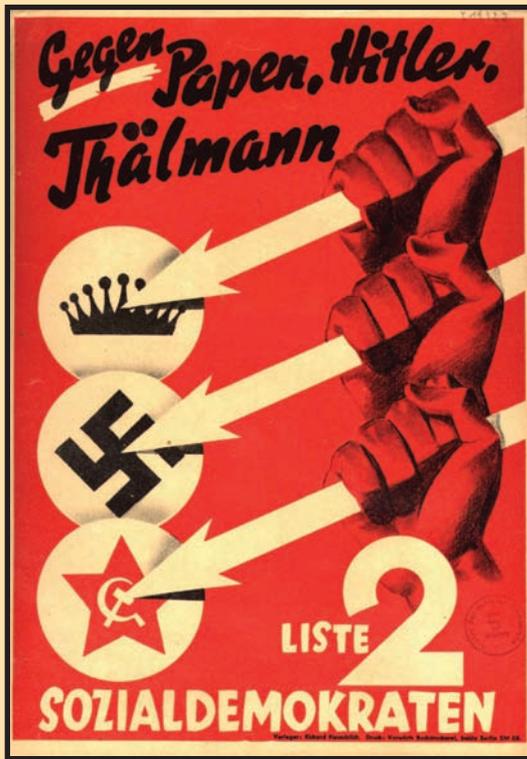


CONFRONTING HITLER



German Social Democrats in Defense of
the Weimar Republic, 1929–1933

WILLIAM SMALDONE

CONFRONTING HITLER

CONFRONTING HITLER

German Social Democrats in Defense of
the Weimar Republic, 1929–1933

WILLIAM SMALDONE



LEXINGTON BOOKS

A division of

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.

Lanham • Boulder • New York • Toronto • Plymouth, UK

LEXINGTON BOOKS

A division of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
A wholly owned subsidiary of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200
Lanham, MD 20706

Estover Road
Plymouth PL6 7PY
United Kingdom

Copyright © 2009 by Lexington Books

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Smaldone, William.

Confronting Hitler: German Social Democrats in defense of the Weimar Republic, 1929–1933 / William Smaldone.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7391-2843-5 (cloth: alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-7391-2843-4 (cloth: alk. paper)

ISBN-13: 978-0-7391-3211-1 (e-book)

ISBN-10: 0-7391-3211-3 (e-book)

1. Germany—Politics and government—1918–1933. 2. Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands. I. Title.

DD240.S63 2009

943.085—dc22

2008032327

Printed in the United States of America

∞™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48–1992.

To Jennifer, Sarah, and Emily

Contents

List of Abbreviations ix

Preface xi

CHAPTER 1

Weimar and the Social Democratic Challenge 1

CHAPTER 2

Siegfried Aufhäuser (1884–1969): “Freedom will always triumph.” 23

CHAPTER 3

Rudolf Breitscheid (1874–1944): “Readiness is everything!” 47

CHAPTER 4

Rudolf Hilferding (1877–1941): Against the Right and the Left 71

CHAPTER 5

Marie Juchacz (1879–1956): Mobilizing Women 101

CHAPTER 6

Carlo Mierendorff (1897–1943):
“Democracy and Socialism were our polestars.” 119

CHAPTER 7

Antonie Pfülf (1977–1933): “A socialist in deed.” 143

CHAPTER 8

Toni Sender (1888–1964): German Rebel 163

CHAPTER 9

Carl Severing (1875–1952): “I will yield only to violence.” 179

CHAPTER 10

Friedrich Stampfer (1874–1957): Reaching out to the Communists 207

CHAPTER 11

Otto Wels (1873–1939): Defending Socialism’s Honor 225

CHAPTER 12

Conclusion: Reconsidering the German Catastrophe of 1933 253

Chronology 277

Works Cited 285

Index 299

About the Author 317

Abbreviations

ADGB	Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (General Federation of German Trade Unions)
AdsD	Archiv der sozialen Demokratie (Bonn)
AfA-Bund	Allgemeiner freier Angestellten-Bund (General Federation of Free Employees)
ANC	African National Congress
Butab	Bund der technischen Angestellte und Beamten (Federation of Technical Employees and Officials)
Butib	Bund der technisch-industriellen Beamten (Federation of Technical and Industrial Employees)
BVP	Bayerische Volkspartei (Bavarian People's Party)
COSATU	Confederation of South African Trade Unions
DDP	Deutsche Demokratische Partei (German Democratic Party)
DHV	Deutschnationaler Handlungsgehilfenverband (National German Clerks' Association)
DMV	Deutscher Metallarbeiter-Verband (German Metal Workers' Association)
DNVP	Deutschnationale Volkspartei (German National People's Party)
DV	Demokratische Vereinigung (Democratic Union)

DVP	Deutsche Volkspartei (German People's Party)
FSLN	Sandinista Front for National Liberation
IF	Iron Front
ISH	International Institute of Social History
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)
NP	National Party (South Africa)
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party; Nazi Party)
PDC	Chilean Christian Democratic Party
RdI	Reichsverband der deutschen Industrie (Association of German Industry)
RFB	Roter Frontkämpferbund (Red Soldiers' League)
SA	Sturmabteilung (Nazi paramilitary force)
SACP	South African Communist Party
SAPD	Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei (Socialist Workers' Party)
SOPADE	Social Democratic Party Executive Committee in Exile
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
SPÖ	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (Social Democratic Party of Austria)
UDF	United Democratic Front
UNO	United Opposition of Nicaragua
UP	Chilean Popular Unity Party
USPD	Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany)
VdDK	Verein der deutschen Kaufleute (Association of German Salespeople)
VMD	Volksmarinedivision (People's Marine Division)
VSR	Volks- und Soldatenrat (People's and Soldiers' Council)

Preface

ON THE EVENING OF JANUARY 30, 1933, German Social Democracy's top leaders gathered in the parliament (*Reichstag*) building in an atmosphere of deepening gloom. Since the July elections of the preceding year, when antirepublican National Socialists (Nazis) and Communists had won a majority of the *Reichstag*'s seats, they had sensed the approaching debacle. In the intervening months, there had been little hope of restoring a viable parliamentary government. Now rumors were flying about the capital that the reactionary President Paul von Hindenburg was about to name a fanatical enemy of democracy, Nazi chief Adolf Hitler, to lead a right-wing coalition government. After three years of work to forestall this moment, the Social Democrats sensed that the nightmare of dictatorship was upon them. They waited for news and weighed their options.¹

The large group included eighteen of the Social Democratic Party's (SPD) twenty-member executive committee, along with a dozen representatives of the party's *Reichstag* delegation. Hans Vogel, cochair with Otto Wels (who was absent due to illness), and Artur Crispian led the meeting and immediately gave the floor to Rudolf Breitscheid, foreign policy expert and one of the SPD's leading public figures.

Breitscheid got right to the point. Hindenburg, he asserted, would name Hitler Chancellor, dissolve the *Reichstag*, and usher in a new phase of National Socialist rule "in which the SPD would have to drive the fascists from power." This task would be extremely difficult. It appeared already that the army and police would support Hitler. Explicating the gravity of the situation, Breitscheid assessed the SPD's potential allies in the coming

fight. He urged the party to maintain close contact with its trade union partners, but dismissed the Communist Party (KPD) as a partner. "The Communists," he argued, "would create the greatest difficulties" for the SPD. They would cooperate for a few days and then "call us traitors, claim we are responsible for the whole mess, and thereby give the reactionaries the chance to crush the labor movement." Thus, an alliance with the KPD was impossible.

Not all agreed that Hitler's appointment was certain. Rudolf Hilferding, the SPD's leading theoretician and top financial expert, argued that it was more likely that Hindenburg would appoint a cabinet of "officials" (*Beamtenkabinett*) rather than of politicians answerable to the parties of the *Reichstag*.

Vogel interjected that the situation remained unclear and that the party did not need to decide anything immediately, but trade union leader Siegfried Aüfhäuser retorted that the opposite was true. It did not matter, he argued, who sat in the new cabinet. There was no constitutional solution to the political crisis and Social Democracy could not take a "wait and see" attitude. Instead, it had to show its readiness to defend the republic by mobilizing the Iron Front, the pro-republican alliance consisting of the SPD, the pro-socialist unions, and the republican paramilitary *Reichsbanner* organization, for public demonstrations. That call was what the masses expected and the movement could not let the moment pass. Aüfhäuser insisted that Social Democracy call for new elections, warn Hindenburg to respect the constitution, and bring its supporters into the streets. Failing to make a show of force, he concluded, would only push the workers into the arms of the Communists.

While all participants agreed that the SPD had to issue an appeal to the masses, there was continued disagreement about its content and whether the party should begin organizing mass actions. As one *Reichstag* delegate put it, "What should be the goal of the extra-parliamentary movement if Hitler . . . obeys the constitution? What can we do in response to that?"

Otto Braun, longtime former Minister President of Prussia, summed up the socialists' dilemma most clearly. "The people," he observed, "have elected an anti-parliamentary majority to parliament. We have always taken the position that, in a democratic state, the will of the people should be decisive." He wondered whether one could respond to this situation with anything other than a general strike, but then for what purpose? It seemed that, given the makeup of the current parliament, there were few options other than dictatorship. The economic situation was the decisive factor; with six million unemployed, the labor movement "had a millstone around

its neck.” He urged his colleagues to avoid foolish mistakes by waiting to see what would happen.

In the end, the other socialist leaders drew the same conclusion. They agreed to declare that they would “unreservedly support any government that had the goal of ending the anarchy in the country and of restoring government under the law and the constitution.”² Yet, before they could even end the meeting, the announcement arrived of Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor. The die was cast. Hitler would waste no time in testing the Social Democrats’ resolve to defend the republic. Using every instrument at his disposal including elections, “emergency” legislation, parliamentary maneuvers, and terror, within six months he was able to destroy the world’s largest, best organized socialist party, along with all his other political rivals.

The victory of National Socialism represented a seminal moment in the history of twentieth-century Europe and the world. The republic’s collapse simultaneously marked the defeat of German Social Democracy’s effort to introduce socialism via democratic means and the triumph of one of Europe’s most violent anti-democratic movements. These disasters, which opened the road to the Second World War and the Holocaust, have naturally drawn the attention of many historians, who have examined in great detail Social Democracy’s struggle to defend the republic against the rising forces of Nazism and Communism.³ Relatively few studies, however, have looked closely at the individual men and women who led that fight. While biographies of the Nazi leadership abound, works on their Social Democratic opponents are relatively rare (especially in English) and many important leaders have been neglected altogether.⁴

This study examines Social Democracy’s failure in 1933 from the perspective of ten of its most prominent leaders at the end of the Weimar Republic. It explores such questions as: why were the Social Democrats unable to develop political strategies and organizing techniques to combat their Nazi and Communist rivals? What motives led them to adopt their “wait and see” policy during the turbulent months before and after Hitler’s appointment to the chancellorship? Why did they not fight? And, finally, how instructive is their dilemma for the contemporary world?

Three goals stand at the center of this work: First, it analyzes the experience of a particular set of individuals in their struggle for political freedom and social justice in the face of extreme and violent opponents. Second, it evaluates that experience in the broader context of the history of twentieth-century democratic socialism. And third, it brings the lives of these Social Democratic leaders to a wide audience long interested in the

rise of the Nazis, but with little knowledge about the identity of their most important opponents.

To achieve these goals I have divided this study into twelve chapters. Chapter 1 summarizes the Social Democratic project under Weimar and the major obstacles to its realization. Chapters 2 through 11 are biographical essays on ten Social Democratic leaders drawn from the SPD's national executive committee (Rudolf Breitscheid, Rudolf Hilferding, Friedrich Stampfer, Otto Wels, and Marie Juchacz), from the regional party leadership (Toni Sender, Toni Pfülf, and Carl Severing), the trade unions (Siegfried Aufhäuser), and the "front generation" of younger socialist leaders (Carlo Mierendorff). After sketching the experiences of these individuals, the closing chapter examines how the Social Democrats' failure in 1933 relates to the global experience of democratic socialism in the twentieth century.

The history of the Weimar Republic has been told many times elsewhere and this work does not recapitulate the entire tale. The introductory chapter provides, in broad strokes, a general outline of Weimar political history with a focus on the SPD. For readers unfamiliar with the sequence of the major events of the republic's short lifetime, I have appended a brief chronology to the text.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the many people and institutions that assisted me in preparing this work. These include the staffs of Willamette University's Hatfield Library, the archive and library of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Bonn, the Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, and the Universitäts und Stadtbibliothek of the University of Cologne. I am grateful to the many colleagues who commented on conference papers that I delivered on Toni Sender, Marie Juchacz, Friedrich Stampfer, and on the SPD's defeat in 1933. I wish to especially thank Professor Jost Dülffer for inviting me to present my work to his seminar at the University of Cologne and to Professor David A. Meier for his many useful comments.

The preparation of this book also received generous support from the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board and from Willamette University. I am particularly grateful to Professor Dieter Dowe and his colleagues at the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung for their friendly assistance and support during my time there as a Fulbright Fellow. Thanks are also due to Emily Jorgensen, who helped prepare the bibliography, and it was a pleasure to work with Julie Kirsch and her staff at Lexington Books. Their encouragement and helpful assistance greatly aided in the editing process.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Jennifer Jopp for her editorial assistance, substantive advice, and good-humored patience from start to finish.

Notes

1. The description that follows is drawn from Hagen Schulze, ed., *Anpassung oder Widerstand? Aus den Akten des Parteivorstands der deutschen Sozialdemokratie 1932/33* (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1975), 130–36.

2. Friedrich Stampfer, *Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse. Aufzeichnungen aus meinem Leben* (Cologne, Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, 1957), 260.

3. See the discussion on pages 17–18.

4. Among the ten figures examined here, there are no full-scale biographies of Siegfried Aufhäuser or Friedrich Stampfer in German or English. While relatively recent biographies have appeared on Carlo Mierendorff, Toni Sender, Toni Pfülf, and Carl Severing, it has been almost four decades since dissertations on Rudolf Breitscheid and Otto Wels appeared and almost fifty years since a book length work on Marie Juchacz was published. With the exceptions of two recent biographies of Rudolf Hilferding, there are no book length monographs on any of the figures discussed here in English. Readers will find full citations for all biographical works of any length on these individuals in the chapters that follow.

Weimar and the Social Democratic Challenge

1

DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF NOVEMBER 1918, a popular upheaval swept away the German monarchy. After four long years of slaughter at the front and deprivation at home, German soldiers, sailors, and workers rose up against the autocratic regime by toppling local authorities and establishing workers' and soldiers' councils as centers of revolutionary power. On November 4, mutinying sailors in the port of Kiel disarmed the garrison, took control of the city, and sparked a wave of similar actions all over the country. On November 7, the Wittelsbach dynasty in Bavaria fell and Kurt Eisner, a leader of the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD), took control of the government. Two days later, with tens of thousands of workers and soldiers marching on the streets of Berlin, the last imperial Chancellor, Prince Max von Baden, announced the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II and handed over power to SPD leader Friedrich Ebert, whose party was the largest in the *Reichstag*. The next day Ebert invited the USPD to form a provisional coalition government. After more than forty years of exclusion and repression, it appeared to many that Germany's Social Democratic moment had arrived at last.

What that moment would embody, however, remained uncertain. For decades the SPD had stood at the center of the world's socialist movement. Socialists around the globe respected and envied its more than one million dues-paying members, powerful trade union allies, and ability to win the support of more than one third of the German electorate in the *Reichstag* election of 1912. Ideologically guided by its *Erfurt Program* of 1891, the SPD grew as a result of the organizational skills of its leaders and the dedication of its rank-and-file activists. Inspired by the program's assertion that

history was on their side and that capitalism was moving inexorably toward socialism, workers looked forward to a world in which private property in the means of production gave way to “social property,” cooperation replaced competition, and equality and justice supplanted discrimination and exploitation based on class, race, and gender differences. Over the long term, it was the workers who would carry out this revolution through international class struggle. In the meantime, their party would lead the way in the fight for social, political, and economic reforms within the semiautocratic framework of Germany’s capitalist order.¹

Between its founding in 1875 and the outbreak of the First World War, the SPD had no serious political rivals on the socialist left. In 1914, however, the party leadership’s decision to back the government’s “defensive” war effort fundamentally changed the situation. Although most Social Democrats lined up behind Ebert and the majority of the party’s top leaders, a substantial minority regarded their action as a betrayal of socialist internationalism. By 1917 this opposition drew support from all parts of the party’s internal political spectrum. “Reformist” leaders such as Edward Bernstein, “radicals” such as Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, and “centrists” such as Karl Kautsky and Rudolf Hilferding openly opposed the party’s pro-war policy. When the SPD expelled these opponents in January of 1917, they formed a party of their own, the USPD, in April.² A year and a half later, as Friedrich Ebert formed his provisional coalition government, it was unclear if the movement could overcome this division.

Much had happened in the interim. Not only had the two parties been at loggerheads over the war (with antiwar advocates subject to severe repression), but the collapse of Tsarist Russia in February 1917, as well as the Bolshevik Revolution of October, had added a new element to European politics—an embryonic communist movement—and fired the imaginations of radicals everywhere. In Germany, the appearance of workers’ and soldiers’ councils seemed to follow the pattern of their revolutionary counterparts, the soviets, in Russia. Some on the German left, especially in the Spartacus League, which was led by Luxemburg and Liebknecht and formed the extreme left-wing of the USPD, saw them as harbingers of a new and very different kind of radical democracy, one that had little in common with the traditional Social Democratic aim of a democratized parliamentary system. The new provisional government, in which each party had three representatives, would have to determine if these visions of the future could be reconciled.

For Friedrich Ebert and the majority of his colleagues in the SPD leadership, the answer was a clear no. For decades they had worked for the es-

establishment of a government responsible to the *Reichstag*, a goal that had been achieved in the waning days of the war and was most clearly symbolized by Ebert's emergence as Chancellor. Now the SPD leaders aimed to consolidate the parliamentary system by ending the war, maintaining order and discipline, and organizing elections to a National Assembly to write a new constitution. They wanted to establish a republic equipped with broad civil liberties, substantial welfare benefits, and a political structure that would provide a framework for further reforms and the gradual evolution toward socialism. In the wake of the military disaster, the threat of foreign intervention, the ongoing Allied blockade, food shortages, and the challenges of reconstruction, they opposed immediately founding a socialist republic and any social and economic "experiments" that might follow.

Claiming that he hated revolution "like sin," Ebert sought to head off the radicals.³ By forming a coalition with the USPD, he won the support of many workers who hoped for socialist unity, and he gained the backing of the Berlin Workers' and Soldiers' Council in which the SPD and USPD were strongly represented. This action effectively isolated the Spartacus League, but Ebert took no chances. He also cut a deal with the leader of the army general staff, General Wilhelm Groener, in which the latter pledged loyalty as long as Ebert promised to support order and discipline in the army. Thus, to fend off the radical left, whom Ebert wrongly equated with Bolshevism, he made the fateful decision to forge an alliance with Germany's reactionary officer corps.⁴

Despite widespread support for a unified socialist government, within a short time it became clear that the coalition partners were deeply divided. Pushing for a social as well as a political revolution, the USPD called for a purge of the state bureaucracy and military, for the expropriation of industry, and for the "dictatorship of the proletariat" during the transition to socialism. The councils and the provisional government had established this dictatorship, the Independents asserted, and now had to oversee the socialization of industry and the democratization of the state. Once these tasks were accomplished, the entire population could participate in elections to the National Assembly.⁵

But the Independents, too, were split. Leaders of the party's right wing, such as Kautsky and Bernstein, argued that the war's end eliminated the main issue separating the two parties and called for their reunification. On the left, the Spartacists and the factory-based "revolutionary shop stewards," fearing that the election of a National Assembly would lead to the creation of a bourgeois republic, called, instead, for a system based on the workers'

and soldiers' councils. While most USPD members, at least for a time, fell somewhere between these two poles, factional conflicts made it difficult for moderate leaders such as Hugo Haase, USPD cochairman and key figure in the Provisional Government, and Rudolf Hilferding, editor of the party's leading paper, *Die Freiheit*, to pursue a coherent set of policies.⁶

The division of its rivals placed the SPD in a favorable position to block radical reforms, but the party's hand was also strengthened by its support in the free trade unions and the overwhelming presence of its loyal members in the councils. Within days of the monarchy's fall the social democratic oriented unions (about 2.8 million strong in 1918) were able to use the labor movement's powerful political position to extract substantial gains from Germany's employer associations. In an agreement signed on November 15, the employers agreed to recognize the unions as "the authorized representatives of the workers" for collective bargaining, to end their support for employer-backed "yellow unions," to introduce the eight hour day with no loss of pay, and to allow the establishment of workers' committees in all enterprises with more than fifty employees. These were substantial gains that the labor movement had long worked for, but they also reflected the view of most union leaders that reform, not the overthrow of capitalism, was the order of the day.⁷

The situation was similar in the councils. SPD activists had played an important role in their formation, they far outnumbered their counterparts from the much smaller USPD, and they shared the party leadership's vision of parliamentary democracy. While many SPD members also hoped for substantial social and economic reforms, such as the socialization of key industries, most also backed their leaders' determination to hold elections to the National Assembly in which all citizens could participate.

These sentiments clearly revealed themselves when the first Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils convened in Berlin in mid-December 1918. Among the five hundred delegates present, about two-thirds belonged to the SPD and only a dozen were members of the Spartacus League. The Congress easily passed resolutions supporting the immediate socialization of all industries that were "ripe for it," such as mining; the disarming of counterrevolutionary forces; and the creation of a people's militia. At the same time, large majorities defeated USPD proposals for the postponement of elections, the establishment of a council-based republic, and the concentration of executive and legislative authority in the hands of a Central Council to be elected by the Congress. A strong majority voted to set elections to the National Assembly for January 19, 1919.⁸

Tensions within the Provisional Government intensified as it became clear that the SPD was determined to block any major social and economic

reforms until after the elections. The crisis came to a head in late December in a clash over Ebert's decision to use the army to quell unrest in Berlin without consulting the USPD. When the Independents condemned this action and renewed their demands for military and economic reforms, the SPD refused to budge. Frustrated, the USPD leaders quit the coalition. In doing so, they handed full control of the government over to the SPD, an action that would prove to be a serious mistake.

