD responded to the onset of mass unemployment and the neighbourhood as a forum for political activity by trying to integrate it into the General

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[322] ibid, pp x-xi,212ff.

Line: the main role of unemployed members was to support campaigns in the factories. The unemployed, however, saw things differently: the vast majority of those unemployed workers who were active in the KPD would only follow the Communist call if it directly addressed their needs. They would march on a Town Hall but not picket a factory.

This case study of the Saxon KPD does not substantiate the "Fischer thesis" that working-class nationalism, present in the KPD's membership, conditioned the re-adoption of a "nationalist" policy in 1930. Nor does it find significant evidence of an overlap in the Communists' and Nazis' constituencies, whether electoral or, less still, in terms of membership.[323] The studies of National Bolshevism by Schueddekopf, Depleux, Ward and Duehnke all concur with Fischer that the KPD did set out to implement a "nationalist" policy and this was presented to the membership as a response to the rise of the NSDAP.[324] The crucial difference is that the other studies identify the roots of the "nationalist" policy in the Comintern, responding to Bolshevik rather that domestic German influences. Rather than the KPD merely taking on the policy as an expression of the membership's, or German working class', political predilections, Ward and Weber stress the conflict which developed between the KPD's leadership and the Comintern over the consequences of the policy.[325] The party's Stalinisation was not to make the KPD responsive to nationalism in the German working class, but to impose the Comintern's General Line on the party membership using a policy of organisational control and purges of political dissidents.

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[323] Fischer, *German Communists*, pp39,112ff,118.

[324] Schueddekopf, *Nationalbolshewismus*, pp285-6; Daycock, 'Political Extremes', pp171,191,324; Ward, 'Smash the Fascists', pp30ff; Depeux, *National Bolschevismus*, pp440,452; Duehnke, *Die KPD*, pp16ff.

[325] Weber, *Hauptfeind*, pp82ff; Ward, 'Smash the Fascists', pp46ff.

Equally problematic is Fischer's thesis that a significant sociological overlap in the Communist and Nazi constituencies reinforced their political rivalries. All previous studies have viewed the cross-over as too limited to have realistically sustained the policy. Schueddekopf's detailed research into the KPD's nationalist line concluded that it had no significant results in winning new members except for individual, largely high profile, defections from the Nazis.[326] The KPD did define the *Mittelstand* as part of its "potential constituency", which the membership should reach out to by means of the nationalist propaganda. However, Jones' research into the impact of the "Nationalism Question" on the *Mittlestand* and German Liberalism concluded that the downwardly mobile sections of the middle classes wanted to be protected from "proletarianisation": defence against the social and economic "threat of Marxism" conditioned their voting predilections. This was a rightward political path leading from the special "interest parties" of the mid 1920s to the Nazis by the 1930s.[327] Hamilton's work stressed that after the rise of the NSDAP a broad spectrum of the *Mittelstand*, not just the lower middle classes, looked to the Nazis to defend their view of the German nation and society against a perceived Marxist threat.[328] The *Mittelstand's* concept of the German nation did not endorse working-class organisation and culture let alone encourage voting for a party advocating the "dictatorship of the proletariat". The other side to the equation, the KPD's active membership, also largely ignored the ZK's and BL's instructions to win over the *Mittelstand* for communist revolution.

Computer based studies of the Nazi vote by Childers, Hamilton and Falter demonstrate that Fischer is pushing at an open door by emphasising working-class support for the

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[326] Schueddekopf, *Nationalbolschewismus*, p306.

[327] Jones, *German Liberalism*, pp476ff.

[328] Hamilton, 'Hitler's Electoral Support', pp1ff.

NSDAP, which reached as high as 40 per cent of the party's total electoral support.[329]

Childers concluded that working–class Nazi support was not from the "organised *Arbeiterschaft*, but from the sizable body of workers in handicrafts and small-scale manufacturing...(who) were rarely integrated into either the organised working-class or entrepreneurial *Mittelstand.*"[330] The cottage industry and small-scale manufacturing structure of Erzgebirge and Vogtland was precisely such a sub-region in Saxony. Social impoverishment during the depression, on top of a tradition of protest voting which had shot from left to right across the political spectrum since the late Imperial period, saw a pattern of voting which went from the SPD in Wilhelmine Germany, to the KPD in the early years of the Weimar Republic to the NSDAP by the late 1920s. In a relatively small number of cases the policy of contact, even co-operation, with the NSDAP was carried out. There is, however, little evidence of a "red-brown" hybrid-radicalism molded by years of long-term unemployment and a political motivation to overthrow the Weimar Republic by any means. The KPD's membership who did carry out the policy of co-operation with the Nazis, largely in the strikes of late 1932, comprised new members whose political socialisation was during the crisis. But, it was especially the "older" members, who had roots in the workers' movement, that refused to carry out the policy. It was the ultimate

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[329] The figure of 40 per cent is given in Falter, J., Hitlers Waehler (Munich, 1991), pp225,371; Szejnmann believes that the NSDAP's vote in Saxony was in excess of 40 per cent, see, Id., 'Nazi Party', p211; Childers, T., *The Nazi Vote. The Social Foundations of Fascism in Germany* (Chapel Hill, 1983), pp260ff; For the different strengths of loyalty within the Nazis social basis also see, Id., 'The Social Basis of the Nazi Vote', *JCH* 11 (1) (1976), pp17-42; Hamilton, Hitler's Electoral Support', p28; Falter, J., 'Politische Konsequenzen von Massenarbeitslosigkeit', in *PVS 25 (1984)* (pp275-95), p288. On the working classes' relationship with the NSDAP see, Mason, T., 'National Socialism and the Working Classes, 1925 - May 1933', in *New German Critique* no.11 (1977) (pp49-93); Muhlberger, D., 'The sociology of the NSDAP. The Question of Working Class Membership', in *JCH* 15 (4) (1980), pp493-511.

[330] Childers, *Nazi Vote*, p264.

consequence of Stalinisation that those Communist militants who identified the German

Communism's "main enemy" as the Nazis were being purged on the eve of the Nazi

Machtergreifung in order to maintain the "social fascist" policy.

8. Factionalism, Fratricide and Political Failure: A Conclusion.

The Stalinisation Thesis and its Critics: What were the limits of Stalinisation?

At both national and district level the newly available documentation confirms the Stalinisation thesis and the central role of the factional struggles in the KPD's political development between 1924 and 1929. However, the documentation of local level developments, which before the fall of the Berlin Wall was unavailable in any quantity, also indicates the limits of Stalinisation. Between 1924 and 1925 the Left leadership, under Ruth Fischer, was unable to uproot right-wing Communism from its strongholds in southwestern Saxony. Compliant BLs could be installed in recalcitrant districts, but the membership's political behaviour could not be dictated from above.[1] In West Saxony between 1925 and 1928 the Vogt Group refused to carry out the Comintern's "Right Turn". Instead a parallel apparatus was constructed to carry out a continuation of the left-wing policies from before the Comintern's intervention. The faction was so firmly anchored among the membership, especially in Leipzig, that the ZK could not overcome its influence.[2] This case study illustrates that in the mid-twenties where a faction was strong enough, it could replace central instructions with local responses. East Saxony, by contrast, indicates that where the party was weak, so too were the factions, and the control of party policy by the apparatus was firmer and faster.[3]

The challenges to the Stalinisation thesis by Schoeck, Stolle, Heer-Kleinert, and more recently by Mallmann, are unable to convincingly demonstrate that the KPD's policies grew out of developments in Germany. Admittedly, they do add interesting theories which

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[1] See chapter three.

[2] See chapter four.