The ramifications of this action soon became clear as the socialist left continued to fracture and violence spread in the capital. On December 31, the Spartacus League abandoned the USPD and united with other left-wing splinter groups to found the German Communist Party. On January 5, along with the revolutionary shop stewards, the KPD attempted to head off the National Assembly elections by seizing power in Berlin. Poorly organized and lacking mass support, this effort came to a quick and disastrous end as Ebert's government brought in army troops, including radical anti-Communist volunteer units, the *Freikorps*, to brutally crush the rebels. These events, exacerbated by the army's subsequent murder of KPD leaders Luxemburg and Liebknecht on January 15, 1919, made the split in the labor movement virtually unbridgeable. Ultimately, this rift helped to undermine the republic.

The results of the National Assembly elections were a blow to the socialist parties. Even if they had been able to cooperate with one another, the SPD's 38 percent of the vote (for 165 of 423 seats) and the USPD's 7.6 percent (22 seats), fell well short of the absolute majority needed to form a purely socialist government and to dominate the constitutional debates. Instead, the SPD had to look to its right to form a coalition with two moderate bourgeois parties, the Catholic Center Party (with 19.7 percent and 91 seats) and the German Democratic Party (the DDP, with 18.5 percent and 75 seats). The KPD did not participate in the elections, while the parties of the right, the German People's Party (DVP) and the German National People's Party (DNVP) were marginalized (with 4.4 percent for 19 seats and 10.3 percent for 44 seats, respectively).⁹

Concerned about the volatile atmosphere in Berlin, the National Assembly convened in Weimar on February 6. The SPD formed a new provisional government, subsequently called the Weimar Coalition, with the Center and the DDP. Friedrich Ebert emerged as president of the Assembly and his party comrade, Philip Scheidemann, assumed the post of Chancellor. With the well-known jurist and DDP politician Hugo Preuss leading the drafting process, the coalition parties shaped the new Constitution and, after its approval in July, became its chief defenders.

As Eberhard Kolb has noted, the Weimar Constitution was much more a creation of liberal rather than socialist constitutional theory.¹⁰ Its most important institution was the *Reichstag*, which was elected using a system of proportional representation and was responsible for enacting legislation and controlling the executive branch. As a counterweight to the legislature, however, the constitution also called for the direct election of a president who had substantial prerogatives. He could appoint and dismiss the chancellor and his cabinet, dissolve the *Reichstag*, and, according to article 48, rule by decree after declaring an emergency. While the empowerment of the *Reichstag* embodied the great political advance of the Weimar Constitution over that of the empire, the powerful presidency represented a clear element of continuity with the old imperial system.

Although the Constitution did not embody any fundamental changes in the social or economic order, its contents reflected the myriad needs of a complex society experiencing rapid modernization. The political parties worked hard to advance the interests of their own constituencies, and the resulting document contained an array of protections for various groups (e.g., workers, the Catholic Church, and others) as well as the full range of individual civil rights. It guaranteed private property, though it left open the possibility of its conversion into public property if it served the interests of the whole. While eliminating the workers' councils from the political system, the Constitution also secured them a role in the workplace, promised a comprehensive system of social insurance, and provided a framework for further reforms.¹¹

The SPD was willing to accept this Constitution. For most of the party's leaders, the creation of a democratic republic—even along liberal lines—was the concrete realization of their chief political aim under the empire. They regarded the creation of the parliamentary order as a great achievement. Moreover, in the spring of 1919, they were especially concerned to get on with the work of governance for, as the Assembly debated, the SPD's political fortunes declined precipitously and the country grew increasingly unstable.

Between February 1919 and June 1920 the SPD led three coalition governments. From the beginning of the armistice on November 11, 1918, until the signing of the Versailles Treaty on June 21, 1919, Germany had to reintegrate millions of returning soldiers into civilian life, manage food and raw material shortages stemming from the continuing Allied blockade, negotiate a peace agreement, restart the peacetime economy, and create a new system of parliamentary governance against considerable opposition from the left and from the right. In the face of widespread suffer-

ing and very difficult material and political challenges, any elected government would have been hard pressed to maintain its support much less increase it. But the SPD leadership's narrow vision and flawed strategy exacerbated its problems. Its refusal to carry out fundamental political or economic reforms and, even more importantly, its willingness to repeatedly use the *Freikorps* to put down widespread worker unrest and to bloodily crush the Bavarian Soviet Republic in the spring of 1919 led many supporters to abandon the party. Often they turned to the increasingly radical USPD, which, by the middle of 1920 had a total of 900,000 members.¹²

The SPD's political myopia became especially clear when, on March 13, 1920, a reactionary civil servant named Wolfgang Kapp attempted to seize power backed by antirepublican *Freikorps* units under General Lüttwitz.¹³ When the army leadership refused to move against the *Putsch*, Chancellor Bauer's government fled Berlin for Stuttgart while the SPD's trade union allies called a general strike. Broad support for the strike and the bureaucracy's refusal to aid the plotters quickly undercut Kapp. On March 18 he fled to Sweden.

Despite this close call, the SPD refused to take advantage of its victory. When the trade unions called for a new government in which they would play a role and demanded a purge of the civil service and military of reactionary elements, punishment of traitors, and the socialization of key industries, the SPD failed to respond. Fearing the radical elements that had also mobilized against Kapp, especially the formation of a large, armed "Red Army" in the industrial Ruhr, the government once again turned to the army (the *Reichswehr*)—which had just proven itself utterly unreliable in the struggle against the *Putsch* supporters—to restore order.

Thus, in the eyes of many workers, the SPD-led coalition was much tougher on the socialist left than it was against the antirepublican right and in the national elections of June 1920 the SPD paid the price. It won only 21.7 percent of the vote (down from 38 percent a year earlier), while the USPD won 17.9 percent. With the Independents apparently poised to overtake their social democratic rivals, the SPD lost its taste for the responsibility of governance. It decided against joining a new coalition government with the moderate bourgeois parties and withdrew to lick its wounds as part of the opposition.

The period immediately following the defeat of Kapp represented a last chance for the socialist left to carry out any fundamental reforms within the new republic. By failing to purge the bureaucracy, courts, and military of antirepublican elements, the SPD left the institutions of the new state largely in the hands of hostile forces anxious to reverse the results of 1918.

By neglecting to carry out any expropriation of industry or fundamental land reform, the socialists allowed Germany's antirepublican propertied elites to maintain their control over the economy. Fearing the revolutionary left, the SPD had hesitated to challenge dangerous forces on the right and had, thus, left in place the very groups that would later work to undermine the new system and pave the way for Nazism.

Following the June 1920 elections, it soon became apparent that the movement for the socialist transformation of German society had run out of steam. In October the USPD split over the issue of whether or not it should join the Communist International (Comintern) headquartered in Moscow. When the bulk of its membership quit the party and joined the tiny and politically marginal KPD (which had only 78,000 members), the latter was transformed overnight into a powerful mass organization, while the USPD became a shadow of its former self. In the spring of 1921 the KPD quickly squandered its newfound strength in fresh rebellions that were easily smashed. Now divided into three weakened and conflicting major parties and myriad small splinter groups, the German left had run aground.

The reactionary right, meanwhile, was resurgent. Humiliated by wartime defeat, most Germans were indignant over the Treaty of Versailles, which forced the country to cede one-sixth of its territory; to give up its colonies, air force, navy, and most of its army; to accept sole responsibility for the outbreak of the war; and to pay enormous reparations to the victors. As rising inflation deepened economic hardship and political disorder persisted, many became disillusioned with the new republic and turned against it. Following the Kapp *Putsch*, political violence by armed nationalist and often anti-Semitic militants intensified and was marked by a number of spectacular assassinations of republican leaders. For example, after narrowly missing Philip Scheidemann, death squads murdered USPD leader Karl Gareis, the important Catholic politician Matthias Erzberger, and on June 24, 1922, the Jewish industrialist and DDP Foreign Minister, Walter Rathenau.

These attacks aroused much public indignation and Chancellor Wirth of the Center Party stood before the *Reichstag* and declared unequivocally that, "the enemy is on the right!"¹⁴ With the existence of the democratic order apparently in the balance, the *Reichstag* passed a Law for the Protection of the Republic, valid for five years, which allowed the state to crack down on extremists. Although the reactionary judiciary primarily used the law against the left, its passage revealed the widespread concern of German political leaders for the republic's stability. In response to the crisis, the SPD

once again entered into coalitions with the DDP and Center, and from May 1921 until November of 1922 it participated in two successive cabinets led by Wirth.

While the SPD was willing to spring into the breach to secure the republic, for a time the depleted USPD continued to reject participation in governments with the bourgeois parties. It also remained at odds with the SPD after the latter passed an explicitly reformist new party program at Görlitz in September of 1921 (see below). In the wake of Rathenau's murder, however, and deprived of its radical left wing, the party moderated its position and agreed to join a coalition with the SPD and the moderate bourgeois parties. Although the latter ultimately blocked the Independents' entry into the government, the two socialist parties continued their cooperation in the *Reichstag* and began discussing reunification. By September 1922 they had reunited at a joint congress held in Nuremberg.¹⁵

Over the course of the next decade, the SPD formed the most important political bulwark of the republic and it was the hope of many who sought to pave a democratic path to socialism while fending off extremists of the right and left. Programmatically, the newly reunited party needed time to get its bearings. The *Görlitz Program* had aimed to broaden the SPD's electoral base by appealing to "working people in town and country" and "uniting all workers of hand and brain" in their common struggle for democracy and socialism. Like *Erfurt*, the program's theoretical section focused on capitalism's development into a polarized system of rich and poor, in which control over the means of production was increasingly concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, while large numbers of people were impoverished. It was this process, the program claimed, that made class struggle for the liberation of the proletariat a historical necessity.¹⁶

Unlike *Erfurt*, however, *Görlitz* dropped the idea that small enterprises must disappear and, by declaring the emancipation of the proletariat to be an ethical, rather than an historical, imperative, it toned down its deterministic language. It also asserted, however, that the democratic republic was the "historically determined" framework for the transition to socialism and that "any attack on it was an assault on the people's right to live." Within the republican order, the SPD would fight for the "transformation of large-scale industry from private into public property, which would emancipate the toilers (*schaffendes Volk*) from the fetters of capitalism and allow the reconstruction of the economy for the benefit of the whole."¹⁷

In addition to this general, long-term aim, the SPD also put forward a practical agenda that included such goals as: the extension of state controls over natural resources and monopolistic capitalistic enterprises, reforms to

provide social security and improve working and living conditions for the masses, the establishment of legal equality among social groups (including women), and the expansion of educational and cultural opportunities for workers and youth. In the sphere of foreign policy, the party's program called for international working-class solidarity, support for the League of Nations, the development of international law, disarmament, and the revision of the Versailles Treaty.¹⁸

While the SPD hoped that the *Görlitz Program* would enable it to reach out more successfully to peasants, craftsmen, white-collar workers, women, and intellectuals, the merger with the USPD quickly undercut its validity. In order to reflect the views of the over 200,000 Independents who returned to the SPD, the Nuremberg congress decided to appoint a new commission to revise the program once again. Chaired by Kautsky and strongly influenced by Hilferding, the commission submitted the results of its work to the Heidelberg Congress of 1925.¹⁹

The *Heidelberg Program* essentially represented a return to the theoretical principles of *Erfurt*. It stressed that the laws of economic development were strengthening large-scale industry and agriculture while undercutting and marginalizing small producers. Indeed, the economy was increasingly moving toward monopoly, which "leads to . . . the organization of the economy into cartels and trusts" in a process that "unites industrial capital, commercial capital, and bank capital into finance capital." As a result, a small number of monopoly capitalists were able to subjugate not only the dependent wage earners, but the middle classes as well. Under their sway, the state aggressively pursued capitalist interests abroad and fueled imperialist rivalries and the threat of war. Only the ever-growing working class, organized in the labor movement, had the power to counter these tendencies and to overcome the contradictions and exploitation of capitalism.²⁰

The program again asserted the party's commitment to the republic as the framework for the transition to socialism and it condemned all forms of exploitation whether of race, class, gender, or nationality. It was a step back, however, from the earlier effort to broaden the party's base among peasants, artisans, and other groups that orthodox Marxists believed had no future under capitalism.

Heidelberg marked the shift to the left that took place after unification, but there was more to the change than a return to Marxist orthodoxy and the language of class struggle. There was also a sharpening of the debate within the SPD over the value of entering into coalitions with the bourgeois parties. As noted above, the Independents had generally been loath to pursue that path because of the compromises and

the political costs it entailed, but the SPD, too, was well aware of these issues and did not relish taking responsibility for crisis management. After 1922 the debate over coalition politics was a recurrent one and, for the most part, the SPD elected to remain aloof from power. At the height of the inflationary crisis of 1923, however, as the republic teetered on the brink of economic collapse and renewed civil war, the party agreed to join back-to-back coalitions headed by DVP leader Gustav Stresemann. These governments managed to stave off disaster and restore order, but at substantial political cost to the SPD. Stung by the loss of voter support in the elections of 1924, Social Democracy did not reenter the national government for four years despite being Germany's largest party. Only after a strong electoral showing in May 1928, did it once again lead a coalition until March 1930.

While Social Democrats hesitated to govern at the national level, they remained very active in regional and local governments around the country, and, for most of the republic's history, SPD-led coalitions controlled Prussia, which comprised two-thirds of Germany's territory and population. Its inability to win an absolute majority at the national level, however, and its decision to remain in the opposition for long periods, represented a serious obstacle for the achievement of the party's goals. Without power, it could not make good on any hoped for "transition to socialism," nor could it carry out more limited, but essential, reforms to democratize state institutions or solve pressing social, political, and economic problems.

Operating from the opposition during the "Golden Years" of relative economic prosperity that characterized the republic from 1924 to 1928, the SPD focused largely on rebuilding its membership and expanding its myriad organizations. Indeed, by the end of the 1920s it could claim a measure of success in extending its appeal. Among its roughly one million members, 60 percent came from the industrial working class, 14 percent were white-collar employees, and the remainder came from other middle class groups. The percentage of female membership also rose from 15 percent to 23 percent during this time.²¹

Yet the SPD's alienation from a number of key social groups prevented it from becoming a true "people's party." Its vision of a secular, urban, and industrial future in which the working class would reign supreme did little to attract Catholics, small businessmen, rural workers, and peasants. When the SPD did attempt to seriously address the concrete practical needs of some of these groups, as it did with respect to the peasantry in the late 1920s, its efforts came to naught in the face its long history of promoting urban over rural interests. The onset of the economic crisis of 1929 and

the party's subsequent exclusion from power made it impossible for it to take concrete steps that might have won it peasant support.

The party also failed to win the backing of a majority of German women. Despite the fact that, under the empire, Social Democracy had been the sole party to demand gender equality, and that one of the first acts of Ebert's Provisional Government had been to grant women the franchise, most German women remained aloof. The SPD women's delegation was the largest in the Reichstag and its women's department worked hard to recruit new members, but its male-oriented culture, its view of gender issues as a matter of secondary importance compared to class, its leadership's refusal to promote more women into responsible posts, and its hypocritical policies that steered women from the workplace back into the home did little to draw women away from the conservative parties. Thus, between 1920 and 1932, women comprised only 40 to 45 percent of Social Democracy's voters.²²

In a parliamentary system in which governance required the winning of majority support, the SPD's inability to broaden its political base was a major obstacle for the achievement of its goals. This problem was exemplified in the parliamentary elections of May 1928, when SPD support reached almost 30 percent (its high point since the National Assembly elections) and its leadership agreed to lead a new Great Coalition government that included the pro-republican DDP, the Catholic Center, and the business-oriented DVP. These parties represented a wide range of often-conflicting interests that proved impossible to reconcile in the context of the economic crisis that soon followed.

While in the opposition, the SPD had been able to help push through a series of reforms quite favorable to workers. These included the implementation of binding arbitration by the Labor Ministry, the restoration of the eight-hour day in large firms, the creation of an unemployment insurance system, expanded health, disability, and social insurance programs, and increased investment in public housing.²³ By the time of the Kiel Party Congress of 1927, many party leaders were convinced that the relatively stable economic climate, and the apparent readiness of important business leaders to cooperate with them, made it a propitious moment to enter a Reich cabinet. They hoped that, by expanding the social state and extending democracy into the workplace ("economic democracy"), a Social Democratic government could promote the gradual democratization of a capitalist order that was becoming increasingly "organized" but remained in private hands. It was this process, they believed, that was at the core of the transition to socialism.²⁴

Their hopes, however, were misplaced. The Social Democratic leaders had drastically overestimated the stability of the capitalist economy and the willingness of Germany's economic elites to cooperate in the solution of Germany's most pressing social, economic, and political problems. Soon after SPD leader Hermann Müller had formed his cabinet it became clear that the Social Democrats would be hard pressed to defend, much less advance, workers' interests. On one issue after the other, such as the building of pocket battleships (against which the party had campaigned), tax policy, and unemployment insurance, the SPD found itself constantly making concessions to hold the coalition together.

Even before the collapse of the stock market in New York, Germany's economy had slowed and social tensions were rising. Unemployment had remained relatively high throughout the period of recovery and, with 2.8 million workers idle by January of 1929, the nascent welfare state struggled to meet its obligations. Class conflict intensified. In the fall of 1928, Germany's steel magnates locked out 250,000 Ruhr workers in an effort to undermine the system of binding arbitration, an act that revealed their determination to roll back gains workers had made under the Republic.²⁵

With the growth of unemployment, conflict grew within the coalition as the parties struggled to shore up the bankrupt unemployment insurance system while protecting the interests of their respective constituencies. For the SPD leaders, protecting unemployment benefits was key to preserving the embryonic social state. Pushed by the party's left wing, which had opposed joining the coalition in the first place, they were not inclined to make further concessions. For their parts, the increasingly conservative Center Party and the DVP knew that by digging in their own heels, a break with the SPD was likely. On March 27, 1930, the coalition finally collapsed.²⁶

The fall of the Müller cabinet marked the effective end of parliamentary government under Weimar. For the next three years, despite frequent elections, no cabinet rested on majority support in the *Reichstag*. Instead, minority cabinets, under a series of increasingly authoritarian Chancellors, carried out policies via presidential decree in accordance with Article 48 of the constitution. This inherently undemocratic presidential system paved the way for the Nazi "seizure of power" in 1933.

Some Social Democrats saw the danger early on. Rudolf Hilferding, for example, opposed the breakup of the Great Coalition because he held that, outside the government, the party could do little to protect workers' interests or defend the republic. He knew that the new Chancellor, Center Party leader Heinrich Brüning, would have little support in the *Reichstag*

and that he intended to govern by emergency decree. The inability of the *Reichstag* to form a majority government, Hilferding asserted, would expand the power of Reich President Paul von Hindenburg (a former general and monarchist elected following Ebert's death in 1925) and make it easier for antidemocratic forces to undermine parliamentary rule.²⁷

Hilferding's fears soon proved to be well founded. Antirepublican forces among the political, economic, and military elites saw the breakup of the coalition as a welcome opportunity to establish a right-wing cabinet equipped with special powers. This government would exclude the *Reichstag* from decision making by granting the Chancellor full power using the President's authority under article 48. Well before Müller's fall, Hindenburg and his advisors planned to set up a *Reich* cabinet that would be antiparliamentarian and "anti-Marxist," (i.e., opposed to the entire democratic, Social Democratic, Communist, and trade union left). They proffered Heinrich Brüning, a reactionary leader of the Center, the Chancellorship, and offered him full power as long as he shifted the government rightward and excluded the SPD. He agreed to comply.²⁸

Brüning aimed to reform the state's finances through sharp cuts in public spending and substantial increases in taxes and special levies. In July 1930, however, a solid *Reichstag* majority rebuffed his first major bill. When he attempted to pass the legislation via an emergency decree, another majority, consisting of the SPD, KPD, NSDAP, and DNVP, made use of its constitutional right to override it. He then dissolved the *Reichstag* and called for new elections in September.

The results of these elections were disastrous. The Nazi Party, which in 1928 had polled only 800,000 votes (2.6 percent) for 12 *Reichstag* seats, now won a great victory with 6.4 million votes (18.2 percent) and 107 seats. The Communists, too, increased their strength from 3.3 million (10.6 percent) and 54 seats to 4.6 million (13.1 percent) and 77 seats. With 8.6 million votes (24.5 percent) and 143 seats the SPD remained the largest single party in the *Reichstag*, but it had lost about half a million supporters and ten seats. Meanwhile, with the exception of the Center, which, together with its sister party in Bavaria, the BVP, won 87 seats for a gain of about nine, the middle-class parties suffered severe losses as many of their members turned to the Nazis as an alternative. The DDP (now renamed the *Staatspartei* or State Party), which had won 18.5 percent of vote in 1919, slipped to 3.8 percent (and a mere 14 seats) in 1930. At the same time the DVP and DNVP together now commanded only 71 seats in the new *Reichstag* compared to 118 just two years earlier.²⁹

The Nazi and Communist gains gave the two most extreme antirepublican parties the largest voting block in the *Reichstag*. Together with the monarchist DNVP, radical antirepublican forces controlled more than 39 percent of the *Reichstag's* 577 seats. Since Brüning was uninterested in forming a coalition with the SPD, it was now impossible for him to form a majority cabinet from the remnants of the middle-class parties. Instead he formed a new minority government that could be toppled at any moment by a parliamentary vote of no confidence. His cabinet survived, however, until May of 1932. Ironically, it was the SPD that made such longevity possible!

The SPD had no love for Brüning, but following the September elections it feared that, "in the given political situation, the party had no other choice than to support Brüning if it wanted to prevent the Nazis from coming to power."³⁰ If his government fell, no one could be sure of what would follow. The Social Democrats underestimated Brüning's authoritarian sympathies, but they also feared that he might gain majority support by bringing the Nazis into his cabinet. Worse yet, Hindenburg might appoint a cabinet consisting of an even more lethal combination of fascist and reactionary forces. Given the rapidly declining economic situation, new elections were more likely to strengthen the extremist, rather than the republican, parties. Since the SPD's top priority was to protect the constitutional order, its leadership decided to support the "lesser evil" by "tolerating" Brüning's cabinet. It hoped, thereby, to preserve the SPD-led coalition with the Center Party in Prussia and, most of all, to weather the political storm brought on by the depression.³¹

The decision to adopt the toleration policy revealed the SPD's growing isolation in the latter phase of the republic's history. The KPD had always opposed the SPD and the republic. It regarded the parliament as an "organ of counter-revolution" that could only be used to enlighten the masses about the capitalist class character and corruption of the bourgeois parties and the SPD. After 1928 the KPD adopted the Bolshevik-dominated Comintern's line accusing the Socialists of being "social fascists" who were even more dangerous to the workers than the Nazis. Since the antirepublican KPD was the only significant party to its left, the SPD could only look to its right for allies, but after 1930 this was no longer a viable option. By then, the increasingly fragmented moderate bourgeois parties, such as the state party, were either in a state of collapse or, like the Center and the DVP, were moving to the right. Thus, there were no major political forces interested in cooperating with the SPD.³²

Although the SPD was not in the cabinet, its toleration of Brüning's draconian austerity policies, which deepened the depression and intensified the enormous suffering of Germany's workers, prevented the party from benefiting politically from its position in the opposition. Instead, the SPD found itself hard pressed to explain its toleration of a government whose policies it constantly criticized. At the same time, the party was unable to construct a set of economic policies that could serve as a compelling alternative to the government's deflationary path. Fearing that deficit spending would lead to a resurgence of inflation, the top SPD leaders rejected innovative suggestions by the trade unions for a Keynesian-like stimulus package to revive the economy.³³

In addition to sharply limiting the SPD's room for maneuver, the toleration policy caused much dissent between the rank and file, especially the youth, and the leadership. A small group of leading left-wing activists quit the party in the fall of 1931, but, after founding the Socialist Workers Party (SAPD), they attracted few followers.³⁴

In response to criticisms of its parliamentary strategy for combating the Nazis, in the fall of 1931 the leadership created an "Iron Front" of democratic forces including the SPD, the large paramilitary *Reichsbanner* organization, the trade unions, and workers' sport associations, to demonstrate republican power in the streets. Many Social Democrats, such as Julius Leber, were heartened by this decision, which acted "like an old half-forgotten storm signal on troops who were used to both fighting and victory."³⁵ Yet the Iron Front's strength was more demonstrative than real and the party leadership, ever hopeful that the constitutional order would prevail, refrained from using it as an offensive weapon against its opponents.³⁶

The deep-seeded nature of the SPD's defensive attitude became especially clear in July 1932 when Brüning's even more reactionary successor, Franz von Papen, decided to depose the legally constituted SPD-led government in Prussia. Charging that the Prussian government had failed to maintain public order in the face of Nazi and Communist violence, he used Hindenburg's authority to declare a state of emergency, dissolve the government, and replace it with a *Kommissar* answerable to him. In response, instead of calling a general strike and summoning the Iron Front into the streets, the SPD and trade union leaders took the government to court rather than risk civil war against the combined forces of the *Reichswehr*, Nazi street fighting units (SA), and the nationalist paramilitary *Stahlhelm*. This strategy ultimately failed.³⁷

The capitulation in Prussia set the stage for the SPD's timid response to Hitler's appointment in January 1933. The Social Democrats certainly were

well aware that the Nazis intended to destroy the republic. In late 1930, Rudolf Hilferding had recognized that the Nazis, feeding on widespread discontent resulting from the lost war, the inflation, and the depression, were the most immediate threat to the republic. Describing them as a “catchall” party with support from the military, the aristocracy, the old middle class (*Mittelstand*), the peasantry, officialdom, and even the working class, he acknowledged its great success in using antirepublicanism to unite disparate elements into a powerful political movement. Hilferding feared that, as National Socialism grew, it would be increasingly tempting for a right-wing cabinet to invite its leaders into the government, a move that would put the resources of the state at the Nazis’ disposal. They would penetrate the government’s administrative apparatus, the *Reichswehr*, and the police. “Once such a government is formed,” he predicted, “it would be very difficult to remove” and would be in a position to destroy the republic.³⁸

Many Social Democratic leaders shared this fear and the Nazis certainly did nothing to refute it. Indeed, expanding Nazi violence and the public assertions of Hitler and Goebbels that “heads would roll” once they had power made clear that their participation in elections served merely as legal camouflage for their antidemocratic ends.³⁹ Despite this Nazi clarity of purpose, however, Social Democracy’s leaders failed to respond to the threat with anything other than parliamentary tactics. The result of this failure was their complete collapse in 1933.

Legions of historians have put forward a wide array of explanations for the Social Democratic debacle. These explanations include: SPD and trade union unwillingness to pursue more radical changes in Germany during the revolution of 1918–1919, the party’s hesitation to govern at the national level during much of the republic’s existence, its fear of civil war and rigid adherence to parliamentary norms even as the latter disintegrated, and its inability to respond effectively to the challenge of the Great Depression. While some historians hold the “structural” social, economic, and political problems that beset the republic as primarily responsible for its demise, others focus on its “crisis of modernity” or stress the allegedly “mediocre” leadership of the parliamentary parties, especially the SPD, in the struggle for power.⁴⁰

The chapters that follow will not provide the “silver bullet” that resolves this debate. They aim, rather, to examine the problem from two very distinct vantage points. Unlike works such as Donna Harsch’s excellent study, which focuses on the organizational, ideological, and cultural diversity that characterized the core institutions of German Social Democracy, this collection of biographical essays provides a view of Social

Democracy's response to the rise of radical antirepublicanism from the perspectives of a selection of individual leaders.⁴¹ Drawn from across the party's political spectrum, these men and women, all long-time Social Democrats, were in the thick of the struggle and approached the problem of what to do from a range of experiences and contexts. Their stories shed additional light on the complexity of the challenges they faced on the ground and the difficulty of their choices.

There are few studies that compare the SPD's response to fascism with that of other non-German Social Democratic parties and those that do tend to remain focused within the interwar and European contexts.⁴² The concluding chapter of this work, however, shifts the focus away from the national and European contexts of the Weimar period to a broader framework both in time and space. By examining three other major moments in the global history of twentieth century democratic socialism—the defeat of Chilean socialism in 1973, the reversal of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua in 1990, and the aftermath of the African National Congress's electoral victory in 1994—the chapter explores how the German Social Democratic failure in 1933 relates to the global experience of democratic socialism in the twentieth century.

Notes

1. Susanne Miller and Heinrich Potthoff, *Kleine Geschichte der SPD, Darstellung und Dokumentation 1848–1990* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1991), 53–65; Peter Nettle, "The German Social Democratic Party, 1890–1914, as a Political Model," *Past and Present* 30 (1965): 69–95.

2. For the classic description of these events see Carl E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905–1917: The Development of the Great Schism* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1955).

3. Werner Maser, *Friedrich Ebert: Der erste Deutsche Reichspräsident* (Munich: Droemer Knauer, 1987), 176.

4. Walter Tormin, *Zwischen Räterediktatur und Sozialer Demokratie die Geschichte der Rätebewegung in der deutschen Revolution, 1918–1919* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1954), 69–72; Sebastian Haffner, *Die deutsche Revolution, 1918–1919* (Munich: Rowohlt, 1979), 68, 83–93; Stefan Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany* (London: Longman, 2000), 95–98.

5. David W. Morgan, *The Socialist Left and the German Revolution: A History of the German Independent Social Democratic Party, 1917–1922* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 127–38.

6. Morgan, *The Socialist Left*, 53–64; Hartfrid Krause, *USPD: Zur Geschichte der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1975), 116–21.

7. Michael Schneider, *Kleine Geschichte der Gewerkschaften. Ihre Entwicklung in Deutschland von den Anfängen bis heute* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 2000), 147.
8. Eberhard Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, translated by P. S. Falla (London: Routledge, 1988), 15.
9. Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, 16–17.
10. Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, 18–20, 148–49.
11. Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, 19–20; Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, Edward Dismendberg, eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 46–51.
12. Berger, *Social Democracy*, 99–100; Morgan, *The Socialist Left*, 242–43, 384.
13. On the Kapp Putsch and its aftermath see Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, 36–39; E. J. Feuchtwanger, *From Weimar to Hitler: Germany, 1918–1933* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2nd edition, 1995), 72–81.
14. Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, 44–45.
15. Morgan, *The Socialist Left*, chapter 13.
16. Dieter Dowe and Kurt Klotzbach, eds., *Programmatische Dokumente der Deutschen Sozialdemokratie* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 2004), 188–89.
17. Dowe and Klotzbach, *Programmatische Dokumente*, 189.
18. Dowe and Klotzbach, *Programmatische Dokumente*, 190–94.
19. William Smaldone, *Rudolf Hilferding: The Tragedy of a German Social Democrat* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998), 139–41.
20. For the text of the program see Dowe and Klotzbach, *Programmatische Dokumente*, 195–203.
21. Peter Lösche and Franz Walter, “Auf dem Weg zur Volkspartei? Die Weimarer Sozialdemokratie,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 29 (1989): 86–87, 132–33; Adelheid von Saldern, “Modernization as Challenge. Perceptions and Reactions of German Social Democratic Women,” in Helmut Gruber and Pamela Graves, eds., *Women and Socialism, Socialism and Women. Europe Between the Two World Wars* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1998), 97.
22. Berger, *Social Democracy*, 121–23.
23. Werner Abelshausen, “Die Weimarer Republik—ein Wohlfahrtsstaat?” in *Die Weimarer Republik als Wohlfahrtsstaat: Zum Verhältnis von Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik in der Industriegesellschaft* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 1987), 15–31; Dick Geary, “Employers, Workers, and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic,” in *Weimar: Why did German Democracy Fail?* Ed. Ian Kershaw (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990): 100–01; David Abraham, *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1986), 229–34.
24. Rudolf Hilferding, “Die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie in der Republik,” *Protokoll des SPD Parteitages, Kiel, 1927* (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1974), 163–84.
25. Miller and Potthoff, *Kleine Geschichte der SPD*, 123–25; Schneider, *Kleine Geschichte der Gewerkschaften*, 193–96.
26. Miller and Potthoff, *Kleine Geschichte der SPD*, 123–25.

27. Rudolf Hilferding, "Der Austritt aus der Regierung," *Die Gesellschaft* 7, 1(1930): 385–89.

28. Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, 111–12.

29. Heinrich August Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1930–1933* (Berlin/Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1987), 189.

30. Wilhelm Keil, *Erlebnisse eines Sozialdemokraten, II*, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1948), 97.

31. Miller and Potthoff, *Kleine Geschichte der SPD*, 134.

32. Riccardo Bavag, *Von links gegen Weimar. Linkes antiparlamentarisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 2005), 104–07; Larry Eugene Jones, *German Liberalism and the Dissolution of the Weimar Party System, 1918–1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 378–91. For a viewpoint highly critical of the SPD leadership's attitude toward the KPD see Jutta von Freyberg, et al., *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie. Von 1863 bis zur Gegenwart* (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1989), 179–82.

33. Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 494–506.

34. Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 398–406.

35. Julius Leber, *Ein Mann geht seinen Weg* (Frankfurt am Main: Mosaic Verlag, 1952), 240.

36. Donna Harsch, *German Social Democracy and the Rise of Nazism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 179.

37. Richard Breitmann, *German Socialism and Weimar Democracy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 185–88; Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 671–80.

38. Rudolf Hilferding, "In die Gefahrenzone," *Die Gesellschaft* 7, 2(1930), 290–96.

39. Quoted in Ralf Georg Reuth, *Goebbels* (San Diego, New York, London: Harvest Books, 1993), 121.

40. See, for example, Erich Matthias and Rudolf Morsej, eds., *Das Ende der Parteien, 1933, Darstellungen und Dokumente* (Düsseldorf: Athenäum Verlag, 1979); Heinrich August Winkler's, *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1918–1924, Der Schein der Normalität. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1924–1930*, 2nd edition, and *Der Weg in die Katastrophe. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1930–1933* (Berlin/Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1985, 1988, and 1987), respectively; Stefan Burger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany* (New York/London: Longman, 2000); Eberhard Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, translated by P. S. Falla (London: Routledge, 1988); Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*, translated by Elborg Forster and Larry Eugene Jones, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Ian Kershaw, ed., *Weimar: Why did German Democracy Fail?* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990); Wolfram Pyta, *Gegen Hitler und für die Republik. Die Auseinander-*

setzung der deutschen Sozialdemokratie mit der NSDAP in der Weimarer Republik (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1989); Dirk Blasius, *Weimars Ende: Bürgerkrieg und Politik, 1930–1933* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2005); Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic. The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, translated by Richard Deveson (New York: Hill & Wang Publishers, 1989); Klaus P. Fischer, *Nazi Germany: A New History* (New York: Continuum, 1995).

41. See Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, especially chapter one.

42. See, for example, Gerd-Rainer Horn, *European Socialists Respond to Fascism: Ideology, Activism, and Contingency in the 1930s* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Larry Ceplair, *Under the Shadow of War: Fascism, Anti-Fascism, and Marxists, 1918–1939* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Sheri Berman, *The Social Democratic Moment, Ideas and Politics in the Making of Interwar Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

Siegfried Aufhäuser (1884–1969)

2



Siegfried Aufhäuser (1884–1969) Courtesy of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

“ . . . freedom will always triumph. . . . ”

—SIEGFRIED AUFHÄUSER, 1933¹

ON MARCH 13, 1932, as he stood on the speakers' platform and watched hundreds of thousands march into the Berliner Lustgarten arena, Siegfried Aufhäuser must have felt great pride. Only two days remained before the presidential elections and the republican Iron Front was mobilizing a massive show of support for President Hindenburg against his main challenger, Adolf Hitler. Most of the marchers were SPD, *Reichsbanner*, and trade-union members, and Aufhäuser was certainly especially proud of the last group. For over a decade he had been organizing Germany's white-collar workers into a democratic and socialist union. Now over 450,000 strong, the General Federation of Free Employees (*AfA-Bund*) was an integral part of the Association of Free Trade Unions (ADGB), which counted over four million members. Many of these white-collar unionists were marching, together with their blue-collar comrades, to defend Germany's democracy against the forces of dictatorship.

Short and stout with close-cropped hair, a weather-beaten face, and a small mustache, Aufhäuser did not cut an imposing figure. But when he stood before a crowd, whether in the *Reichstag* or in the union hall, his passionate energy and speaking skills made him a powerful messenger. As the main speaker at the Lustgarten rally, he fired up his listeners by calling on them to fight for the republic: “Down with Hitler!” he shouted from the rostrum, “Down with fascism. Long live our fighting brotherhood! Long live the real and genuine united front of German republicans, the Iron Front. The Third Reich won't come if we don't want it! And we don't!”²

The election results seemed to show that most Germans agreed with Aufhäuser. Hindenburg easily outdistanced Hitler by winning 49.6 percent of the vote to the latter's 30.1 percent in the first round, and his victory in the April runoff was equally decisive. Without question, the archconservative Reich President owed his reelection largely to the Social Democrats who had mobilized their considerable forces to keep Hitler at bay. For most SPD leaders, the election showed that the newly formed Iron Front could be an effective electoral instrument in the face of the steadily growing Nazi threat.³ For Aufhäuser, it was also a vehicle through which workers could take the offensive against fascism and fight for a social democratic way out of the capitalist crisis. For a brief moment the Social Democrats were buoyed up by hope. But it was not to last.⁴

Almost exactly one year later the movement's fortunes, along with Aufhäuser's, lay in ruins. Following Hitler's appointment to the Chancellorship on January 30, 1933, the Iron Front proved to be a paper tiger as its constituent groups found themselves unwilling or unable to respond to the Nazi regime's assault on the republic's institutions. As one of those calling for organized resistance, Aufhäuser soon became increasingly isolated from his more accommodating colleagues in the trade union leadership. After the voters confirmed the Nazi-led coalition government on March 5, his days in Germany were numbered. Under increasing pressure, on March 28 Aufhäuser resigned from the *AfA-Bund*. Five weeks later he avoided arrest by fleeing into exile.

Siegfried Aufhäuser was an excellent organizer and committed parliamentarian who believed that workers could make important political and economic gains within the framework of the republic. His critical view of the latter, however, and his critique of the SPD's strategy against Nazism, placed him in the radical-wing of Social Democracy. Aufhäuser's experience in the spring of 1933 illustrated the contradictions and limits of Social Democratic reformism in the face of Nazi barbarism. It also epitomized the trade union leadership's desperate, humiliating, and, ultimately, shameful willingness to placate the Nazis. Because Aufhäuser stood on the SPD's left wing and came from a Jewish family, his colleagues knew that he was an especially glaring example of those who had no place in the new Germany. It did not matter that he had devoted his life to building the union movement. For them it was more important to keep their organizations, and, many certainly hoped, their own careers, intact. To that end they were willing to abandon colleagues and long-held principles.⁵

German Social Democracy did not win Siegfried Aufhäuser to its banners until he was thirty-four years old. In early November 1918, as the First World War ground to its bloody end, he joined the newly formed USPD. Himself a former capitalist and a long-time organizer of salaried employees, Aufhäuser came into the socialist movement with a background different from that of most of his comrades. He also brought with him a variety of skills, which he put to good use.⁶

Aufhäuser was born in Augsburg on May 1, 1884. His father, Hermann, was a prosperous manufacturer who produced various kinds of "spirits." He was also a cousin of Heinrich Aufhäuser, a famous Munich banker, whose sons rose to positions of leadership in the financial world of late imperial Germany. Of Jewish background, Hermann and his wife, Julie, raised a daughter and three sons, all of whom were economically and socially successful. Siegfried's younger sister, Friedl, married a businessman

from Bamberg. His older brother, David, studied the natural sciences and became a professor at the Technical College Berlin–Charlottenburg. Albert, the oldest, took over the family firm. There was no hint of political radicalism in the Aufhäuser clan. It was a solid bourgeois family whose fortunes rested on commercial success.⁷

As a youth, Siegfried seemed destined to follow his father and Albert into the world of commerce. After attending a business school, at sixteen he moved to Munich where he apprenticed at the manufacturing firm of J. Einhorn & Company and eventually became a clerk. In 1910 he married Anna Stein, the daughter of a Frankfurt merchant. By that time, the hard-working twenty-six-year-old owned his own factory. His road ahead seemed clearly laid out.

But, in fact, matters were not so clear. In 1903, as a young clerk, Aufhäuser had joined the Association of German Salespeople (*Verein der deutschen Kaufleute*, VdDK), a step that changed his life and ultimately led him to Social Democracy. The VdDK was a part of the Hirsch–Duncker Association of Trade Unions, which, unlike the social-democratic free trade unions, was nationalist in orientation and aimed to improve workers' rights and conditions within capitalist society. It demanded, for example, the right to collective bargaining, equal rights for male and female workers, paid vacations, the eight-hour day, improved health benefits, and better working conditions.⁸ Aufhäuser shared the union's goal of establishing legal, but not economic, equality for all citizens and he opposed Social Democracy's ultimate aim of overthrowing capitalism.

Anti-Semitism also spurred Aufhäuser's early interest in politics. At the age of nineteen he wrote an article for the *Kaufmännische Rundschau* (*Merchant's Review*) the VdDK's newspaper, in which he sharply criticized the anti-Semitic views of a rival organization, the National German Association of Clerks (*Deutschnationaler Handlungsgehilfenverband* or DHV), whose speakers had recently toured Munich. Their use of epithets such as "court Jews" (*Hoffjuden*) to refer to the VdDK's leaders, misinformation, and unprincipled debating tactics appalled Aufhäuser, who urged fellow members to be aware of the DHV's intolerance and devious methods.⁹

Clearly at home in the more inclusive VdDK, Aufhäuser rapidly became absorbed in its work. He was interested in the social, economic, and political issues that concerned the association and enjoyed public speaking and debate. He served on the executive committee of the VdDK's local in Munich, and, in 1905, after moving to Berlin to take a job in a retail shop, he became chairman of its large and active citywide organization. After long days on the shop floor Aufhäuser worked hard organizing events at

which leading figures from Berlin's legal, medical, academic, and other professions spoke. Members quickly recognized his efforts. Although he was only twenty-three, they elected him to the general council of the national organization and to the board of its health insurance agency.

As his political views matured, Aufhäuser found himself in the camp of Germany's "left liberals," who rejected the National Liberals' inclination to ally themselves with conservative forces. The left liberals aimed, instead, to democratize the empire's political life. Led by Theodor Barth, in 1908 they established a new party, the "Democratic Union" (*Demokratische Vereinigung* or DV). Aufhäuser was among the founders. He became a member of the party's executive committee and, along with four others, wrote its program. At the party congresses of 1909 and 1910 he won majority support against the death penalty and urged the party to take the lead defending salaried employees whose democratic rights were trampled by "privileged" big capitalists protected by the law.

At that time a strong sense of fair play drove Aufhäuser's politics more than any adherence to a particular theoretical worldview. He recognized, however, that political privilege and class background were often intertwined, and he did not hesitate to use the language of class struggle when analyzing workers' problems. Aufhäuser believed strongly that white-collar and blue-collar workers had the same interests and needed to work together. To achieve major goals, such as the abolition of the Prussian three-class electoral system, he even advocated such radical actions as a general strike. When taken on their own, many of Aufhäuser's views placed him very close to those of prewar Social Democracy. But he was not yet ready to become a socialist.

Aufhäuser distanced himself from Social Democracy for a number of reasons. First and foremost was its tendency to ignore the interests of white-collar workers. He rejected SPD theorist Karl Kautsky's contention that salaried employees represented a class between the bosses and the workers and benefited from imperialism. He felt that this argument, like the capitalist propagated "fairy tale" that salaried employees represented a "new middle class," served to "drive a wedge" between two groups of workers linked by their dependence on capital. This outlook, along with other "dogmatic tendencies" and the SPD's insistence on the "unconditional nationalization" of industry, undercut the party's ability to organize salaried employees. Aufhäuser urged the DV to take on this task.