[3] See chapters three, four and six.

investigate the motivation and mental world of the different political tendencies within the party.[4] However, Mallmann has gone too far in underplaying the importance of Stalinisation in the KPD's political development.[5] It is possible that the Saar region, which features strongly in Mallmann's documentary evidence, is an exception to the general course of the KPD's internal development. The Saxon case, however, reaffirms that Stalinisation was a means of imposing Moscow's line in Germany on an increasingly reluctant membership. The KPD's ties to the Comintern prevented it from becoming a social movement responding to the membership's political predilections. The present study places factionalism and political fratricide at the centre of the Saxon KPD's internal party life. In Saxony the KPD's ties to its membership were eroded in a caustic solution of an all-pervasive politicisation of every aspect of internal party life; witchhunts for the "enemy within" were a prominent feature of party meetings.[6] Paradoxically, the connections with Moscow, which gave the KPD a wider electoral appeal, also brought political failure, as the party's policies failed to account for the needs of the local activists who would carry out communist campaigns.

What Produced the Local Political Tendencies in the Saxon KPD: Local Conditions or Ideology?

Previous historical explanations for the different political tendencies in the KPD reached a general consensus on certain social and economic factors. In areas which industrialised

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[4] See chapter 1.2.

[5] Mallmann, K-H., *Kommunisten in der Weimarer Republik: Sozialgeschichte einer revolutionaeren Bewegung* (Darmstadt, 1996), pp54-83.

[6] In addition to the documentary evidence already presented see the memoirs of the former senior party functionary, Retzlaw, K., *Spartakus. Aufstieg und Niedergang. Errinnerungen eines Parteiarbeiters* (Frankfurt/M, 1972), especially pp214ff.

early, where a skilled workforce had developed traditions of political and trade-union organisation, Communists supported the united front policy of on-going day-to-day work for economic concessions in the social democratic dominated workers' movement. However, in areas of rapid and late industrialisation, which had not developed traditions of political and trade-union organisation, a "new" working class formed the social basis for a more spontaneous form of communism which only became politically engaged when it was possible to achieve immediate objectives.[7] Reuter's study of party members' political thought in Hanover also pointed to the role of individuals' political socialisation, family backgrounds and position in the labour market.[8] Chapter two of this thesis, however, outlined the peculiarities of Saxony's social, economic and political development as an "old" industrial region with specific sub-regional variations. Franz Walter originally used these Saxon sub-regional differences to explain the different rates of erosion of the SPD's vote during the rise of the NSDAP: the stronger the degree of organisation in the SPD subculture, the less the Nazis could penetrate the wider electorate.[9] Szejnmann further developed Walter's findings in relation to the rise of Saxon NSDAP. The present thesis has incorporated Walter's findings for the SPD into an investigation of the factors explaining the different political orientations within the Saxon KPD.

It is possible to conclude that the political tendencies in the Saxon KPD responded to the following factors. In the party district of Erzgebirge-Vogtland, where the degree of organisation in the SPD and trade unions was weak in comparison with the eastern and northwestern districts, a far left-wing variant of the Saxon SPD developed. It was small-

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[7] See chapter 1.2.

[8] Reuter, G., *KPD-Politik in der Weimarer Republik. Politische Vorstellung und soziale Zusammenstellung der KPD in Hannover zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik* (Hanover, 1982), pp24ff.

[9] Walter, F., 'Sachsen - ein Stammland der Sozialdemokratie?', in *PV* 32 (2) (1991), pp207-31.

scale industrial structures, which were heavily hit by the Great Depression, that produced the strongest support for the SPD's far left.[10] In this context local Communists took on a right-wing, or pro-contact, disposition because they felt able to work towards communist goals within the wider workers' movement. The KPD's ability to influence the wider workers' movement was also graphically illustrated in the crisis year of 1923.[11] In West Saxony, however, the reverse of these factors applied. The left wing of the Saxon SPD remained loyal to the policies of the Reich Executive, if at times verbally critical.[12] With a strong organisational wall securing the SPD membership's loyalty, the local Communists, especially in Leipzig, felt unable to exert significant influence from within the reformist dominated workers' movement. In this environment the KPD retreated into a left-isolationist variant of Communism.[13]