But the DV's life was short. After rushing unprepared into the *Reichstag* elections of 1912, the party's failure to win a single seat discouraged many of its leading figures, such as Rudolf Breitscheid, who then joined

the SPD. Aufhäuser refused to take this step. For the next two years he tried to reinvigorate the DV, but to no avail. The coming of war brought other priorities to the fore, especially trade-union work, and by the end of the military struggle, the DV had disappeared and Aufhäuser was no longer a liberal.

August 1914 found Aufhäuser and his wife living in Berlin. Although the record is sketchy, it is clear that by then he had given up his business career. Between 1910 and 1912 the Aufhäusers had lived in Frankfurt am Main, where he owned a factory. In January of 1913, however, he took a job as a “research assistant” in the Berlin office of the Federation of Technical and Industrial Employees (*Bund der technisch-industriellen Beamten* or Butib). His passion for politics had gotten the better of his inclinations toward commerce.¹⁰

His new job was with one of the most “modern” of the white-collar workers’ organizations. Unlike their counterparts in most of the older, trade-related sectors, the 22,000 Butib members, drawn largely from the sphere of modern industry, did not regard themselves as employees on the way to becoming independent business owners. They viewed themselves, instead, as highly skilled employees whose social status and interests were close to, though not the same as, those of blue-collar workers. Organized according to trade-union principles, Butib’s members also differed from most other white-collar workers through their willingness to strike to achieve their aims.¹¹

Their organization was also faction ridden and it was in managing internal squabbles that the energetic and politically astute Aufhäuser quickly stood out. In September of 1913 Butib’s executive committee recommended him for the top post of “secretary” of a coalition of twelve employees’ associations: the Working Group for Uniform Employee Rights. With 130,000 members, this organization formed the nucleus of what later became the *AfA-Bund*.

Poor vision in one eye spared Aufhäuser from military service. During the war years he worked tirelessly for Butib and, with many of its functionaries drafted, soon found himself as its effective chief. Along with most other union leaders, Aufhäuser initially supported the war as a “defensive” struggle and hoped to mobilize the white-collar unions behind the war effort while easing the difficulties faced by employees as soldiers and as workers in a wartime economy.¹² The white-collar unions had to deal with a host of tough issues, including an initial collapse in employment, falling real wages, a massive influx of women into white-collar sectors, the chaotic legal status of employees, and the care for wounded employees and their

reabsorption into the labor market. In addition, they actively promoted better military pensions and social services for families of dead soldiers. Lack of resources, falling membership, and the drafting of experienced personnel made the struggle to deal with these issues especially challenging.

The passage of the “Patriotic Service Law” in 1916 was a key event in the history of the labor movement and for Aufhäuser. The law gave the state enormous power to control the labor market and to redistribute resources. At the same time, it brought representatives of the state, capital, and the unions together to coordinate policy—an unprecedented development. Although the unions were not equal partners, state and business leaders found it necessary to take their concerns seriously in order to effectively mobilize labor for war production. As chief of the largest white-collar worker organization—reorganized in 1917 as the Cartel of Free Employee Federations (AfA)—Aufhäuser found himself at the negotiating table with Carl Legien and Adam Stegerwald, leaders of the Free and Christian trade unions, respectively, as well as officials from the state and employer organizations. He was now an important figure on the national stage.

The blue- and white-collar unions had mixed success in promoting their interests during the war, but Aufhäuser believed they had laid the groundwork for future gains. The establishment of employee committees in the workplace to discuss wage and working conditions, the creation of arbitration boards in which labor was a partner, and the placement of employee representatives on the War Department’s Advisory Board illustrated the state’s and capital’s *de facto* recognition of organized labor’s interests. With their brothers dying at the front, the unions were not in a position to refuse many important concessions to the state (e.g., on workers’ mobility), but Aufhäuser was convinced that they had made substantial progress.¹³

By early 1918 he had also turned against the war. Although Aufhäuser could not express his opposition openly without fear of reprisal, some of his published comments hinted in that direction. In January, for example, he described the war as “a consequence of imperialism,” which, “in one blow had destroyed an abundance of social and moral values.” “The chief task of all trade unions,” he added, “was to prevent [the war’s] repetition.”¹⁴ A sign that Aufhäuser was not alone in this view within the AfA was that organization’s refusal, in March, to back a call for workers to contribute to the “Ludendorff Fund” in support of the war effort.¹⁵

In addition, Aufhäuser had dispensed with any hope that the war’s end would bring social peace. On the contrary, he was convinced that conflict

would intensify. Employees could expect no “gifts” in the new Germany. They would have to assert their power in a struggle against opposing groups. Unity was essential to accomplish this aim, but would be difficult to achieve given the evolution of the white-collar worker’s movement into two large “bourgeois” umbrella associations (the Association of Employee Unions or GdH, and the League of German Employee Unions or Gedag) and a single trade-union-oriented one, the AfA. While the former “yellow” unions agitated for special legal and social status for employees, advocated “harmony” with capital, and distanced themselves from the blue-collar workers’ movement, the latter worked to bring “workers of hand and brain” together. Aufhäuser hoped to overcome the split by linking all three groups into the struggle for enhanced social, economic, and political rights.¹⁶

“To stand still,” Aufhäuser reminded his readers in early 1918, “was to fall into slavery.” Because “movement was the liberating principle of all human action,” it was as important for the employees’ organizations as having clear goals. Aufhäuser believed that the war was changing the consciousness of many white-collar workers, who had earlier hesitated to join in the struggle for reform. Less than a year later events would prove him right.¹⁷

Aufhäuser’s actions and political outlook in the period following the collapse of the monarchy reveal how the war had transformed the left-liberal activist into a radical socialist. Instead of following the urgings of his friend, Hellmut von Gerlach, to join the newly-formed German Democratic Party, on November 1, 1918, Aufhäuser followed his wife into the USPD. Soon thereafter he publicly demanded that the newly formed Provisional Government carry out a “broad socialization of industry,” and he denounced calls for the election of a National Assembly. If the workers ceded their newly won power to a parliamentary body, he argued, “They will miss a chance to sweep away or limit capitalist exploitation.”¹⁸

In early November, 1918, as the central government’s power ebbed and soldiers’ and workers’ councils took control of much of the country, Aufhäuser worked to link the AfA into this process. Along with the other leaders of the AfA’s constituent organizations, he set up a Central Office of Employee Councils, which cooperated with Berlin’s Central Executive Committee of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Councils to carry out elections in enterprises throughout the city. On November 17, the Central Office organized an impressive demonstration of 20,000 employees who expressed their support for the revolution and asserted that, “the place of employees is on the side of the workers.”¹⁹

Although the movement to establish workers' councils as an alternative to parliament eventually succumbed to internal weakness and government repression, the Weimar Constitution did allow for the creation of councils (*Betriebsräte*) to deal with conditions in individual enterprises. Aufhäuser believed, like most German trade unionists, that the unions should play a major role in these bodies.²⁰ Working with the ADGB leadership, he succeeded in achieving this aim and, along with ADGB leader Peter Grassmann, coedited a newspaper, *Der Betriebsrat (Factory Council)* in which they promoted ideas such as workers' codetermination of industry.

Even more importantly for Aufhäuser, the white-collar workers' movement, like its blue-collar counterpart, flourished in the immediate postwar years. Recruits flooded into the employees' organizations, mergers were frequent among like-minded groups, and the ideologically divided umbrella associations expanded. Aufhäuser's union, Butib, for example, merged with the German Federation of Technicians and became the Federation of Technical Employees and Officials (*Bund der technischen Angestellte und Beamten* or Butab). While in 1917 AfA membership had fallen to 57,000, by June 1920 it reached a peak of 700,000 (over 42 percent of all organized white-collar workers) drawn from literally dozens of professions. Although ideologically diverse, with some groups even hostile to socialism, Aufhäuser masterfully held the organization together.²¹

He failed, however, to unite the white-collar federations into a single powerful group. Indeed, rivalries intensified between the "bourgeois" and "proletarian" camps and, over the course of the republic's life, the AfA actually lost ground. In 1931 its membership had slipped to 477,000, about half of the total of 927,000 claimed by the middle-class federations. The main reason for this division was ideological. During the German Revolution of 1918–1919 even the bourgeois employees' associations increasingly organized themselves along trade-union lines in order to fight more effectively for better contracts. Despite this organizational similarity to the AfA, however, the bourgeois associations maintained a strong antipathy to the blue-collar workers' movement. They demanded special legal status for employees and attacked the socialist workers' movement as unpatriotic, morally inferior, and irresponsible. Indeed, as a Jew and a member of the left-wing USPD, Aufhäuser served as a lightning rod for right-wing claims that the AfA was anti-Christian and pro-Bolshevik.²²

He was quite aware of the power of this ideology and, in a June 1920 speech to fellow unionists, noted that the struggle for the emancipation of salaried employees faced even more difficulties than that of hourly wage earners. Employees' sense of having a special, independent status from the

proletariat stemmed not only from their frequently different social origins but also from their place in the capitalist production process. Functioning as a “buffer” between capital and labor, they often served as subalterns for the bosses and adopted the latter’s ideological point of view. They viewed themselves as a “new middle class” and their organizations argued for social harmony between the classes rather than for the elimination of classes altogether.²³

According to Aufhäuser, the AfA faced a twofold challenge. It had to overcome the “fanatical” opposition of capitalists infuriated by the AfA’s ability to recruit formally “loyal” technicians, architects, chemists, and other employees. At the same time it had to win the solid support of the blue-collar unions, which thus far had underestimated the importance of organizing white-collar workers as well as the ideological difficulty of enlightening them. In this situation Aufhäuser elaborated two key goals. First, the AfA had to unite technical and other employees on a trade-union basis using appropriate psychological methods to win their support. Second, it had to restructure itself in a way that would preserve the independence of the professional associations while linking them into the broader organized workers’ movement. Such a structure would promote workers’ solidarity without diminishing the autonomy that white-collar unions required to deal with their constituencies’ specific needs.²⁴

Aufhäuser’s new and strongly held Marxist convictions were clear and he urged the AfA to adhere to the free trade unions’ program, which rested upon the recognition of class struggle under capitalism. Rather than simply denying class-struggle’s existence, as did the bourgeois employees’ organizations, the trade unions aimed to “overcome it” by abolishing the wage system and introducing a planned economy to meet the needs of the people rather than the needs of capital for profit.²⁵

In response to critics’ charges that the AfA’s support for socialism would make it an instrument of party political interests, Aufhäuser asserted that socialism “was not a party dogma” but was simply a “way of perceiving economic reality.” One could be a socialist and not be a member of any party. To calm the fears of some constituent groups, who were unhappy with the AfA’s close relationship to the SPD, he encouraged the organization to promote socialist ideas without losing its political independence. And, just as he urged his comrades to think flexibly about different views of socialism, he also called for open-mindedness about the latter’s relationship to Christianity. Both had much in common when it came to notions of social justice and the economic role of private property, and Aufhäuser suggested that cooperation between their respective followers was possible.²⁶

These comments on socialism and Christianity reflected not only Aufhäuser's ideological flexibility, but also his recognition that the AfA would have to be pragmatic if it wanted to maintain a broadly based membership. In October 1921, after considerable internal debate, the AfA reorganized itself into the *AfA-Bund* and became a member of the ADGB. While the organization's structure and relation to the ADGB was very much in keeping with Aufhäuser's proposals, the AfA program's commitment to "economic socialism" eliminated reference to class struggle or its adherence to any socialist political current. Aufhäuser accepted this non-committal language because, without it, some of the AfA's most important constituent groups would have bolted from the organization. Compromise was essential to unity.²⁷

Unity was especially important as Germany slipped into economic crisis and the forces of counterrevolution gained ground. Aufhäuser had been concerned about the latter since December 1918, when it became clear that the election of a National Assembly would challenge the power of the workers' councils. Indeed, over the next two years, despite tenacious resistance by parts of the working class, including radical employees, the capitalist elite and pro-parliamentary forces had stripped the councils of real authority and blocked the socialization of industry.²⁸

During this period of retreat there were still moments in which Aufhäuser thought that great things were possible. In March 1920, for example, he worked closely with the ADGB's Carl Legien to help quell the Kapp Putsch. Their joint appeal to all workers to follow the government's call for a general strike met with broad support that helped defeat the rebellion and seemed to open the way to a new socialist government and radical reforms. Euphoric about the unions' prospects, at one point Aufhäuser exclaimed to Otto Wels, "We have eight million people behind us, more than all the parties combined. . . . We want control over all the government's ministers, even when they have their roots among the workers."²⁹

But such hopes rapidly evaporated in the face of German political realities. Divisions among the socialist parties and the unions, as well as opposition from the SPD's liberal coalition partners, hindered any leftward shift in the makeup of the government or its policies.³⁰ The failure of the left to regain political momentum sobered Aufhäuser's outlook substantially. As his work to reorganize the AfA showed, he was soon back in a defensive mode. At the same time, however, the successful general strike surely strengthened his conviction that blue- and white-collar workers were gravitating toward one another. This unity, he believed, would allow

them to defend the revolution's democratic gains while using new institutions, like the enterprise councils, to progress toward socialism.³¹

Following the defeat of Kapp, Aufhäuser, like many other Social Democratic leaders, became a "workhorse" of the republic. As chair of the *AfA-Bund* and its representative in the ADGB's executive committee, he was a major figure in the pro-republican union movement. In 1921 he won a seat in the *Reichstag* on the USPD's list. Following the reunification of the USPD and the SPD in 1922, his comrades in the local Berlin party organization nominated him over the opposition of the more conservative national leadership, and he remained in the *Reichstag* until 1933. There he played a key role as the SPD's speaker on social insurance issues. A frequent contributor to the union and party press, and with additional posts on important boards and commissions such as the *Reich* Economic Council, the High Court for the Defense of the Republic, and the Berlin Workers' Bank, Aufhäuser was certainly a man with little time to spare.

He was in great demand due both to his energy and his leadership skills. At the *AfA-Bund's* founding congress of 1921, delegates elected him to the chair's position by a resounding vote of 100 to 1, a clear reflection of the respect he had earned among all factions. An unpretentious and thrifty chief—the *Bund* had no car because he insisted that taxis were cheaper—he was frank in debate but also modest enough to rethink his ideas in light of criticism. A good listener, fast learner, and outstanding speaker, it is not surprising that he was a welcome participant in many governmental and nongovernmental bodies.³²

Aufhäuser's commitment to the republic and to the SPD was a sincere but critical one. Like others on the party's "left-wing," from its earliest days, he viewed the republic not only as "a form of state that had to be defended" but also as the "battleground for socialism." Social Democracy, he insisted, had to remember that the republic was dominated by "big capital," which used its economic power to control the state. When the SPD entered governing coalitions with the capitalist parties, as it had in the economic and political crisis of 1923, it faced the choice of either sacrificing the interests of its constituency—the working class—or being driven out. As a part of the "Great Coalition," it had allowed capital to use the inflation to enhance its power at workers' expense and then paid the price in the form of lost support in the May 1924 elections. Instead of sacrificing workers' interests on the altar of coalition politics, Aufhäuser urged the SPD to represent them more consequentially. The party had to counter capitalist economic and political power by winning more workers to its banner, and it could only accomplish that aim by defending their interests.³³

This class-oriented perspective shaped Aufhäuser's politics until the republic's demise. From 1924 until 1929, years of relative economic and political stability, he devoted most of his time to building the *AfA-Bund* and to legislative work in the *Reichstag*. While he thought that the SPD and the unions had the strength to make some improvements for workers through parliamentary legislation, he also recognized that much of their energy was devoted to repairing or fending off damage done by the counterrevolution. Indeed, protecting jobs of vulnerable employees, finding work and financial assistance for the unemployed, and helping pensioners ruined by the inflation were among his most immediate concerns.³⁴ In 1927 he reported proudly to his union on the passage of the Unemployment Insurance Law, which he had helped to draft. Because this law could not have been put through the fractured *Reichstag* without the SPD's support, Aufhäuser argued that it represented "spectacular proof of what Social Democracy could achieve in the social-political sphere" even when in the opposition.³⁵

Aufhäuser's stress on the SPD's success while in the opposition illustrated his tendency to ignore the fact that long-time perseverance in government also could lead to substantial gains. The Center Party, for example, was a core member of virtually all Weimar governments and its representative, Heinrich Brauns, was a long-time minister of labor, who advocated separate and superior status for salaried employees. Working closely with the conservative employees' unions and parties, Brauns oversaw the passage of superior benefit legislation for white-collar workers in all areas except the unemployment insurance program. This special treatment was popular among many white collar workers who, contrary to Aufhäuser's hopes, moved in increasing numbers into the camp of the political right.³⁶

The SPD's dilemma clearly was a vexing one. As Aufhäuser argued, to join a coalition government meant taking risks that could cause the party to lose support. But, as his opponents noted, to remain in the opposition meant handing over the levers of state power to others. By 1927, many in the SPD felt that the organization was once again strong enough to enter a new coalition if the next round of elections went well. At the Kiel party congress in May, Aufhäuser and Toni Sender led a substantial minority in opposition to this move. Its supporters, he asserted, were too optimistic about the potential of the republican state for the achievement of social-democratic aims. The state was more firmly in capitalist hands than ever before, none of the potential coalition partners—including the Catholic Center party—was a reliable ally, and the best way to defend the republic was to remain in the opposition and mobilize socialist forces

against capitalism. Joining the government and making concessions to capital was not the way to win new social groups to the SPD. They could only be won when the party stood behind its program.³⁷

Aufhäuser and his allies lost the debate. As a result, following the election of May 1928, the SPD agreed to lead a new “Great Coalition” that included the DDP, the Center Party, and the business-oriented German People’s Party (DVP). Hopes were high, but, much as Aufhäuser had predicted, this government soon bogged down amidst conflicting interests. The SPD failed to advance its reform agenda or to resolve chronic unemployment and fiscal problems. When the economy went into a tailspin in late 1929, the coalition members found themselves at loggerheads over how to balance the interests of labor and capital.

During the coalition government’s twenty-two-month life, Aufhäuser consistently advocated withdrawing if the SPD could not advance workers’ interests.³⁸ In March 1930, as the cabinet entered into its final crisis over the financing of the unemployment insurance program, he joined the majority of the *Reichstag* delegation, including all of its trade unionists, in opposing a proposal, which, they feared, would result in higher workers’ contributions, and reduced benefits. Aufhäuser believed that it was time for the SPD to stop providing “cover” for the reactionary policies of the bourgeois parties, but this decision, which he and his comrades knew would bring down the government, proved fateful. Under the new antirepublican Chancellor, Heinrich Brüning, a new center-right minority coalition emerged that not only intensified the attack on the welfare state but gradually undermined the parliamentary order itself.³⁹

Aufhäuser was a sharp critic of Brüning’s efforts to resolve the economic crisis by cutting workers’ wages and benefits, introducing regressive new taxes, and reducing social expenditures, while simultaneously maintaining subsidies for capital and increasing military spending. When the SPD leadership’s policy swung from tenacious resistance in April to a more accommodating posture in late spring, he continued to excoriate the government. After Brüning dissolved the *Reichstag* and called for elections in September, Aufhäuser argued that this contest was, in effect, a showdown between capital and labor over the distribution of the social product. It would decide whether the social reaction would be able to crush collective bargaining, eliminate arbitration, undermine the unemployment insurance system, and turn full control over wage levels over to monopoly capital.⁴⁰

During the election campaign Aufhäuser hoped to forge “an iron block of head and hand workers” to resist the “dictatorship of capital.” The returns, however, brought victory to the National Socialists, who emerged as

Germany's second largest party behind the SPD. With no group able or willing to form a majority coalition, Brüning continued to preside over a weakened minority cabinet that depended on the SPD's toleration for survival. Fearing further Nazi or Communist gains if new elections were called, for almost two years the SPD found itself sharing responsibility for antilabor policies that Brüning implemented via presidential emergency decree. This backing of the "lesser evil" divided the SPD and undercut its support as the depression deepened.

It did not take long for Aufhäuser to come out against the party's policy. On September 30, in a speech to Berlin functionaries, he demanded resolute opposition to Brüning's government. The most important lesson to be drawn from the election results, he argued, was that liberalism was politically bankrupt and that impoverished workers, employees, students, artisans, and officials were rebelling against capitalism. The Nazis, rather than the Social Democrats, were able to attract these people because the SPD's coalition politics had discredited it. Now was the time for the SPD to become less a "party of the state" and more of a "workers party." Instead of flirting with the bourgeoisie, the SPD had to wield its fist. By linking its agitation to socialist goals and concrete, worker-friendly policies, such as shorter hours and taxes on the rich, the party could energize the proletariat and win its support. The point was "not just to defend the republic and democracy with tooth and nail," but also to defend "the social content of the state." Indeed, if a worker-oriented policy made it more likely that the Nazis would enter into a bourgeois coalition government, he thought it worth the risk.⁴¹

These arguments reveal that, while Aufhäuser had a clear understanding of the broad base of Nazi support, he did not fully grasp the nature and extent of the Nazi threat. Like many on the social-democratic and communist left, he misjudged Nazism as an outgrowth of capitalism. The "driving force" of fascism, he wrote in 1924, is to be found not in its ostensible nationalism, but in the capitalist economy. Fascism was a "stage of capitalist development" in which political violence was indispensable to the system. While some workers and employees were attracted to it for psychological reasons, (e.g., a "post-war psychosis") that fueled hatred of democracy and the republic, such an intellectually vapid movement had to rely on force to quell its opponents.⁴²

After its electoral breakthrough in 1930, Aufhäuser continued to underestimate the genuine independence and grassroots strength of Nazism. In October of 1932, following the formation of the Harzburg Front, an alliance between the Nazis, the DNVP, and the right-wing paramilitary

Stahlhelm, he stressed that fascism was “an instrument of capital” that had not arisen on its own, but, rather, as a result of the bourgeoisie’s political weakness. Fearful of the rising working class, “the middle classes had thrown themselves into the arms of fascism, while big industry paid the latter’s bills” and used its members as “cannon fodder.” Aufhäuser viewed the partnership between Hugenberg and Hitler as one in which the former, as a leading representative of capital, called the shots. Though he knew that the Nazis were capable of brutal violence, he seriously misunderstood the movement’s inherent strength as well as Hitler’s own abilities and aims.⁴³

Aufhäuser may have misjudged the relationship between Nazism and capitalism, but it was very clear to him that the SPD had to respond to the economic and political crisis with a more effective strategy than the toleration of Brüning. There were no easy answers to the problem. Most SPD leaders, including Aufhäuser, agreed that they had to try to keep Hitler from power. Toleration made that possible, at least in the short run, but it also risked linking the party with Brüning’s reactionary policies and thus driving away former or potential supporters. By 1931, tensions within the SPD over the toleration policy threatened to cause a split, while the SPD and ADGB also disagreed about alternatives to Brüning’s procapitalist economic program. Aufhäuser responded to these challenges in several ways.