In East Saxony the strength of the SPD tradition had prevented the KPD from developing a strong party organisation and exerting influence on the workers' movement. However, as in the other Saxon party districts, the political border between the KPD and SPD memberships was at its most rigid in larger cities and receded in the smaller towns and, especially, in industrial village settings. During the 1926 campaign to expropriate the former princely houses the SPD and KPD memberships both worked towards achieving what was regarded as a common objective. The everyday contact between the parties' activists in the cultural and sports *Vereine* acted to further dissolve the political border

[10] Drechsler, H., *Die Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SAPD). Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung am Ende der Weimarer Republik* (Meisenheim-am-Glan, 1965), pp19ff. Other similar areas were: Thuringia, and localities in Frankfurt am Main, Breslau and Hagen.

[11] See chapters three, five and seven.

[12] Schaefer, R., *SPD in der Aera Bruening: Tolerierung oder Mobilisierung? Handlungsspielraeum und Strategien sozialdemokratischer Politik 1930-1932* (Frankfurt/M, New York, 1990), pp93ff.

[13] See chapter four.

between Communists and Socialists. Such developments, however, were an exception to the rule of separate political campaigning, which above all characterised developments in the larger cities.[14] During the rise of the Nazis in the early thirties it was also in small town and industrial village settings that the greatest degree of co-operation between Social Democrats and Communists took place. The factor giving rise to political co-operation was above all the intensity of Nazi violence in these areas. This limited local co-operation between Saxon Social Democratic and Communist activists derived from the fact that the Saxon SPD at grass roots level was actively combating a political opponent which did not discriminate between SPD or KPD workers.[15]

It is the contention of this thesis that the nearer communist politics came to local level in Saxony, the greater the influence of the immediate political environment and the weaker the influence of ideology. The 12th Reich Party Congress in 1929 was able to proscribe the organisation of factions, and their challenges to the party line, and to end the cohabitation of different communist tendencies in the leadership; but local conditions continued to produce "deviation" from the party line when it did not accord with the reality of party militants' every-day life.

Communist Tactics and their Influence on the Wider Political System.

Each change in the KPD's political tactics was limited by the socio-economic context in which it was played out. During 1924 and 1925 the KPD, under the leadership of Ruth Fischer, tried to uproot right-wing communism from its Saxon strongholds. An ultra-Left policy was imposed using the party machine, and common points of contact with the

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[14] See chapter five.

[15] See chapter seven.

wider workers' movement were limited by splitting the trade unions and rejecting any co-operation with the SPD in local politics. This marked the temporary abandonment of the policy of trying to become a majority of the working class by winning over Social Democratic workers through including them in communist-led campaigns. Strongly emphasising the vanguardist elements of communist ideology, the KPD leadership believed that an influx of former Social Democrats would only dilute the party's ideological purity. The tactic, however, failed to connect with the wider political environment and saw the KPD turn in on itself in fratricidal feuding on the outer edges of working-class politics.[16]

One constant throughout each change in Communist tactics was the objective of destroying the influence of the SPD in German politics. The united front policy introduced by the Comintern's "open letter" of 1925 aimed to do so by increasing the KPD's influence in the workers' movement. The KPD again embarked on a policy of contact with the reformist dominated workers' movement in the trade unions and limited co-operation in municipal councils. However, the campaign to expropriate the former German princes put the political spotlight on the conundrum of communist campaigning: to create a high profile movement in Germany the KPD had to use the subterfuge of an issue of radical socialist reform; in Saxony this risked benefiting the left-wing SPD, which wanted to enlist the KPD's support for a policy of radical reforms in the *Landtag*. The KPD's left wing believed that the policy had "worked in reverse": in other words co-operation at local level with Social Democrats for reforms had taken place, and the campaign had not succeeded in eroding the SPD's social basis. The right wing of the KPD, in contrast,

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[16] See chapter three.

believed that creating a positive profile in the workers' movement would benefit the party in the next crisis, as had happened in 1923.[17]