At the SPD’s Leipzig Congress of 1931 he tempered his opposition to toleration by arguing that, as long as it kept Hitler from power without undermining the living standards and rights of the workers, it made sense. As intended, this argument served to hinder, at least temporarily, a break between the pro-toleration majority behind Otto Wels and the radical opposition behind Max Seydewitz. It also revealed his conviction that, in the midst of the crisis, “iron unity” behind the party leadership was the order of the day. “Whoever in the workers’ movement has not yet learned to march in the rank-and-file,” he asserted, “will be unable to take decisive action at the right moment.”⁴⁴

To expand the party’s social base, Aufhäuser naturally focused on its difficulty winning the support of salaried employees. These workers constituted one of Germany’s fastest-growing social groups, but widespread “false consciousness,” continued to alienate many from the proletariat. At the AfA-Bund’s fourth congress of October 1931, Aufhäuser analyzed the historical, psychological, and ideological roots of this phenomenon and argued that the labor movement should respond with mass education about the unity of the working class and the nature of socialism. At the same time, a flexible approach and careful consideration of differences among

various groups of workers was essential. For Aufhäuser, these general proposals were not new. What was different, however, was his call for the *AfA-Bund* to place the immediate “restructuring of the economy” on its political agenda. This demand, which the congress accepted, stood at the center of his political activity until the republic’s fall.⁴⁵

Like many other Social Democrats, Aufhäuser welcomed the formation of the Iron Front in December of 1931. He saw it not only as an opportunity to mobilize mass support behind the republic, but also as a chance to promote an alternative economic vision. Although capitalism clearly was collapsing, he believed that society could not just leap into socialism. Instead, the state had to begin restructuring the economy to stimulate economic growth and employment and begin the transition to an economic system in which community needs took precedence over those of capital (*Gemeinwirtschaft*).

To rapidly create jobs, the government had to remove barriers to trade, invest in public works (paid for by a large-scale public loan), shorten the workweek, and establish a voluntary labor service for youth. More decisive in the long run, however, would be expanded public ownership of utilities, raw material and heavy industries, large insurance firms and the banks. State planning would regulate remaining cartels in the private sector, while in agriculture the government would expropriate large estates and provide support for small peasants. Finally, it was essential that Germany establish better relations with its neighbors, bring an end to reparations payments, and gain access to foreign credit.⁴⁶

Aufhäuser’s position was at odds with that of the majority of ADGB leaders, who were less enthusiastic about plans for restructuring and, instead, favored quickly stimulating growth via deficit spending. Aufhäuser’s opposition to that strategy rested on his fear of renewed inflation and most SPD leaders, such as Hilferding and Wels, shared this view. By March 1932 the party began lining up behind the AfA’s plan, and the executive charged Aufhäuser with presenting a detailed proposal at its next congress in March 1933.⁴⁷

That the SPD leaders picked Aufhäuser to be the main speaker on economic and social policy marked a clear shift in his standing within the party. His criticisms of the SPD’s coalition strategy and of the republic had earlier alienated him from the executive, but his loyalty in the crisis and economic views now brought him closer to the majority in that body, which, rhetorically at least, was moving leftward in 1932. In two very important respects, however, Aufhäuser continued to part company from most top SPD and ADGB leaders: his willingness to cooperate, at least in

a limited way, with the KPD, and his support for a general strike when the republic appeared to be seriously threatened.

Both issues first came to a head in the summer of 1932 after the newly appointed but unpopular Chancellor, Franz von Papen, dissolved the *Reichstag* and called for new elections on July 31. Aufhäuser and a few other SPD leaders, such as *Vorwärts* editor Friedrich Stampfer, suggested that a “non-aggression pact” with the KPD would allow both parties to concentrate their electoral energy against the rising Nazi threat rather than against one another. This proposal, however, quickly came to naught. The KPD, following instructions from Moscow, rejected social-democratic overtures and continued to view the “social-fascist” SPD as the workers’ chief enemy. For their part, SPD and ADGB leaders were less than enthusiastic about reaching out to the KPD. In addition to mistrusting its leaders, they feared that cooperation with them would give Papen a pretext to overthrow the SPD-led government in Prussia and, thus, remove its large police force from Social Democratic control.⁴⁸

On July 20, when Papen moved against the Prussian government anyway, Aufhäuser was one of the few trade union or party leaders to call for a general strike to make good on Social Democracy’s repeated promise to defend the republic by all means. This suggestion encountered strong opposition, however, from the executive leadership of the SPD and ADGB. Wels and his ADGB counterpart, Theodor Leipart, expressed the opinion of most top leaders that to call a general strike or summon the *Reichsbanner* into the streets would precipitate a civil war in which the Reichswehr, backed by the SA and *Stahlhelm*, would triumph. Instead of fighting, they placed their hopes on the courts and on victory in the upcoming elections as a means of “restoring the constitutional order in the German republic.”⁴⁹

The subsequent Nazi electoral victory was a powerful blow to such illusions, but Aufhäuser responded in an oddly upbeat manner. In his view, the fact that the NSDAP and the DNVP did not win an absolute majority meant that most voters opposed dictatorship or the establishment of a corporate state (*Ständestaat*). At the same time, the fact that 13 million had voted for either the SPD or the KPD and 14 million for the Nazis showed that a majority, consciously or unconsciously, had turned against capitalism. Many voters had surely been fooled by the rhetoric of a Nazi leadership that offered no real solutions to the crisis. But, Aufhäuser pointed out, if the Nazi *Reichstag* delegation was prepared to fulfill its duty to the voters, it could now cooperate with the forces of the left and use the Iron Front’s program to restructure the economy and help the suffering people.⁵⁰

Aufhäuser's argument failed to consider that the Nazis entered parliament not to pass legislation but to destroy it. His view was not, however, a mere grasping at straws. Instead it represented a continuation of the analysis that he had advanced after the first major National Socialist electoral victory in September of 1930, and it contained the same misunderstanding of Nazism. Many voters certainly had turned to the Nazis as a result of the economic crisis and their effective use of anticapitalist rhetoric. But Aufhäuser's stress on economic interests continued to neglect the other factors that made Nazism popular, such as its strident nationalism, antirepublicanism, anti-Communism, and anti-Semitism.

He had no illusions about the Nazis' brutality or dictatorial intentions. Indeed, in October of 1932 he argued that, with the KPD's help, they had effectively created a dictatorship of the industrial and agricultural elite. But just as he had suggested in August that anticapitalist sentiment could bring the Nazi, Communist, and Socialist *Reichstag* delegates together around a joint program, in October he argued that economic tensions could tear the Nazis apart. If anticapitalist elements, such as white-collar workers, became conscious of how the party betrayed their interests to those of capital, it could lead to the dissolution of the Nazi electoral coalition. As a new round of elections approached, Aufhäuser hoped that the Iron Front would lead the struggle to educate the masses and turn the political tide before the formal democratic order, which masked the dictatorship, disappeared.⁵¹

But the Iron Front was not up to the task. Within a week after the Prussian coup, Leipart was holding conversations with Papen in which he proclaimed the unions' positive attitude toward the state and their long-standing commitment to educating workers to serve the nation. In December the ADGB also expressed its willingness to cooperate in Chancellor von Schleicher's failed effort to unite the unions and a part of the Nazi party behind his anti-parliamentary government. These actions make clear that, instead of fighting, the union leaders were increasingly inclined to accommodate the newly-emerging authoritarian state.⁵²

The SPD leaders did not take the route of accommodation but, fearful of civil war, stuck to their parliamentary strategy. On the eve of Hitler's appointment as Chancellor, Aufhäuser vacillated about how to react. He attacked the majority's willingness to "wait and see" what Hitler would do, but he also advocated a defensive strategy (*Abwehrkampf*) that was not very different from that of the majority. He urged that the party and unions back new elections and take the lead in defense of the constitution. No one disagreed with his point. The question was how to do it.⁵³

Within a week of this meeting, Aufhäuser no longer believed that the elections, now scheduled for March 5, would even take place. He told his colleagues that he was “tired of academic discussions” and that “the only goal now in question was that of power and we have to declare ourselves ready to take it.” For him the key weapon in the movement’s struggle was the general strike, but for most union and party leaders such an option was too dangerous. It was no longer seriously considered.⁵⁴

Despite his reservations, Aufhäuser once again joined in the *Reichstag* elections as a candidate from Berlin. Urging *AfA-Bund* members to get involved, he also admonished them to remain disciplined in the face of right-wing provocations.⁵⁵ In the surreal atmosphere of the parliamentary politics and bloody Nazi terror, he prepared a set of suggestions to reorganize structure of the party leadership for presentation at the scheduled March congress.⁵⁶ It was, in a way, business as usual, but in his articles a sense of defeat underlay his upbeat encouragement to fight on. On March 1 he wrote,

The idea of a socialist humanity is a beacon to us through the darkness of social reaction and a collapsing economic system. Just as clouds can sometimes hide the sun and our opponents can put freedom in chains, the sun . . . cannot be diverted from its path and freedom will always triumph as long as humanity survives. Our election on March 5 is about the life and security of the German people and the rights of workers. Vote for a better future . . . vote for democracy and socialism.⁵⁷

On March 5 a majority of Germans gave their support to the Nazi-led coalition government. Nazi terror against the unions, already considerable, now greatly intensified in spite of the union leaders’ pleas even to Gestapo officials and Hindenburg for protection. Three weeks after the elections, Aufhäuser resigned from the *AfA-Bund* as that organization and the ADGB attempted to save themselves by abandoning Social Democracy and placating the new regime. On April 28, when it became clear to *AfA-Bund* leaders that these efforts would likely fail to secure their organization’s existence, they dissolved it. The ADGB disappeared less than a week later. On May 2 the Nazis arrested its leaders and seized its property.⁵⁸

Unwilling to go along with the unions’ new political course, Aufhäuser had no choice but to resign. What is less clear is to what extent his departure was based on his Jewish background. As Korthaase suggests, it is likely that he also resigned to spare his comrades this additional “burden.” In any case, while many claimed it was difficult to see him go, all agreed that “in light of the general situation,” it was better if he stepped down.⁵⁹

By May 4, the day that Aufhäuser arrived in Saarbrücken, his first destination in exile, the republic was dead and the socialist movement was shattered. He had begun his political life as a trade unionist and a liberal. The First World War transformed him into a radical socialist, but in the aftermath of the revolution he became a loyal, if critical, servant of the SPD and the republic. A successful union organizer and an effective party leader, Aufhäuser was convinced that the strength of Social Democracy's organizations, rather than parliamentary legislation, was the guarantor of a socialist future. Like many others, he overestimated their strength and the commitment of some of their leaders, especially in the trade unions, to defend democracy. At the same time, he underestimated Nazism's strength and misunderstood its nature. These miscalculations, widespread among the republic's defenders, had devastating repercussions, for while social democratic forces adhered to constitutional norms, their Nazi opponents only used these as a means to camouflage a strategy of terror.

As a liberal democrat Aufhäuser had been willing to support radical action, such as a general strike, to achieve fundamental political aims. Over twenty years later he represented a small segment of socialist leaders, which, even if late in the game, was willing to use such methods to defend the republic. But, in a movement in which most party and union leaders shrunk back from risky measures, his was a voice crying into the wind.⁶⁰

Notes

1. Siegfried Aufhäuser, "Wahlkampf = Freiheit," *Der freie Angestellte* 37, 5 (1 March 1933): 63.

2. "Hunderttausende marschieren!" *Vorwärts* 121(12 March 1932); Heinrich August Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 516.

3. Donna Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 179–80.

4. Siegfried Aufhäuser, "Unsere historische Aufgabe," *Deutsche Republik* 6, 23 (1 March 1932): 709.

5. Gerhard Beier, *Das Lehrstück vom 1. und 2. Mai 1933* (Cologne: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1975), 29–32; Hannes Heer, *Burgfrieden oder Klassenkampf. Zur Politik der sozialdemokratischen Gewerkschaften 1930–1933* (Neuwied und Berlin: Luchterhand, 1971), 101–08; Michael Schneider, *Kleine Geschichte der Gewerkschaften. Ihre Entwicklung in Deutschland von den Anfängen bis heute* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 2000), 223–29.

6. There is no full-scale biography of Aufhäuser and the only substantial essay on his career is that by Werner Korthaase. "Siegfried Aufhäuser (1884–1969): Der Organisator der Kopfarbeiter," in Peter Lösche, Michael Scholing, and Franz Walter, eds., *Vor dem Vergessen bewahren: Lebenswege Weimarer Sozialdemokraten*

(Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1988), 15–37. There is also a short sketch in O. B. Server's, *Matadore der Politik* (Berlin: Universitas, 1932), 89–94.

7. Unless otherwise noted, this description of Aufhäuser's family background and early career is drawn from Korthaase, *Vor dem Vergessen Bewahren*, 15–21.

8. "Das neue Gewerkvereins-Programm, nach den Beschlüssen des 16. Verbandstages der Deutschen Gewerkvereine (Hirsch-Duncker) 1907 in Berlin," in Schneider, *Kleine Geschichte*, 509–12.

9. *Kaufmännische Rundschau*, 20, XI (25. 9 1903): 188.

10. Korthaase, "Siegfried Aufhäuser," 19.

11. Joachim Pahlberg-Landwehr, *Die freien Angestelltengewerkschaften zwischen Arbeiterbewegung und "bürgerlicher" Konkurrenz: eine historisch-soziologische Studie über den Afa-Bund 1921–1933* (Paderborn, 1993), 20–21.

12. Siegfried Aufhäuser, *Weltkrieg und Angestelltenbewegung* (Berlin: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaft, 1918), 4–5.

13. Aufhäuser, *Weltkrieg*, 73–83.

14. Aufhäuser, *Weltkrieg*, 63.

15. Korthaase, "Siegfried Aufhäuser," 21.

16. Aufhäuser, *Weltkrieg*, 107–14; idem., "Der gelbe Sumpf," *Deutsche Industriebeamten-Zeitung*, 14, 16/17 (2 August 1918): 109–12. For a good summation of the divisions among the employee associations, see Michael Prinz, *Vom neuen Mittelstand zum Volksgenossen. Die Entwicklung des sozialen Status der Angestellten von der Weimarer Republik bis zum Ende der NS-Zeit* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1986), 19–21.

17. Aufhäuser, *Weltkrieg*, 115–16.

18. Aufhäuser, "Wider den Kapitalismus," *Deutsche Industriebeamtenzeitung* 14, 23/24 (29 Nov. 1918): 158.

19. H. v. Gerlach, "Die Massenkundgebung der Angestellten," *Die Welt am Montag* XXIV, 46 (18 Nov. 1918).

20. S. Aufhäuser, *Das Gesetz über die Betriebsräte* (Berlin: Freiheit, 1920).

21. Korthaase, "Siegfried Aufhäuser," 23

22. Korthaase, "Siegfried Aufhäuser," 24; Prinz, *Vom neuen Mittelstand*, 21–22.

23. S. Aufhäuser, *Die Freie Angestellten- und Arbeiterbewegung* (Berlin: Industriebeamten-Verlag, 1920), 5–6.

24. Aufhäuser, *Die Freie Angestellten- und Arbeiterbewegung*, 6–7; idem., *Industrieverband mit Unterteilung nach Berufsgruppen oder Berufsverband mit Industriefachgruppen. Vortrag gehalten auf der 2. Tagung des Bundesausschusses* (Berlin: Industriebeamten-Verlag, 1920).

25. Aufhäuser, *Die Freie Angestellten- und Arbeiterbewegung*, 13–15.

26. Aufhäuser, *Die Freie Angestellten- und Arbeiterbewegung*, 15–17.

27. Pahlberg-Landwehr, *Die freien Angestelltengewerkschaften*, 55–79. For Aufhäuser's concern about unity, see page 65.

28. Susanne Miller, *Die Bürde der Macht, Die Sozialdemokratie 1918–1920* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1978), 354–360; Aufhäuser, *Das Gesetz über Betriebsräte*, 15–19.

29. Quoted in Korthaase, "Siegfried Aufhäuser," 25.

30. Miller, *Bürde*, 382–89.
31. Aufhäuser, *Das Gesetz über Betriebsräte*, 19–20.
32. Server, *Matadore*, 93–94.
33. *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag 1924. Protokoll mit dem Bericht der Frauenkonferenz* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1974), 102–03.
34. See, for example, Siegfried Aufhäuser, “Anklage Rede im Reichstag,” *AfA-Bundeszeitung* 4, 7 (1925): 55–58; idem., “Die Not der Angestellten,” *AfA-Bundeszeitung* 7, 11 (1925): 145–46; *Erwerbslosigkeit, Landesarbeitsamt, Gemeinde, Reich. Drei Vorträge gehalten von Paul Brühl, Ernst Reuter, Siegfried Aufhäuser* (Berlin: Industriebeamten-Verlag, 1926): 18–21.
35. Siegfried Aufhäuser, “Die Verabschiedung des Arbeitslosenversicherungsgesetz,” *AfA-Bundeszeitung* 9, 7/8 (1927): 98–99.
36. Prinz, *Vom neuen Mittelstand*, 50–51.
37. *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag 1927 in Kiel. Protokoll mit dem Bericht der Frauenkonferenz* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1974): 198–200.
38. *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag Magdeburg, 1929* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1974): 174–77.
39. Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 58–59; Heinrich August Winkler, *Der Schein der Normalität*, 806; Siegfried Aufhäuser, “Der politische Kampf um die Arbeitslosenversicherung und ihre sozialpolitische Bedeutung,” *Die Gesellschaft* 7 (1930/I): 401–03.
40. Siegfried Aufhäuser, “Neuer Kampf entbrennt um die Arbeitslosenversicherung,” *Der freie Angestellte*,” 34, 11 (1930): 169–70; idem., “Angestellte vor die Front,” *Der freie Angestellte*,” 34, 18 (1930): 281–82.
41. Siegfried Aufhäuser, “Wir bejahen den Staat aber nur so weit, als er Leben und Zukunft des arbeitenden Volkes bejaht,” *Vorwärts* 460 (1 Oct. 1930).
42. Siegfried Aufhäuser, *Gewerkschaften und Politik. Parteipolitische Neutralität, religiöse Gewissensfreiheit, Faschismus und Kapitalismus. Vortrag, gehalten auf dem 5. ordentlichen Gau-tag des Bundes des technischen Angestellten und Beamten. Gau Rheinland-Westfalen, am 15. Juni 1924 in Barmen* (Berlin: Industriebeamten-Verlag, 1924), 7–8.
43. *Verhandlungen des Reichstages*, Bd. 446, 55. Sitzung, 15. Oktober 1931, 2155–156, 2161.
44. *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag in Leipzig 1931 vom 31. Mai bis 5. Juni im Völkshaus* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, 1974), 142–44. Quotations from Korthaase, “Siegfried Aufhäuser,” 29.
45. Siegfried Aufhäuser, *Ideologie und Taktik der Angestelltenbewegung. Referat, gehalten auf dem 4. AfA-Gewerkschaftskongress, Leipzig 1931* (Berlin: Frier Volksverlag, 1931).
46. S. Aufhäuser, “Unsere historische Aufgabe,” *Deutsche Republik* 6, 23 (1 March 1932): 709–13; idem., “Neuorganisation der Wirtschaft,” *Unser Weg* 6, 3 (March 1932): 68–69.
47. Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 540–41; Korthaase, “Siegfried Aufhäuser,” 32.
48. Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 616–26.

49. Heer, *Burgfrieden oder Klassenkampf*, 63–64; Pahlberg-Landwehr, *Die Freien Angestelltengewerkschaften*, 246; Winker, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 662.

50. S. Aufhäuser, “Wahlen und Wirtschaft,” *Vorwärts* 371 (Morning edition, 9 August 1932); idem., “Gewerkschaftlicher Gestaltungswille,” *Der freie Angestellte*, 36, 16 (16 August 1932): 1–2.

51. S. Aufhäuser, “Der Entscheidung entgegen,” *Der freie Angestellte* 36, 19 (1 Oct. 1932) 281–83; idem., “Reichstagswahl und Klassenkampf,” *Unser Weg* 6, 10 (Oct. 1932): 291–92.

52. Pahlberg-Landwehr, *Die Freien Angestelltengewerkschaften*, 247–48.

53. Schulze, *Anpassung oder Widerstand?*, 133.

54. Schulze, *Anpassung oder Widerstand?*, 165; William Smaldone, *Rudolf Hilferding*, 179.

55. S. Aufhäuser, “An die Mitglieder der Gewerkschaften!” *AfA-Bundeszeitung* 15, 2 (1 Feb. 1932): 13–14.

56. S. Aufhäuser, “Reichsparteitag. Berliner Vorschlag zur Organisationsfrage,” *Unser Weg* 7, 2 (Feb 1933): 33–34.

57. S. Aufhäuser, “Wahlkampf = Freiheit,” *Der freie Angestellte* 37, 5 (1 March 1933): 62.

58. Prinz, *Vom neuen Mittelstand zum Volksgenossen*, 95–99; Pahlberg-Landwehr, *Die freien Angestelltengewerkschaften*, 253–55; *AfA-Bundeszeitung* 15, 4 (1 April 1933): 41–42; *Der Freie Angestellte* 37, 8 (16 April 1933): 105–06.