In Saxony there is no evidence that the KPD's "left turn" of 1928 grew out of a leftist mood among the membership.[18] However, contrary to Moscow's intentions, the introduction of the leftist policy was intensified by Thaelmann's inner faction, which wanted to end the coalition of factions in the party leadership. The extremism of the left-isolationist policy between 1928 and 1930 was not welcomed by the Saxon KPD. Many left-wing activists believed that the policy would excessively limit the impact of communist campaigning.[19] However, the policy was not in the first instance concerned with increasing communist influence, but ending contact with the wider workers' movement and its influence on the membership's political predilections. The KPD could have found a policy with a common denominator in the membership, allowing some degree of regional and local flexibility within the context of an outright attack on the policies of the SPD's National Executive. However, the completion of the KPD's Stalinisation did not sanction flexibility to enable wider influence to be gained, but envisaged a method of maintaining strict conformity to the General Line and preventing a challenge to party policy motivated by local needs.

The KPD's General Line had been set before the rise of the NSDAP, which became evident in Saxony from 1929. Rather than responding to a new variable in the political equation, the leadership tried to integrate its response to the Nazis into existing methods of campaigning. Particularly during 1931 and late 1932 the KPD claimed that it could beat back the Nazis by extending the united front from below to win over "Nazi-workers" and

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[17] See chapter five.

[18] See chapter six.

[19] See chapter 6.3

the "misled" *Mittelstand*.[20] In Saxony the KPD membership overwhelmingly ignored a policy which was unable to bring to a halt the Nazi penetration of *Mittelstand* politics. The political direction of protest voting in Saxony had switched around 180 degrees since the pre-war era, when the SPD had gained temporary support from those excluded by the limitations placed on the franchise.[21] In the 1922 *Landtag* elections the victory of the "Left" continued to be interpreted in influential governmental circles as an indication that the Saxon *Mittelstand* was "going with the Left".[22] However, after the events of 1923, when the Saxon middle classes felt at the mercy of the working classes, who had the sanction and support of their state government, this decisively ended. It was the Nazis who increasingly drew on an explicitly anti-Marxist social protest movement, which had taken shape at grass roots level during the mid-twenties.[23] The KPD's policy was like a communist fish drowning outside Soviet waters: it was maintained for so long, in both the mid-twenties and early thirties, because of Comintern policy, which hoped to use German national indignation with the Versailles Treaty and the Western powers to reinforce good German-Soviet relations.[24]

In Saxony there was a specific regional context to the KPD's fear of contact with the SPD and socialist and revolutionary splinter groups: they were organising actions to combat Nazi violence against the workers' movement on the streets which were involving Communist activists. The KPD's Anti-fascist Action in mid-1932 was an attempt to

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[20] See chapter 7.4.

[21] See chapter 2.2.

[22] Feldman, G. D., *The Great Disorder. Politics, Economics, and Society in the German Inflation, 1914-1924* (New York, Oxford, 1993), p485.

[23] Lapp, B., 'Political Polarisation in Weimar Germany: The Saxon *Buergertum* and the Left, 1918/19-1930', Ph.D. Dissertation (University of California, 1991), pp169ff.

[24] Carr, E. H., *The Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (London, 1982), pp6ff.

prevent party members from taking part in SPD-led *Abwehr* actions on the streets of Saxony. The policy's rapid reversal, however, came after both Comintern intervention and the fact that it had actually promoted not prevented co-operation against the Nazis.

The KPD and the Saxon Political System.