59. Korthaase, “Siegfried Aufhäuser,” 33–34; *AfA-Bundeszeitung* 15, 4 (1 April 1933): 41–42.

60. And it would remain so. On April 26, just before his flight, a conference of SPD leaders elected him to the party’s new executive committee as a representative of the leftwing. Once abroad, however, he quickly came into conflict with a majority in the SOPADE, who opposed his calls for a radical change of course and efforts to build bridges with the Communists. The SOPADE expelled him in January 1935. In exile, Aufhäuser moved from Saarbrücken to Paris and then to Prague, where he worked for the Czechoslovakian employees’ unions until 1938. From there he fled to London and New York, where he arrived with his wife in May 1941. Throughout his years abroad he was active in the exile community and wrote frequently for its press. He returned to Germany in 1951 and became a regional leader of the German Employees’ Union until 1959. He also rejoined the SPD and served as a Berlin delegate to party congresses in 1954, 1956, and 1958 where he urged his comrades to continue to combat the power of big business and fight for a new economic order. He died in 1969. See Korthaase, “Siegfried Aufhäuser,” 34–36.

Rudolf Breitscheid (1874–1944)

3



Rudolf Breitscheid (1874–1944) Courtesy of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

“Readiness is everything!”—RUDOLF BREITSCHIED¹

ON JANUARY 31, 1933, the day after Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor, SPD leaders met with representatives of the Iron Front to discuss their response. Although the KPD had already issued an appeal to Social Democracy to join in a general strike, no one at the meeting spoke in favor of taking that step. On the contrary, the socialist leaders resolutely opposed it. They mistrusted the KPD, which for years had attacked them as “traitors” to the working class; more importantly, they feared that a strike would provide Hitler with a pretext to crush their organizations. Instead of taking action, they wanted to wait and see what Hitler would do. Only if he abandoned the Constitution would they consider a strike.²

Those in attendance were doubtless relieved when Rudolf Breitscheid, the cochair of the SPD Reichstag delegation, gave eloquent voice to this outlook in his political report. Breitscheid was among the republic’s most talented parliamentarians. Tall, slim, always very well dressed, this handsome socialist “lord” was a powerful speaker who regularly annihilated opponents’ views with his rhetorical skill and factual knowledge. On this day, however, his arguments encountered no opposition and earned the unanimous support of his comrades. They also reflected the limits of Social Democratic politics in the crisis of 1933.

To Breitscheid, Hitler’s appointment, however unpalatable, was constitutionally correct and “inevitable.” After a series of increasingly authoritarian cabinets had failed to sustain themselves, it was only a matter of time, he argued, before the government fell into the hands Germany’s most authoritarian political leader: Hitler. Chancellors Brüning, Papen, and Schleicher all had hoped to transform the republic along authoritarian lines, but their lack of parliamentary support, which Nazi backing would have provided, hindered their efforts. When Schleicher failed to co-opt the Nazis and was unable to prevent them from allying with industrial and agrarian reactionaries, the way to Hitler’s appointment lay open. Breitscheid credited the Nazis for their tenacity, but he believed that the “criminal acts” of the KPD were also responsible for their victory. By allying themselves with the fascists in their attack on the republic, the Communists had paralyzed the people’s will to defend democracy.

Breitscheid noted that Hitler’s cabinet was full of tensions. The new Chancellor lacked an absolute majority, did not have a clear economic plan, and his popular base expected economic concessions that his coal-

tion partner, the right-wing businessman, Hugenberg, opposed. Yet, Breitscheid did not think the government would fall anytime soon. It would be harder, he asserted, to drive Hitler from power than it had been to keep him at bay. He warned that precipitous action by the Iron Front would only strengthen the cabinet's unity against the workers.

Comments by the President of the *Reichstag*, Nazi leader Hermann Göring, and other officials indicated to Breitscheid that, initially at least, the Nazis would keep to the rules of the parliamentary system and seek to form a majority with the Center party. If that occurred, he urged the SPD to be critical of the Center but not to burn its bridges in order to keep future options open. Breitscheid strongly believed that Hitler intended to follow Mussolini's example of manipulating parliament to gradually isolate and destroy his rivals and to establish a dictatorship. He did not think the time had come for the workers to undertake extra-parliamentary action. If they acted immediately, Hitler would jettison the Constitution and move against them before they were ready. Instead he urged his comrades to prepare for the moment when Hitler, on his own volition, violated the constitution. That would be the moment for Social Democracy to act.

Meanwhile it had to build up its forces. Believing that the KPD was not really interested in cooperation, Breitscheid insisted that the SPD focus on explaining to the workers how the Communists had divided and weakened labor's ability to defend democracy. It was not in their interest to fight for "impossible ideas" like the "dictatorship of the proletariat." They should strive, rather, for socialism constructed on a democratic and parliamentary basis. Breitscheid thought that more and more workers were coming to this realization. To him the battle lines of class struggle had never been more clearly drawn: "on the one side stood the working class; on the other stood the united reaction, unified capitalism, backed by Hitler's brown hordes." The Iron Front had to mobilize the workers for the coming showdown. "Readiness," Breitscheid insisted, "is everything!"³

But the Iron Front did not get ready. In the end, both the party and the trade unions drifted and vainly pinned their hopes on the March 5 elections. They allowed Hitler to continue down the pseudo-legal road to power mixing a new round of parliamentary electioneering with terror and repression. Following the Nazi victory, as Hitler and his allies prepared to effectively eliminate parliament through the passage of the Enabling Law, Breitscheid realized that the republic was dying. Yet neither he nor most of his fellow socialist leaders was ready to respond with radical action. Unprepared to engage in the kind of ruthless struggle that an open confrontation with Nazism would have entailed, his only option, in the end, was flight.

That Breitscheid found it difficult to advocate extra-parliamentary tactics or violence was not surprising. He was, in many ways, a quintessential parliamentarian whose life's path resembled a long-term training program for a legislative career. Breitscheid's importance as an SPD leader did not stem from widespread support or influence within the party or trade union organizations; he had not worked his way up through the hierarchy. Instead, his prominence rested on his abilities as a publicist and public speaker. These skills were in great demand in a party interested in winning elections and using parliament to carry out reforms. His gifts catapulted him into the top ranks of the SPD leadership and made him a key figure in republican politics.

Like Siegfried Aufhäuser, Breitscheid began his political career in the liberal, rather than the social-democratic camp. He came to liberalism as a result of his upbringing and education. Born in Cologne on November 2, 1874, Breitscheid was an only child in a family of very modest means. His father, Wilhelm, worked in a bookshop, and his mother, Wilhelmine, was the daughter of a tailor. His parents were strict Protestants, and his mother vainly hoped that her son would undertake a religious career. They placed much value on Christian charity and education. Wilhelm died when Rudolf was only nine, but his mother struggled successfully to put him through Cologne's Friedrich-Wilhelm Gymnasium and to send him to study law at the University of Munich in 1894.⁴

It did not take the young Breitscheid long to realize, however, that he was more interested in political and economic issues than the law. Before the year was over he transferred to Marburg, where he studied under political scientist Karl Rathgen, an "engaged liberal" and member of the German Colonial Society, the Evangelical Social Congress, and the Social Policy Association. Breitscheid adopted the outlook of "classical liberalism," stressing the political and economic freedom of the individual. His upbringing, however, and Rathgen's teachings on the need for social reform and German colonial expansion, tempered his belief in *Laissez-faire*. In 1898 he completed his Ph.D. with a dissertation on "Land policy in the Australian colonies."⁵

In the class-bound German society of his day, Breitscheid had grown up keenly aware of his family's low status. His decision at Marburg to join the fraternity, "Arminia," was, in part, an effort for the status-conscious young man to step outside of his social milieu. He also joined, however, under the mistaken impression that "Arminia" remained a bearer of the "liberal-democratic" ideals espoused by many German fraternities before the failed revolution of 1848. Once admitted, Breitscheid's energy and

speaking skills enabled him to rise quickly into the organization's leadership, but his fiery speeches criticizing the Kaiser and empire brought him into conflict with more conservative members, including an early mentor, the pan-German nationalist Professor Theobald Fischer. As a result, Breitscheid soon began to look elsewhere for political friends and drew closer to people such as Rathgen.⁶ It would not be the last time that he would be disappointed by the politics of an ostensibly liberal organization. It also would not be the last time that questions of principle would force him to move on.

Following graduation Breitscheid decided to try his hand at political journalism. After editorial apprenticeships at several free-trade-oriented, pro-colonialist papers in North Germany, he moved to Berlin just after the turn of the century. There he continued his career as an editor and also worked as a correspondent for a Hamburg paper.⁷ Breitscheid focused primarily on foreign policy matters. An outspoken supporter of free trade, he also thought it was economically necessary for Germany to expand its colonial holdings, to crush the Herero Rebellion in Southwest Africa, and to take a tough line with England. Breitscheid's view of free trade (and social reform) placed him at odds with the large, pro-tariff National Liberal Party. In the parliamentary elections of 1903 he decided to campaign for the smaller, free-trade-oriented Progressive Party (*Freisinnige Vereinigung*). By that time, he was also a member of Friedrich Naumann's social reformist National-Social Association, which, in September, merged with the Progressives to form the left wing of German liberalism.⁸

Shortly after coming to Berlin, Breitscheid married Tony Drevermann, a feminist activist. Over the course of the next four decades, Tony supported her husband in a variety of ways. She had the main responsibility for raising their son, Gerhard, born in 1903, shared in his political work, and helped him emotionally during trying times. With her help Breitscheid focused his energy on politics. He relished the life of the agitator, marked by constant traveling, meetings, and controversies, and he quickly emerged as an important liberal leader in Berlin. In 1904 he won election to the City Council and to the Brandenburg Provincial Assembly. In that same year, he also became chair of the city's Progressive Party organization. These public posts brought him private benefits. In 1905 the *Handelsvertragsverein*, an organization dedicated to free trade and the growth of German exports, hired him as a deputy business manager. Breitscheid lobbied companies and political parties on trade issues and developed propaganda aiming to win consumer support for reduced tariffs on foodstuffs.⁹ Steady income from this job made it easier for him to continue his political work.

Otto Server once described Breitscheid as a person “who took no radical turns” but developed his views gradually.¹⁰ This observation certainly applied to his politics prior to the First World War. After joining the Progressives, Breitscheid’s ideas about German foreign and domestic policy steadily evolved. Once hostile to Britain, for example, his studies of British and German colonial policies in southern Africa and Asia led him to conclude that the two countries had many common interests and that Germany had much to learn from its more experienced rival.¹¹ Under the influence of Friedrich Naumann, and later, after he grew too conservative, Theodor Barth, and Helmuth von Gerlach, Breitscheid became increasingly committed to a liberal economic policy that would combat industrial monopolies, protect consumers, and promote social justice. By adopting this outlook, and by working to eliminate Prussia’s undemocratic “three-class” electoral system, Breitscheid hoped that liberalism would attract working-class support. To that end he, Barth, and von Gerlach favored cooperation with the moderate “revisionist” wing of the SPD.¹²

Breitscheid was convinced that democracy could only advance in Germany once the power of its privileged aristocracy, the *Junkers*, had been broken. Like many ordinary Germans, he was pleased when, in January 1905, revolution in Russia threatened to destroy Tsarism. On February 1, at a large public gathering in Berlin, he asserted that the continued existence of absolutism in Russia helped prop up Germany’s own privileged elite. Tsarism, he argued, was a “bulwark of reaction in Prussia and Germany” and to protest against it was the “best kind of national politics.” That same year Breitscheid traveled to Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Russia to compare political conditions in those countries with those in Germany. He returned more convinced than ever of the need to democratize his homeland.¹³

In 1907 Breitscheid lost a bid for a *Reichstag* seat during the so-called Hottentot election in which Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow made the government’s colonial policy the central issue. Running in a rural district against a Junker candidate, Breitscheid fumed at his rival’s use of his long-standing economic and social power to win peasant votes. After this depressing loss, his dismay intensified when the Progressives decided to join the National Liberals and Conservatives in a coalition backing von Bülow. Along with Barth and von Gerlach, he did not believe that von Bülow would follow through on promises to support reform. In 1908, when the party backed a new *Reich* Association Law sharply restricting the rights of the Polish minority, this group decided to abandon ship. Along with a few other dissenters, they then founded the Democratic Union (DV), with Breitscheid as its chairman.¹⁴

The DV soon passed a new program and began to construct an organization but, as we have seen, failed to become an effective party. Although its membership grew to almost 11,000 between 1908 and 1911, it was primarily an assemblage of educated bourgeois intellectuals (*Bildungsbürgertum*) loyal to left-liberal principles. The DV's crushing defeat in the *Reichstag* elections of January 1912 (it won only .2 percent of the vote) convinced Breitscheid that there was no political space for a principled liberal party in Germany. Instead of carrying on futilely in the DV, he, Tony, and a majority of party members in Berlin decided to join the SPD.¹⁵

In May 1912 Breitscheid explained to his friend, the Swedish Socialist leader, Karl Branting, that he had turned to the SPD because "in the long run it was no longer possible to uphold democratic ideas outside of socialism."¹⁶ It had taken him a long time to come to this conclusion. For years he had hoped that Germany's liberal movement, by working for social and democratic reforms, would pull Social Democracy into its orbit, but this effort had clearly failed. In the context of Germany's semiautocratic order, the National Liberals and Progressives had been too willing to compromise their principles. The failure of the DV convinced Breitscheid that liberalism was no longer a viable option.

He had contemplated joining the SPD as early as 1908 but rejected that idea due to his "strong concerns regarding the scientific basis of Social Democracy's program" and out of loyalty to Barth and von Gerlach.¹⁷ By 1912, however, these grounds were no longer compelling. Programmatically, his view of liberalism's concrete goals had much in common with those embodied in the SPD's *Erfurt Program*. These included parliamentary democracy, equal rights for men and women, progressive and direct taxation, separation of church and state, free trade, international cooperation, and a variety of social reforms.¹⁸ Though still skeptical of Marxist theory and focused on the right of the individual to develop his personality to the fullest extent (*Persönlichkeitsrecht*), he now concluded that, "real democracy presupposed the economic liberation of the working class. As long as capitalism dominates, the proletariat can only achieve its *Persönlichkeitsrecht* to a very limited extent."¹⁹

Breitscheid's political evolution and his adherence to principle cost him friendships and jobs. His relationship to Friedrich Naumann, for example, collapsed as a result of sharp differences over the Progressives' political course, while his increasingly critical view of the rise of big business ended his employment at the *Handelsvertragsverein* by 1910.²⁰ When he left the DV two years later, he had to give up his job editing its newspaper, *Das Freie Volk* (The Free People). Breitscheid's willingness to accept such personal and financial

consequences tells us much about his personal integrity and determination. The latter was especially important when he joined the SPD, for he faced not only economic uncertainty, but also the skepticism of some of its leaders who, drawn mainly from the union movement, looked askance at having “doctors, lawyers, and literary types” in their ranks.²¹

But Breitscheid also had friends in the SPD. Friedrich Stampfer, for example, had followed the founding of the DV closely and knew him well. He recognized Breitscheid’s talents as a speaker and a journalist and hired him to coedit his “private correspondence,” which was widely syndicated in the SPD press, and his “Year Book” on politics and the labor movement (*Jahrbuch für Politik und Arbeiterbewegung*). Breitscheid also socialized frequently with leading SPD intellectuals in Berlin. At the famous café Josty, for example, he joined the likes of Ludwig Frank, Rudolf Hilferding, Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and the Russian Alexandra Kollantai for coffee and political debate.²² Well connected and with his employment problem solved, Breitscheid soon made a mark for himself in socialist politics.

One of the most heated controversies facing the SPD in 1912 was the issue of whether or how the movement should use the mass strike. While many on the party’s right wing, especially trade unionists fearful of government repression, opposed using such strikes to confront the regime politically, the left viewed them as a means of promoting revolutionary action. Breitscheid quickly entered the fray with an essay in SPD’s theoretical journal, *Die Neue Zeit* (*The New Age*) in which he suggested that the relationship of the mass strike to revolution was not very important. The debate, however, was essential for raising workers’ consciousness about the means to bring about real change, such as reform of Prussian suffrage. This outlook reflected a common frustration with the SPD’s inability to translate its mass support and parliamentary strength into concrete reforms. It placed him within the moderate centrist faction of the prewar SPD.²³

As it did many others, the outbreak of war in 1914 radicalized Breitscheid. His pacifist inclinations and cosmopolitan outlook, reinforced by his substantial professional and personal experience in England and France, led him to join the antiwar opposition. At odds with Stampfer over the war, he once again had to quit his job, but soon found work as the Berlin correspondent for the left-wing daily *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (Leipzig People’s Paper). In March 1915, with the financial help of Nikolaus Witt, a wealthy friend from his DV days, Breitscheid began publishing the *Sozialistische Auslandspolitik* (*Socialist Foreign Policy*), which became an important outlet for social democratic dissent.²⁴

His views quickly made him enemies inside and outside the party. In October 1914 he infuriated SPD leaders by inaccurately claiming, in an

article for an English newspaper, that the party had backed the war in return for a government promise to grant its papers the same freedoms enjoyed by the rest of the press. Like many veteran SPD chiefs, Ebert already viewed Breitscheid as an upstart and expressed his feelings in no uncertain terms at a January meeting of the Party Council. In the last *Reichstag* election, he fumed, Breitscheid had been “a bourgeois candidate who had opposed our party and scorned its principles. [He] was the last person who should play the role of party schoolmaster abroad.”²⁵ Given Ebert’s reaction, it was not surprising that Breitscheid failed to secure an editor’s post at the party’s flagship paper, *Vorwärts*. His attitude toward the war also resulted in his exclusion from the military High Command’s regular press conferences.²⁶

Breitscheid remained undeterred. In his articles and public statements he spoke out against the war and expressed understanding for the security concerns of Germany’s western opponents. A vocal supporter of Hugo Haase’s call for peace without annexations, he also was willing to countenance a split if the party did not change course. In December 1915 Breitscheid made a speech at a street rally that so angered one pro-war union leader that he complained to the authorities about this “ambitious man,” who, “in order to play an important roll would take up virtually any viewpoint.” Comparing him to the notorious Karl Liebknecht, he noted that Breitscheid “had great hopes for a [*Reichstag*] mandate in Berlin.”²⁷ Although the paper trail ends there, it is likely that the arrival of forty-two-year-old Breitscheid’s draft-notice in January was no coincidence.

The army sent Breitscheid to the western front, but he remained politically engaged. In 1916, both he and Liebknecht attempted to win the SPD’s nomination for an unexpectedly open *Reichstag* seat in Cologne but failed due to the objections of local party leaders. In January 1918 the newly-formed USPD nominated him as a candidate from Berlin, but the army granted him only a brief leave to campaign. Tony, who now was also running the *Auslandspolitik*, took on the burden. Despite her efforts, he lost to the SPD’s candidate, Rudolf Wissell.²⁸

Unlike many SPD veterans who, driven by opposition to the war, agonized when facing the decision to leave their long-time political home, Breitscheid had less compunction. He was a relative newcomer to the party, vehemently opposed its cooperation with the regime, and—a sign of his wartime radicalization—believed that it had abandoned its struggle against capitalism. Breitscheid was again ready to move on. Joining the USPD in 1917, he believed that party could provide “fundamental opposition to the capitalist social order” and he hoped to play a leading role in setting its political course.²⁹

While at the front, Breitscheid was unable to assume any posts within the USPD. Until the end of the war, however, he continued firing off letters and articles criticizing the conflict, calling for an international socialist peace conference, and demanding constitutional reforms. The latter, he believed, were essential before the SPD took over governmental responsibility. In the summer of 1918, he warned his former comrades against entering a coalition with the bourgeois parties, because they would then become *de facto* supporters of a bankrupt system and would be blamed for its failures. This warning was especially prudent as Germany's military defeat approached and he mulled over the political difficulties of creating a new, postwar order.³⁰

He returned to Berlin during the revolutionary days of November 1918 where he participated in the negotiations that led to the formation of the provisional government in which the SPD and USPD shared power. Despite his disillusionment with the SPD and his doubts about its commitment to socialism, he thought that such a coalition made sense in the midst of Germany's turbulent conditions. A recognized foreign policy expert, Breitscheid was a candidate for the post of foreign minister, but, in the end, he took over the Interior Ministry in Prussia, where a socialist coalition also was at the helm. Concerned about the monarchist bureaucracy's resistance to change, Breitscheid only was willing to take on the post after Helmut von Gerlach, his old friend and an experienced administrator, agreed to work as his assistant.³¹

Taking office on November 14, Breitscheid quickly ran into roadblocks. Conflicts within the coalition and bureaucratic resistance to change made reform difficult. When the coalition government at the *Reich* level collapsed in December, the Prussian coalition also fell apart and thus ended his six-week term of office. It was the only ministerial post he ever held.

Following his resignation he focused on editing the USPD's weekly journal, *Der Sozialist*, which had replaced *Sozialistische Auslandspolitik* and appeared until 1922. He also became an important figure in the USPD's internal politics. The two years following the collapse of the imperial regime represent the most radical phase of Breitscheid's career. While at the beginning of this period he had no clear vision of a socialist future, his ideas on the future political order crystallized as a result of unfolding events. During the fall of 1918 he became frustrated with the SPD's insistence on deferring revolutionary political and economic reforms until after the convening of the National Assembly. In late December, when Ebert employed the army to put down unrest in Berlin, he agreed that the USPD should withdraw from the *Reich* and Prussian governments.

He was also critical of his own party, however, as the small Spartacist left-wing demanded a soviet-style system of government and rejected cooperation with the SPD, while the majority remained unclear about its view of the parliamentary order. In the December issue of *Der Sozialist*, Breitscheid baldly asserted that, “we have no policy.” If the party wished to avoid sinking into insignificance, it had to decide either for Spartakus or for participation in the coalition government.³² Within weeks, however, the choice was moot. By then Spartacus had quit the party to form the KPD and the USPD had left the coalition.

Three months later, at the USPD’s congress in Leipzig, Breitscheid stated his opposition to the purely parliamentary order as well as to the councils’ system demanded by the Communists. Following Hilferding, Kautsky, and others, he called for a democratic system in which both parliament and workers’ councils would play an essential role. According to Breitscheid, neither institution, by itself, was satisfactory. “In a bourgeois state,” he asserted, “there can be no democracy” because the parliamentary system is corrupted by money and the rich manipulate the elections. The recent elections to the National Assembly confirmed this fact, as the banks alone pumped in tens of millions of marks and enabled the bourgeoisie to emerge with a majority.³³

Achieving socialist control of parliament, Breitscheid argued, would be a thorny process that might take decades. The councils, however, as instruments of workers’ power, could serve to accelerate the move toward socialism. For that reason the party had to support them, but what did that mean in practice? Breitscheid responded by underscoring the fact that, at that moment, the majority of workers did not favor a councils system. The party, therefore, should respect the election of the National Assembly while simultaneously calling for the creation of a Central Council that could veto the Assembly’s legislation and suggest legislation of its own. This hybrid system, he concluded, would allow socialism to grow on the basis of democracy rather than under the auspices of a minority dictatorship.³⁴

These views, along with demands for socializing the banks, annulling war loan debts, and creating special tribunals to try those responsible for the war, represent the high tide of Breitscheid’s radicalism. Desiring to “break with the old system,” he was unsure about what should follow. Because he had observed—over many years, but especially in wartime—how the imperial regime had manipulated the *Reichstag* (rather than serve it), Breitscheid had come to doubt whether parliament, in fact, could embody a “government of the people.” In the spring of 1918, he described it as

“only one of the means with which we can achieve our goal.”³⁵ By the following year it seemed that the councils were another such “means,” but his continued commitment to majority rule hindered his willingness to cast parliament aside in their favor. If the councils did not have even the support of a majority of workers, they alone could not form the heart of a new democratic order.

Breitscheid’s outlook did little to win him friends in the SPD or on the radical left. His participation in the antiwar opposition had led the former to accuse him of lacking patriotism, while leftists such as Franz Mehring did not think he had the Marxist credentials to win over a radicalized electorate as a candidate for the *Reichstag*.³⁶ The radical left’s criticism intensified as Breitscheid qualified his support for the Bolshevik Revolution and for the councils system in Germany.

Like many other Social Democrats, he initially had welcomed the Russian revolutions of 1917. He believed that the overthrow of Tsarism had shown that the people could, in fact, achieve fundamental internal changes through their own actions, while the Bolsheviks were making an “honest and serious” effort to create a socialist state amidst very difficult circumstances. Indeed, it was now the USPD’s duty “to do whatever it could to support this world historical act.” Although he opposed adopting “Bolshevik methods” in the German context, he believed so strongly in the need to back the revolution that he urged his comrades to restrain their criticisms of Bolshevik policies.³⁷

He soon changed his mind, however. During the fall of 1918 his participation in the Prussian government and willingness to cooperate with the SPD put him at odds with the USPD’s Spartacist faction, and he opposed the KPD’s effort in January 1919 to seize power and establish a proletarian dictatorship. These positions earned him the Communists’ wrath. In the spring of 1920, they placed him on the list of those whom the USPD would have to expel in order for it to join the Third International.

Breitscheid always maintained that it was the duty of socialists to defend the Soviet Union against capitalist counterrevolution, but he also became a firm opponent of the Bolshevik dictatorship. In September 1920 he observed that “In Russia, we do not have the dictatorship of the proletariat or of the Communist Party or of the soviets, but rather, the dictatorship of a few leaders.”³⁸ As the USPD moved toward its momentous split over the Comintern issue, he spoke even more bluntly about the “Communist-Bolshevik wave that was sweeping over Germany” as impoverished workers fell victim to a “Russian-Bolshevik psychosis” and ceased listening to reason. Germany, he thought, may have to experience a period of Bolshevik rule before people came to their senses.

Breitscheid insisted that the USPD come to grips with this reality. “Our time is not the immediate future,” he asserted, “but . . . will come afterward, after the time of depression . . . in which it appears that all our ideas have suffered shipwreck.” It was for “this moment that the party had to prepare and to develop its tactics.” That meant first and foremost to criticize Bolshevism and German Communism “objectively” from “the standpoint of scientific socialism.” It also meant pursuing a “revolutionary” policy independent of the SPD and the KPD and resting not on radical phrases, but on concrete solutions to real problems. That approach was, in his view, the best preparation for the future revolution.³⁹

These comments reveal two important elements of Breitscheid’s outlook at the end of 1920. First they show that, despite his fear of a Bolshevik-style dictatorship in Germany, his response to this threat was rather tepid. He did not urge the party to prepare for battle or underground resistance. Instead he suggested that, rather than waiting for the “great collapse” to usher in the New World, it undertake practical work on specific problems.

This response seems rather out of sync with the gravity of the threat he had just outlined, but it does not mean that his remarks constituted empty rhetoric. Breitscheid was very conscious of the violent nature of Germany’s postwar politics. His recommendations likely stemmed from his aversion to such violence and his conviction that parliamentary politics represented the only possible alternative. By the end of 1920, he was clearly tired of talking about proletarian dictatorship and the councils system, “without having a clear idea of what these terms meant.”⁴⁰ The fact that, in June, he finally had won a *Reichstag* seat was also doubtless of great importance. As a member of parliament, the skilled publicist now had the chance to directly influence national legislation.

In his first speech to the *Reichstag* in July 1920 Breitscheid vigorously presented the USPD’s views. He lambasted the Majority Social Democrats for their politics after 1914, defended the Russian Revolution, demanded the socialization of the economy, and asserted that “when the victorious workers . . . in Germany and the Entente states come to power, . . . the Treaty of Versailles will be swept away.”⁴¹ Less than one year later, however, instead of distancing the USPD from the SPD and the republic, he took the opposite tack. In a speech attacking rightist and Liberal efforts to replace the merchant marine’s republican flag with a monarchist one, he argued:

the republic is not our final aim. It is only the vessel whose content is socialism. But we defend this vessel against your attacks. We believe that it is one hundred times more valuable for the interests of the German people, than that which the capitalists, militarists . . . and German nationalists desire.⁴²

The context in which Breitscheid made these remarks was the key factor that led him to adopt this new outlook. By 1921 the resurgence of radical nationalism and the rise of right-wing terror convinced many on the German left, including Breitscheid, that counterrevolution threatened the republic's existence and that republican unity was essential to repel this threat. Within the USPD he worked to counter powerful currents opposed to cooperation with the bourgeois parties and the SPD, and he believed it was essential to preserve Chancellor Wirth's coalition government and its effort to pursue a peaceful "policy of understanding" with the allies. In February 1921 Breitscheid and a minority in the USPD *Reichstag* delegates abstained in a vote of "no confidence" against Wirth. They had broken party discipline—a cardinal sin for Social Democrats of all stripes—but helped save his government.

In keeping with his desire for unity, Breitscheid also supported the reunification of the rump USPD and the SPD in the fall of 1922. Despite his sharp criticisms of the SPD just a short time before, he was now convinced that only a unified Social Democracy would have the strength to counter the right. He made his argument clear at the USPD's congress of Gera in September: "Perhaps we don't like the SPD's methods," he asserted, "but it is a party of the proletarian masses and, therefore, of socialism." Unless the USPD came out of its isolation and rejoined the SPD, it would have a much harder time influencing these masses or wielding political power.⁴³

Following reunification Breitscheid emerged as one of the SPD's leading parliamentarians and a staunch defender of republicanism. Although his "academic" background and former USPD membership hindered his relations with some party leaders, his knowledge of foreign affairs, rhetorical skills, and aristocratic bearing propelled him into the *Reichstag* delegation's leadership. In 1927 he won election to the delegation's executive committee and the following year he became one of its three chairmen next to Wilhelm Dittmann and Hermann Müller. Finally, in 1931, the party congress elected him to the SPD executive committee. It was the high point of his career.

Breitscheid focused most of his attention in the twenties on foreign policy. Hoping to preserve peace and revise the terms of the Versailles Treaty, he supported the "policy of fulfillment" as a way a reestablishing trust and communications between Germany and the *Entente* powers. Even after the collapse of German "passive resistance" to the French occupation of the Ruhr, as the right called for intransigence and even war, Breitscheid urged negotiations to prevent the latter and manage the problem of repa-

rations.⁴⁴ To achieve these ends and open the way to further improvements in Germany's position, he also backed the Dawes Plan in 1924.⁴⁵

Breitscheid had close contacts on the French left and, after Poincaré's fall, he put them to good use in promoting better German-French relations. His efforts in support of Gustav Stresemann's foreign policy helped pave the way for the Locarno Pact in 1925. Breitscheid was proud of this achievement, which he believed resolved postwar border disputes in the west, laid down rules for arbitration of disputes, and paved the way for Germany's entry into the League of Nations.⁴⁶ When Germany entered the League a year later, Stresemann appointed him to the German delegation. Breitscheid's cooperation with Stresemann raised his standing in republican circles. In 1928, as the SPD considered joining a new coalition government, his name circulated as a candidate for foreign minister, but ultimately Stresemann retained the post.

As the 1920s unfolded, Breitscheid placed increasing emphasis on the need to adopt a practical political outlook. At the Berlin party congress of 1924, for example, he urged his colleagues not to overuse the rhetoric of "class struggle" when dealing with concrete political matters such as the Dawes Plan. The party was always engaged in class struggle, he insisted, and to constantly refer to it simply watered down its meaning. While Breitscheid believed that the SPD could cooperate with the middle classes to achieve foreign and domestic progress, he did not favor cooperation at any price. In 1926, for example, he favored entering a coalition with bourgeois republican forces only if they agreed to pursue democratic reform of the bureaucracy, justice system, and *Reichswehr*, a foreign policy of peace and understanding, and a social policy strengthening the economic, financial, and social security of the workers.⁴⁷

At the Kiel party congress in May 1927 Breitscheid did not speak explicitly in favor of joining a coalition government with the bourgeois parties, but sought to keep that option open. For him, opposition was not a "long term condition," but, rather, a prelude to governmental responsibility in which the SPD could carry out policies in the interest of the workers. He criticized those who, frustrated with "bourgeois democracy," rejected the coalition tactic and argued that a dictatorship would better serve workers' interests. Republic and democracy, he asserted, "were the basis upon which [the SPD] could lead the victorious struggle for socialism." Capital may still wield great power within the republic, but workers were in a position to wrest it from them. A workers' dictatorship would only be necessary as a defensive measure, if the bourgeoisie used violent methods to block democratic reform.⁴⁸

Following the SPD's strong showing in the elections of May 1928, Breitscheid reluctantly supported its decision to lead a "Great Coalition." Realizing that conflicting interests in the government made progressive reforms unlikely, he believed that the party still was duty bound to use its strength to influence policy in the workers' favor, fend off the damage of the "capitalist state," and continue Stresemann's peaceful foreign policy.⁴⁹

The SPD's participation in the coalition proved far more trying than he had imagined. After a year in office, Breitscheid could report few successes to his comrades. On a whole range of issues such as tariff policy, government subsidies to industry and agriculture, or even the creation of a national holiday celebrating the republic's creation, the SPD had failed to achieve its aims. For the new cochairman of the *Reichstag* delegation, the struggle over the pocket battleship had been especially difficult and Breitscheid had to admonish the party's own ministers to consult with the delegation before making major decisions. Maintaining discipline was clearly a serious practical issue, but Breitscheid insisted that the ministers answer to the membership. "The SPD," he reminded them, "wasn't just a typical party," but was, rather, "a kind of 'life community' (*Lebensgemeinschaft*)."⁵⁰ Such remarks illustrate Breitscheid's deep commitment to the party; he had finally found his political home.

Despite the SPD's difficulties, in 1929 Breitscheid argued for remaining in the coalition. After all, the party had prevented even deeper cuts to social services, protected the strained unemployment insurance program, and supported Stresemann's foreign policy. If the coalition broke up, he feared the onset of a parliamentary crisis that could lead the president to use his extraordinary powers to set up a "hidden dictatorship" in the form of a "cabinet of officials." To forestall this possibility, the SPD should remain in the government and try to make it work. If, however, the party reached a point where it "could carry on no longer," then it had to be ready to defend the republic with extra-parliamentary means. While he explicitly rejected "fighting on the barricades," he gave no concrete indication of what other means he had in mind.⁵¹

Breitscheid and most of his comrades finally reached the point where they "could carry on no longer" in the cabinet crisis of March 1930. Arguing that the bourgeois parties aimed to drive the Socialists out of the coalition, he believed that, even if they made concessions on the unemployment insurance issue, in the long run, they would have to quit. Paradoxically, he also recognized that this step opened the door to Hindenberg's appointment of Brüning, the candidate of the reactionary right, to the Chancellorship. But he had no alternative to offer.⁵²

The deteriorating situation in 1930 transformed Breitscheid's assessment of Germany's political evolution. During the relatively stable middle years of the Weimar republic, he had recognized that German democracy faced serious challenges, yet his speeches and writings reflected a general sense of optimism about the country's future. Democratization and social reform seemed possible and, after Locarno, he believed that the west had taken its first steps toward a "United States of Europe."⁵³ Brüning's appointment in April 1930 and the Nazi electoral breakthrough in September brought this optimism to an end. From then on his efforts focused primarily on keeping the Nazis out of the government.

The problem was how. Breitscheid understood very clearly that Brüning's Chancellorship represented a threat to the republic. He also rightly believed that the Nazis were even more dangerous. From the perspective of the parliamentarian, therefore, there was no alternative to the SPD's decision to tolerate the "lesser evil," Brüning, as a means of keeping the Nazis at bay. At the Leipzig Party Congress in June 1931 Breitscheid delivered an analysis of Nazism and the SPD's response to it that made the party's dilemma painfully clear.⁵⁴

According to Breitscheid, fascism was a movement to create a form of state, which, unlike democracy, "recognized the right of one individual or one privileged minority to formulate and exercise state power." What set it apart from traditional forms of despotism or dictatorship was its use of democratic forms and pseudo-legal means to build mass support drawn from all classes. While fascism's form of rule had much in common with that of communism, the two systems rested on different social bases and had different goals. The Soviet system suppressed democracy in the name of the working class, but fascism did so to maintain the power of capital. The common goals of fascist movements everywhere were to sweep away democracy and suppress the rights of workers.

Basing his analysis on the rise of the Italian and German fascist movements, Breitscheid understood that their success rested on the depth of the post-war economic, social, and political crisis as well as specific historical circumstances in each country. Fascist movements were organized along hierarchical, military lines, but their espousal of a "certain reverence for democracy" facilitated their attraction of a mass following. They formed a "rallying point" (*Sammelstätte*) for all those social forces that felt threatened by the crisis, by the rise of the working class, and by the specter of "Bolshevism." These fears led many to join a movement that equated "Marxism" with democracy, republicanism, and Social Democracy and blamed it for all of Germany's woes. At the same

time, the Nazis' vague advocacy of "socialism" drew many hoping for a classless society.

Breitscheid also recognized that Nazism attracted many voters for non-economic reasons such as its aggressive nationalism, its anti-Semitism, and its willingness to engage in violent action (something particularly attractive to many alienated youth). It was not the logical integrity of the Nazi program that made the party a threat. On the contrary, it was its irrational, chaotic content—promising something for just about everyone—that allowed the NSDAP to broaden its base. Breitscheid had no illusions about the Nazis' opportunism and lust for total power. He also was convinced that Hitler's party was in no danger of crumbling and that, once in government, it would act ruthlessly to consolidate its position.

Although Breitscheid grasped the complexities of fascism's origins more effectively than many socialist, and especially communist, observers at the time, he also cherished some of the prevalent left-wing misconceptions about the movement. For example, he overestimated the political influence of "capital" on the NSDAP, and he believed that the Nazis depended on business for much of their financial support. More problematic, however, was his conclusion regarding the SPD's response to fascism. In his view, the party had to continue the policy of toleration in order to win time to carry out two essential tasks: the removal of the economic sources of fascist support through economic recovery and the intellectual enlightenment of the masses. With disaffection from capitalism widespread, he argued that the SPD now had the chance to show the people that it was socialism that provided the best alternative.

The central difficulty here was that the SPD was in no position to shape economic policy. In addition, even if it had joined the coalition, it had no clear plan to implement. Toleration, then, amounted to winning time in the hope that the business cycle turned around and Nazi support dried up. For the SPD, however, this passive strategy was very damaging as its constituency bore the brunt of Brüning's reactionary policies. Breitscheid knew that there were limits to what the party could bear. But he did not know what else to do.

During the fall of 1931 impatience with toleration intensified on all levels of the SPD. The formation of the reactionary Harzburg Front in October, however, convinced the leadership that the right was consolidating its forces and dissuaded it from risking a break with Brüning. With Nazi street violence on the rise, however, and the government hesitating to suppress it, many frustrated SPD leaders cast about for a way out of the impasse. On November 14, in a speech in Darmstadt, Breitscheid remarked

that if the Communist Party was serious about its recent decision to halt the use of terror, “then one of many obstacles between Social Democracy and the Communist Party would be swept away.” That he would be willing to float this “peace feeler” to the KPD, which was at the height of its anti-Socialist frenzy, reflected his growing sense of alarm as Germany’s crisis deepened.⁵⁵

Although there is some evidence that, by December 1931, Breitscheid was calling privately for a “new course,” in his public statements, he continued to justify toleration.⁵⁶ On December 16, in a speech marking the formation of the Iron Front, he lambasted Brüning’s socially disastrous decrees but defended the SPD’s support for his government. The party, he said, could not be held responsible for Brüning’s decisions. It was the voters who were to blame for electing a parliament in which two of the largest parties were in fundamental opposition to the constitution. “The parliament can only live,” he asserted, “if it has the support of parliamentary parties.” The current *Reichstag* clearly did not, but, fearing the results of new elections, he opposed dissolution. There was nothing left for the SPD to do but continue toleration until conditions changed.⁵⁷

Meanwhile he admonished his comrades to reject fatalism. The SPD had to fight in parliament to ameliorate the worst of Brüning’s policies and to pressure the government to rein in the extremists. Now he conceded, however, that it also had to fight in the streets. Although the SPD did not wish to take this step, its opponents had long since gone down that road and Social Democrats had to defend themselves. “All workers organizations,” he insisted, “had to unite to repel opponents’ attacks and to hold their ground so that, when conditions improve, they can win back what they had lost.”⁵⁸

Despite Breitscheid’s adoption of this radical rhetoric, he saw no real option. He certainly knew his National Socialist enemy well. Familiar with *Mein Kampf*, he was well aware of Nazi goals abroad and at home. He had no doubts about their commitment to destroy the republic. As Detlef Lehnert has noted, however, Breitscheid understood less well Germany’s industrial, agricultural, and military elite. He recognized their reactionary tendencies, but he could not imagine that they would ever acquiesce to Hitler’s accession to power. Indeed, grasping at straws, Breitscheid, like most other SPD leaders, placed his hopes in conservative Hindenburg to defend the constitution and defended the SPD’s support of his reelection in May of 1932. Eight months later Hindenburg repaid the SPD’s trust by appointing Hitler Chancellor.⁵⁹

Breitscheid never really recovered from the shock. Despite all the talk of “readiness,” he refused to abandon parliamentary tactics even as Hitler,

in a series of rapid steps, undermined the constitution and transformed the elections of March 5 into a sham. Just as he had once urged the USPD to respond to a possible Communist seizure of power by adopting what was essentially a more practical legislative (rather than combative) approach, now, in response to Hitler's actual appointment he advocated strict adherence to the parliamentary road. In the first half of February 1933 he worked to avoid antagonizing the regime rather than organizing the party to fight against it. In the latter half of the month he moved to Munich where the SPD leadership had relocated temporarily to remove themselves from the reach of Berlin's Nazi-controlled police. By March 5 he was seriously considering going into exile.⁶⁰

Before taking that step, however, he returned with the executive to Berlin. Still hoping that Hitler might follow Mussolini's example by, at least for a time, allowing the parliament to continue to exist, Breitscheid cherished the illusion that the party organization could somehow survive in Nazi Germany. It took the events of March 23, on which he witnessed the transformation of the *Reichstag* into nothing more than a stage for Nazi politics, to force the realization that the republic was dead. Fearing arrest, he joined Hilferding, Sender, and other prominent Socialists who left the *Reichstag* session just prior to the passage of the Enabling Act. He and Toni then returned to Munich where for the next ten days they avoided the wave of arrests that struck many comrades around the country. On April 1, after much agonizing debate, they managed to cross the border into Swiss exile.⁶¹

Notes

1. Schulze, *Anpassung*, 147.

2. For a description of the meeting see Winker, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 867–75. For the text of Breitscheid's speech see Schulze, *Anpassung*, 138–48.

3. See footnote number 1.

4. For the only full-scale biography of Breitscheid see the dissertation by Peter Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid 1874–1894. Ein biographischer Beitrag zur Parteiengeschichte* (Nuremberg: Druckschnelldienst Nürnberg, 1970). Shorter sketches include Roswitha Berndt, "Rudolf Breitscheid," in Ottfried Dankelmann, ed., *Lebensbilder europäischer Sozialdemokraten der 20. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1995), 109–19; Detlef Lehnert, "Rudolf Breitscheid (1874–1944) Vom Linksbürgerlichen Publizisten zum sozialdemokratischen Parlamentarier," in Peter Lösche, Michael Scholing, Franz Walter, eds., *Vor dem Vergessen bewahren. Lebenswege Weimarer Sozialdemokraten* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1988), 38–56; Heinz Niemann, "Rudolf Breitscheid und der sozialdemokratische Anti-

fascismus,” in Manfred Weißbecker und Jochen Traut, eds., *Nachdenken über Antifaschismus* (Jena: Jenaer Forum für Bildung und Wissenschaft, 1994): 35–46; O. B. Server, “Dr. Rudolf Breitscheid, der SPD-Lord,” in *Matadore der Politik* (Berlin: Universitas, 1932), 53–58; Eckard Trümpler, “Vom bürgerlichen Demokraten zum Mitbegründer der antifascistischen Volksfront, Rudolf Breitscheid,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 18 (1976): 513–25.