A particular feature of the Weimar political system by the early thirties was the collapse of the parties of the so-called "bourgeois middle", the DDP and the DVP, and the contraction of the DNVP which rendered it a narrowly based conservative party. Explanations for these developments have emphasised certain contributory factors. Firstly, the process of rapid German industrialisation, beginning in the late Imperial period, was identified as the cause of the dissolution of the "socio-moral milieu" which underpinned the political system.[25] Secondly, the parties of German (economic) liberalism were identified as increasingly unable to address the needs of their diverse electoral basis, as organised industrial interests sat behind the scenes influencing policy-making.[26] Finally, the *Honoratorien* structure of the traditional parties of the political Right did not adapt to the demands of a growing grass roots *Mittelstand* protest movement, which became evident in Saxony from the mid-twenties, forcing a search for a new form of politically expressing social and economic anxieties.[27]

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[25] Lepsius, R.M., 'Parteiensystem und Sozialstruktur. Zum Problem der Demokratisierung der Gesellschaft' (pp58-80), in Ritter, G. A. (ed.), *Deutsche Parteien vor 1918* (Cologne, 1973). For the application of this trend of research in Saxony see, Szejnmann, C-C. H., 'The Rise of the Nazi Party in Saxony between 1921 and 1933', Ph.D. thesis (King's College, University of London, 1994), p15.

[26] Jones, L. E., 'The Dissolution of the Bourgeois Party System' (pp268-88), in Bessel, R. and Feuchtwanger, E. J. (eds.) *Social Change and Political Development in Weimar Germany* (London, 1981), pp271ff.

[27] For Saxony, Lapp, 'Political Polarisation', passim.

The KPD's policies also failed to adequately respond to the social basis of communism in Saxony. However, by contrast, the party was able to sustain itself both electorally and in terms of its membership. Certain key factors facilitated the further development of the KPD. The KPD had an extensive bureaucracy and press, which gave the party a political profile from national to local level. However, despite the party's self-image as a movement of permanent political campaigning, its factional feuds and inappropriate policies greatly limited the numbers of activists. Most of the membership's campaigning was limited to periods of electoral campaigns and referenda, which they believed could make an positive impact on their daily lives. The concept of a modern "party of total integration", as presented by Neumann, must, therefore, be modified.[28] By the early thirties the KPD's campaigns in Saxony were almost entirely driven by the party machine, which frequently found that its policies could not be fuelled by the membership's enthusiastic participation.[29] Even in the KPD's "inner core" (Kriegel) of full-time functionaries few remained in the KPD throughout the Weimar period. Borkenau estimated that 5 per cent of all those who passed through the party stayed the course, surviving changing policies and party purges.[30]

During the early thirties an already high rate of membership turnover rocketed. The new mass membership of the early thirties was qualitatively different from the smaller numbers of the mid-twenties: these people were temporary recruits from among the unemployed,

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[28] Neumann, S., *Die Parteien der Weimarer Republik* (4.edn.; Stuttgart, 1977), pp87ff.

[29] For the national party see, Weber, H., *Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus. Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik* (vol.1; Gekuerzte Studentenausgabe; Frankfurt-am-Main, 1971), p12.

[30] Borkenau, F., *World Communism. A History of the Communist International* (2 edn.; Michigan, 1962), p371.

who quickly left a party which saw them as means to its own ends.[31] By 1932 at least half of the Saxon KPD's membership had been "Communists" for no longer than one year.[32] Despite the electoral successes between 1930 until 1932, political failure and final defeat characterised a movement which was unable to develop specific German solutions to a specifically German crisis: the rise of Hitler to power. However, the KPD did take on one feature endemic in the German and Saxon party system: it became a vehicle to express electorally the "anti-system" politics of those within the working classes who suffered structural unemployment, chronic poverty and social marginalisation.

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[31] On the political apathy of the working-class unemployed and their relations with the KPD see, Fischer, C., 'The Unemployed and Left-Wing Radicalism in Weimar Germany, 1930-1933' (pp210-221), in Stachura (ed.), *Umemployment in Germany*.

[32] see chapter 6.4.

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10. Appendix

10.1 KPD Membership: Saxony and the Reich In Comparison, 1919-1932

Yr.	Reich.	Erzgebirge/ Vogtland		West Saxony		East Saxony		Saxony (Total)	
	M'ship	*M'ship*	*% of Reich M'ship*	*M'ship*	*% of Reich M'ship*	*M'ship*	*% of Reich M'ship*	*M'ship*	*% of Reich M'ship*
1919	106,656	14,000	13.1	-	-	6,500	6.1	-	-
1920	72,519	17,500	24.1	-	-	1,000	1.4	-	-
1921	359,000	23,798	6.6	14,338	3.9	4,453	1.3	42,589	11.9
1922	224,689	19,432	8.6	12,054	5.4	4,152	1.8	35,638	15.9
1923	294,230	30,584	10.4	9,594	3.3	5,334	1.8	45,512	15.5
1924	120,098	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1925	125,394	12,500	10.0	-	-	3,000	2.4	-	-
1926	131,641	-	-	8,509	6.5	-	-	-	-
1927	133,951	-	-	7,021	5.3	-	-	-	-
1928	130,000	11,800	9.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
1929	114,446	9,000	7.9	7,320	6.4	4,080	3.6	20,400	17.8
1930	135,417	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1931	223,740	-	-	-	-	-	-	27,447	12.3
1932	266,393	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source:- Calculated from, Weber, *Wandlung*, pp361-95; B.a.K., NSDAP Hauptarchiv NS 26/810; 'Struktur und Mitgliederbewegung, 1926-31', in SAPMO I 3/8-10/158, Bl.41,81-4.

10.2 KPD Membership Strength: Saxon Representation Relative to National Representation (1929)

Party District	Reich Membership Share (%)	District/Reich Poulation Ratio (%)	Relaive Representation :- District Party : Reich
Erzgebirge/ Vogtland	7.9	2.8	2.8 : 1
West Saxony	6.4	2.0	3.2 : 1
East Saxony	3.6	2.9	1.2 : 1

Source:- Calculated from, Weber, *Wandlung*, pp367-8.

10.3 Membership Variation in the Reich and Saxon KPD

Reich KPD

Year	Membership High	Membership Low	% Variation on ave. membership
1926	134,172	112,300	18%
1927	143,172	124,729	14%
1928	130,000	130,000	-
1929	135,160	98,527	31%
1930	176,000	120,000	38%
1931	246,513	190,182	26%
1932	260,000	252,000	3%

Source:- Weber, *Wandlung*, pp362-4. Note: There is only one figure for the year 1928.

Saxony KPD

Year	Membership High	Membership Low	% Variation on ave. membership
1926	14,333	9,750	38%
1927	13,000	7,750	51%
1929	24,102	16,715	36%
1930	23,271	18,907	21%

Source:-'Struktur und Mitgliederbewegung, 1926-31', in SAPMO I 3/8-10/158, Bl.83-4.

No figures obtained to define values for recognised definition of"fluctuation".

10.4 Reichstag Elections, 1920-33. Saxony and the Reich In Comparison

Year	Reich		Erzgebirge/ Vogtland		West Saxony		East Saxony		Saxony	
	Vote (000s)	% of total Vote	Vote (000s)	% of total Vote	Vote (000s)	% of total Vote	Vote (000s)	% of total Vote	Vote (000s)	% of total Vote
6.1920	589	2.1	79.6	9.4	12.8	2	9.52	1.1	101	4.2
5.1924	3,746	12.6	182	19.8	109	15.7	80.9	8.4	373	14.6
12.1924	2,709	9.0	138	14.8	90	12.5	64.6	6.5	294	11.3
5.1928	3,263	10.6	154	16.2	121	16.1	105	10.3	381	14.2
9.1930	4,590	13.1	204	18.5	142	17.2	139	12.4	486	16.0
7.1932	5,297	14.3	228	19.6	156	18.7	165	14.3	550	17.4
12.1932	5,980	16.9	242	21.4	175	20.7	189	17.0	608	19.7
5.1933	4,848	12.3	233	19.0	158	17.4	165	13.4	556	16.5

Source:- Weber, *Wandlung*, pp361-95; *Statistisches Jahrbuch fuer den Freistaat Sachsen*, Nr50, 1931/4 (Dresden, 1935), pp430-1.