5. Christoph Osterwald, “Die politische Entwicklung Rudolf Breitscheids bis zu seinem Eintritt in die Sozialdemokratie im Jahre 1912,” *Jenauer Beiträge zur Parteiengeschichte* 36 (1974): 92–93.

6. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 6–7.

7. Breitscheid was editor of the *Hamburgischer Korrespondent* (1898–1899), the *Koloniale Zeitschrift* (1899–1900), and the *Hannoverscher Courier* (1900–1902). His correspondent’s job was again with the *Korrespondent* (1903–1905). See Osterwald, “Entwicklung,” 94.

8. Osterwald, “Entwicklung,” 96–97; Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 10–11.

9. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 30–31.

10. Server, “Dr. Rudolf Breitscheid,” 54.

11. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 13–14.

12. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 18–24.

13. Osterwald, “Entwicklung,” 105–07.

14. Lehnert, “Rudolf Breitscheid,” 39–40; Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 54–59.

15. Lehnert, “Rudolf Breitscheid,” 40–41; Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 85–89.

16. Quoted in Lehnert, “Rudolf Breitscheid,” 40.

17. Quoted in Berndt, “Rudolf Breitscheid,” 110. On his friendship loyalty to Barth and von Gerlach see Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 58.

18. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 89–92; Osterwald, “Entwicklung,” 110–11.

19. Quoted in Berndt, “Rudolf Breitscheid,” 111.

20. Osterwald, “Entwicklung,” 118–99.

21. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 110–11.

22. Friedrich Stampfer, *Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse* (Cologne: Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, 1957), 128–32; 140–45.

23. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 112–14.

24. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 115–17; Lehnert, “Rudolf Breitscheid, 41; Berndt, “Rudolf Breitscheid,” 111.

25. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 108–09.

26. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 117–18.

27. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 124.

28. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 126.

29. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 128.

30. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 134; Trümpler, “Vom bürgerlichen Demokraten,” 515.

31. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 145–47.

32. *Der Sozialist* 50 (12 Dec. 1918): 1.

33. USPD, *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des außerordentlichen Parteitages vom 2. Bis 6. März 1919 in Berlin* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1975): 143–44.
34. USPD, *Protokoll über . . . Berlin*, 144.
35. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 156.
36. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 131.
37. Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 132–33, 137–38.
38. USPD, *Protokoll der Reichskonferenz vom 1. bis 3. Sept. 1920 zu Berlin* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1975), 123–25.
39. USPD, *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des außerordentlichen Parteitages in Halle vom 12. bis 17. Oktober 1920* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1975), 287–89.
40. USPD, *Protokoll über . . . Halle*, 288.
41. Rudolf Breitscheid, *Reichstagsreden*, edited by Gerhard Zwoch mit einem Vorwort von Annemarie Renger (Bonn: Verlag AZ Studio, 1974), 5.
42. Breitscheid, *Reichstagsreden*, 47.
43. *Protokoll der Sozialdemokratischen Parteitage in Augsburg, Gera, und Nürnberg, 1922* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1975), 162.
44. Breitscheid, *Reichstagsreden*, 116–18.
45. Breitscheid, *Reichstagsreden*, 148.
46. Rudolf Breitscheid, “Locarno,” *Die Gesellschaft. Internationale Revue für Sozialismus und Politik*, 2, (1925): 501–02.
47. Rudolf Breitscheid, “Ist eine republikanische Phalanx möglich?” in Joseph Wirth, ed., *Der Aufbruch. Republikanische Flugschriften* (Berlin: Verlag der Republikanischen Union, 1926), 33–36.
48. *SPD-Parteitag, Kiel, 1927*, (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1974), 206–07.
49. Breitscheid, *Reichstagsreden*, 242, 249–50.
50. *SPD-Parteitag, Magdeburg, 1929* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1974), 155–58, 160; Lehnart, “Rudolf Breitscheid, 46.
51. *SPD-Parteitag, Magdeburg, 1929*, 170.
52. Rudolf Breitscheid, “Worum es ging und geht,” *Die Gesellschaft* 2 (1930): 97–102.
53. Breitscheid, “Locarno,” 509.
54. *SPD-Parteitag Leipzig 1931* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1975), 87–108, 169–77.
55. Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 148–49; Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 297–99.
56. Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 150.
57. Rudolf Breitscheid, *Leipart und Breitscheid über die Notverordnung* (Berlin: Verlag des Allgemeinen Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes, 1931), 22–24.
58. Breitscheid, *Notverordnung*, 25
59. Breitscheid, *Reichstagsreden*, 290–314; Lehnert, “Rudolf Breitscheid,” 48–49.

60. On his activities after Hitler's appointment see Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, 315–19.

61. Breitscheid and his wife moved to Paris in May 1933 where they spent the next seven years. Not elected to the SOPADE, his involvement in exile politics—especially his willingness to cooperate in an effort to create a “National Front” of exile group that included the KPD, led to his increasing estrangement from the SPD leadership. In May 1940 he and Tony left Paris for southern France with Hilferding. They arrived in Marseilles on August 8 and from there vainly attempted to acquire visas to leave France for the USA. In September the French police placed Breitscheid and Hilferding under house arrest in Arles. On February 9, 1941, the French delivered both men to the Gestapo. Hilferding committed suicide in Paris the next day. The Nazis moved Breitscheid first to the Gestapo prison on the Prinz Albrecht Straße in Berlin. After ten months there they moved him to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. In September 1943 he was transferred to the camp in Buchenwald. In both camps he was placed among prominent prisoners and was able to see his wife. He died in an allied air attack on 24 August 1944. On his life from 1933–1944 see Pistorius, *Rudolf Breitscheid*, part 4; William Smaldone, *Rudolf Hilferding. The Tragedy of a German Social Democrat*, 205–07; Niemann, “Antifaschismus,” 41–46; Trumpler, “Vom bürgerlichen Demokratien,” 519–21.

**Rudolf Hilferding (1877–1941):
Against Right and Left**

4



Rudolf Hilferding (1877–1941) Courtesy of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

“A political struggle has never been fought out to the end in Germany and that is this nation’s tragedy.”

—RUDOLF HILFERDING, 1932¹

AS GERMANY’S DEPRESSION DEEPENED and the country gradually slipped into political paralysis, few republican leaders felt the pressure to find a way out of the crisis more acutely than Rudolf Hilferding. The author of a great work of Marxist political economy, *Finance Capital* (1910), and editor of two of Social Democracy’s leading newspapers, for more than two decades Hilferding had been among German socialism’s most important intellectual and political leaders. Under Weimar he had risen into the SPD’s executive committee and become the editor of *Die Gesellschaft* (*Society*), its most important theoretical journal. When the party entered the *Reich* government during the inflationary crisis of 1923, and again in 1928, it turned to Hilferding to take over the key post of finance minister. Following the Müller government’s dissolution, with the Weimar system verging on collapse, many Social Democrats looked to Hilferding to provide a roadmap out of the crisis.²

On October 6, 1931, speaking to a congress of the powerful union of white-collar employees (*AfA-Bund*), Hilferding knew that the eyes of workers far beyond his immediate audience were upon him. His comments, however, made clear that he had no ready-made solutions to offer them. Beginning his presentation with an historical analysis of Germany’s predicament, he constructed a plausible interpretation of the causes of the crisis, but his recommendations for overcoming it were vague and politically difficult to implement. For Hilferding, the origins of the Great Depression were not located in the laws of modern capitalist development. On the contrary, he believed that since the latter part of the nineteenth century capitalism had been developing in ways that reduced the frequency and severity of crises. The increasing concentration and centralization of capital in the form of the modern corporation, the development of cartels and trusts, the increasing importance of bank capital in the financing of modern industry (finance capital), and the growing importance of the state’s influence in the economy, he argued, were transforming capitalism from a competitive and anarchically organized system into one in which planning replaced competition and anarchy gave way to organization (organized capitalism).³

The First World War, Hilferding believed, had been a result of finance capitalism’s drive to expand and to secure capital exports, and it had accel-

erated the tendencies toward centralization, organization, and state intervention. But the war had also severely disrupted the world capitalist economy. It had radically dislocated international trade patterns, sharply altered the value of currencies, brought about major shifts in the productivity and the relative strength of different industrial sectors within and among developed countries, and transformed agriculture both in terms of scale and technique. It was the impact of these war-related changes, Hilferding asserted, that had disrupted the development of organized capitalism. In essence the depression represented the “liquidation” of the war’s effects.⁴

To overcome the crisis, Hilferding proposed policies that would not radically transform the economy but, rather, aimed to restore organized capitalism’s health, albeit under increased state supervision. Believing that no country, especially Germany, could recover alone, he demanded the reform of international banking policy that would allow the American, English, and French governments to jointly mobilize their gold reserves as a means of providing a new and stable source of credit. He called for a foreign policy that would restore international security and trust and that rejected economic protectionism. Viewing the disruption of the credit system as one of the precipitant causes of the crisis, Hilferding also demanded that the state undertake the regulation of the banking sector so that its resources could be rationally used for the good of the whole community. He did not think that this action would substantially reduce the hold of private interests over the economy, but he saw it as a first step in the reining in of capitalist power that would be enhanced with the creation of a “cartel ministry” to regulate the operations of Germany’s large, monopolistic enterprises.⁵

Thus, for Hilferding, the “decisive” challenge to German Social Democracy in 1931 was not the immediate implementation of a radical socialist policy that would replace a moribund capitalist order. It was, rather, “to limit the power of private capital, while simultaneously increasing that of the state, which was under the influence of the democratically-led masses and worked in the public interest.” He did not believe that the crisis could be overcome through the sudden abolition of private ownership of the means of production or through radical changes in the political institutions of the republic. Instead, he held that Social Democracy had to reinvigorate the organized capitalist economy within the framework of the established parliamentary order. The latter could then be used to steer German society gradually toward socialism.

Hilferding concluded his address by exhorting the trade unionists to focus not only on the struggle for control over state power, but also on the

fight for democracy, which, in his view, was at the center of the future socialist order. State power was important for the realization of the movement's goals, but holding power within a democratic system was even more important. The aim of the labor movement, he asserted, was not to bring about an exaggerated equality of condition or authority (*Gleichmacherei*). It was to unify workers in the struggle to eliminate property ownership and privileged access to education as obstacles to opportunity and to provide an environment in which all could pursue their personal development to the fullest extent possible (without excluding notions of merit and competition). Echoing Marx, he reminded the workers that the capitalist economy had created a social force that was always growing stronger, more numerous, better organized, and more ready to fight: the working masses. Proud and confident, it was they who were charged with building the new world. His audience responded with stormy applause.

This speech reveals that Hilferding knew how to appeal to his listeners and to present a disastrous situation in relatively positive terms. He had described a scenario in which the proletariat, despite the difficult situation, would emerge victorious because that was its historical role. It is not surprising, then, that the workers would be fired with enthusiasm when presented with this inspiring vision. Such rhetoric, however, no matter how sincere, did little to solve the very real crisis in which they were enmeshed. On that score, Hilferding's proposals for reform had little to offer. His call for an international credit policy and a more accommodating foreign policy left the major decisions largely in the hands of other governments and the proposals for bank and cartel regulation were, at best, vague. Such suggestions provided little in the way of a substantive program that the SPD could put forward in response to the crisis, and they also were of limited use in Social Democracy's ongoing struggle to win broader support.

Hilferding's remarks also illustrate the theoretical perspective and political principles that he had developed over a lifetime of activism within Social Democracy and these reflect the fundamental dilemma faced by the movement in the republic's later years. Like the majority of his party comrades, Hilferding was convinced that the role of Social Democracy was to liberate the working class and all those oppressed under capitalism and, indeed, he believed that the democratic republic was the framework within which that emancipation could occur. At the same time, however, neither he nor his movement was prepared to respond effectively to an economic crisis of unprecedented scope or to a political challenge from mass movements that were just as committed to destroying the republic as Social Democracy was to preserving it. Despite his inspiring rhetoric about the

historical destiny of the working class, Hilferding knew that the republic was seriously threatened as the Nazis and Communists took advantage of the economic disaster and he knew that only political action, not history, could save it. However, for reasons deeply rooted in his own experience in the movement, he was unable to construct a policy that could effectively meet that challenge.

Born in Vienna in 1877, Rudolf was the son of Emil and Anna Hilferding, who were Polish-Jewish immigrants from Galicia. The head cashier with an insurance firm, Emil raised Rudolf and his younger sister, Maria, in the atmosphere of the “enlightened liberal Jewish middle class,” whose sons and daughters often displayed a lively interest in the arts and sciences as well as in the socialist movement.⁶ Rudolf attended an academic high school (*Staatsgymnasium*) from which he graduated in 1894 with average grades. He then moved on to the University of Vienna, where he studied medicine. His career path was a common one at that time among Jewish students, who were inclined to select intellectual professions, especially in medicine and law.⁷

It was during his years as a student that Hilferding developed the basic ideological and political perspectives that later guided his long public career. While still in high school, he became interested in the growing workers’ movement and in 1893, at the age of sixteen, joined the Socialist Student League, which consisted of a small group of Viennese students who met once a week in the café “Heiliger Leopold.” There they discussed such classic Marxist works as *Capital*, but also new books by the Marxist theorist Karl Kautsky and articles from his leading journal, *Die Neue Zeit*. Although the group had no official connections with the Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ), it participated in SPÖ-led street demonstrations calling for a “red republic,” and many of its members, such as Karl Renner, Max Adler, Otto Bauer, and Hilferding, had great respect for the party’s leader Victor Adler. After joining the League these men became close friends and intellectual collaborators and all four later rose to prominent positions in either Austrian or German Social Democracy.⁸

What factors were decisive in drawing Hilferding to socialism? In the semi-autocratic world of the Dual Monarchy, in which socialists were regarded as subversives, why did he not opt for a “safer” political outlook that would smooth his way into the Viennese middle class? Lack of documentation makes it difficult to answer such questions, but it is likely that his Jewish background strongly influenced his choice. Although there is no evidence that his family was religious, turn of the century Austria-Hungary was a society rife with an official and unofficial anti-Semitism that no person

of Jewish ancestry could ignore. For decades many Jews had looked to liberalism, with its call for civic equality, as a vehicle for emancipation but, by the late nineteenth century, liberalism was in retreat and anti-Semitic movements, such as Christian socialism and Pan-Germanism, were on the rise. No longer convinced that assimilation under liberal auspices was possible, some Jews cast about for other solutions to their dilemma such as national autonomy within the Diaspora, the foundation of an independent Jewish state (Zionism), or socialism, a movement which aimed “to liberate the entire people from the chains of economic dependency, to empower them politically, and to lift them out of their intellectual degeneration notwithstanding differences of nationality, races or gender.”⁹ Led by the SPÖ, the socialists demanded workers’ power based on the transformation of the means of production into “the communal property of the whole people” along with a range of other reforms including freedom of association, universal suffrage, free public education, and the separation of church and state. Like many other “non-Jewish Jews” of his generation, Hilferding adopted this party of universal emancipation as his political home. He never left it.¹⁰

While earning his medical degree, Hilferding also studied political economy and, along with Bauer, Adler, and other social democratic students, attended classes taught by Carl Grünberg, one of Europe’s few Marxist professors, Ernst Mach, a leading neo-positivist philosopher, and Eugen Böhm-Bawerk, the foremost anti-Marxist economist of the marginal utility school.¹¹ All three men strongly influenced Hilferding. Whereas Mach’s materialist perspective reinforced his Marxist inclinations and Böhm-Bawerk challenged them, it was Grünberg’s conception of Marxism as a social science that most decisively shaped his thinking. As Tom Bottomore has noted, Grünberg held that Marxism “should be developed in a rigorous and systematic way through historical and sociological investigations,” and he argued that socialist intellectuals should not limit themselves to purely academic pursuits, but should work to develop the class-consciousness of the workers.¹² Such notions—combining science and politics—fired the imagination of the young Hilferding. Although he received his medical degree in 1901, his real interest became political economy. After setting up a practice as a pediatrician, he devoted most of his spare time to the study of economics.¹³

He soon made his mark. By 1903 he was publishing in leading socialist theoretical and political journals on controversial topics such as the nature of value, the role of protective tariffs, and the utility of the general strike.¹⁴ In 1904, together with Renner, Bauer, and Max Adler, Hilferding

founded the journal *Marx-Studien*, which dealt with theoretical questions relating to law (Renner's specialty), the nationality question (Bauer's), sociology (Adler's), and political economy (Hilferding's). This journal, which reflected Carl Grünberg's influence on his students, became the theoretical organ of what historians now call the Austro-Marxist school.¹⁵

Hilferding's activities in the Socialist Student League (he eventually became its president) and his early publications quickly brought him to the attention of SPÖ leaders, such as Victor Adler, and made him familiar to a wider social-democratic audience. The most important event of his early career, however, was the development of his personal and intellectual relationship with Karl Kautsky, Social Democracy's leading theoretician between the death of Engels in 1895 and the outbreak of the First World War. In April 1902 he sent Kautsky his first major contribution in the field of political economy; a critique of Böhm-Bawerk's *Karl Marx and the Close of his System*, in which the author criticized Marx's analysis of the commodity and his contention that the principle of value is to be found in labor.¹⁶ Hilferding saw his challenge to this well-known scholar (and his former teacher!) as a test of his own theoretical and polemical abilities and asked Kautsky to evaluate the usefulness of his work as a contribution to Marxist theory.¹⁷

Kautsky was impressed. The young Austrian's essay was too long for the *Neue Zeit* (it appeared in the 1904 edition of *Marx-Studien*), but its quality was such that Kautsky invited him to become a regular contributor to the journal. Hilferding readily accepted and over the next several years published many articles and book reviews focusing particular attention on the most recent developments in the capitalist economy. It was not long before he had acquired a reputation as an important socialist thinker. In 1906, at Kautsky's suggestion, the SPD leadership appointed Hilferding to teach political economy and economic history at its activist school in Berlin. This appointment, combined with his earnings from writing in the party press, allowed him to give up his medical practice and to move to Germany with his wife, Margarethe. There he could devote himself full time to economics.

Although a law requiring all teachers to be German citizens soon forced Hilferding to resign from his post, he immediately accepted a job as foreign editor of the SPD's most important daily paper, *Vorwärts*. This was a strategic position. It allowed Hilferding to play a key role in shaping the discourse of the party press and gave him access to the SPD's top leaders in the Party Council and Executive Committee. It also provided him with enough time to continue his collaboration with the *Neue Zeit* and to complete his most important work of political economy, *Finance Capital*, which appeared in 1910.

Two elements of Hilferding's work during the pre-1914 period are especially important to our understanding of his outlook toward the end of the Weimar Republic. The first centers on his conception of Social Democracy's political tasks under capitalism; the second, and closely related, theme concerns his view of how the laws of capitalist development worked. We will begin our analysis with the former.

In the period in which Hilferding became politically active both the Austro-Hungarian and German empires were semi-autocratic states in which the government's executive branch—headed by the person of the Emperor—could wield effective power independently of the legislature. At the same time, however, both governmental systems used parliamentary institutions (skewed to favor the propertied elites) to legitimize themselves by providing citizens with a sense of popular representation in the passage of legislation. By the last years of the nineteenth century, although a variety of repressive controls remained in place, elections in each country were vibrant affairs, and different groups, including the working class, could set up their own political organizations in the struggle to secure their interests. It was within these respective contexts that the SPÖ and the SPD were founded and rapidly grew into the most powerful single political parties in each country.

The fact that parliamentary or even semi-autocratic states created space for legal political activity in which a wide range of reforms seemed to at least be possible created sharp tensions between the “reformist” and “radical” wings of the European socialist movement. Led by intellectuals such as Eduard Bernstein, “revisionists” argued that historical economic and political developments had not unfolded in accordance with Marx's expectations. Society, they suggested, was not dividing into two sharply opposed camps, bourgeois and proletarian, and the working class had not grown poorer. On the contrary, the middle class was doing quite well, workers' living standards were rising, and economic crises were growing less, not more, intense. In response to these developments, Bernstein and his supporters called on Social Democracy to discard its revolutionary ideology and to commit itself to a gradual transition to socialism through parliamentary means, including alliances with moderate bourgeois parties. Other socialists, however, such as Rosa Luxemburg, challenged the revisionists' theoretical claims, rejected their emphasis on reforms, and urged the movement to pursue strategies that would prepare the proletariat for revolutionary action.¹⁸

It was in response to this controversy that Hilferding published much of his early work. Hoping to preserve unity, he joined with Kautsky and other

members of Social Democracy's so-called "Marxist Center" faction in an effort to refute both revisionist and radical challenges to the SPD's Erfurt Program of 1891. For the Center, the party's essential tasks were to defend working-class interests in bourgeois society and to unify the workers in the struggle for political power. The centrists rejected the challenge of revisionism to revolutionary Marxist theory, yet they defended the party's reform-oriented electoral tactics against the demands of the radical left. Centrism provided a compromise position that prevented the movement from splitting and at the same time allowed the party leadership to continue pursuing reformist strategies.¹⁹

Hilferding's intervention in the debate over whether the workers' movement should consider the use of the general strike as a political weapon best illustrates his centrist inclinations and his attitude toward the state in the pre-war years. To many social democratic trade union and party leaders, recent experiences in Holland and elsewhere had shown that the use of the mass strike to win reforms, such as expanded suffrage, was not an effective weapon. On the contrary, it invited government repression that threatened to roll back their hard-won social and economic gains and even the very existence of their organizations. In 1905 the Congress of German Trade Unions declared the political mass strike to be "indiscussible," but revolutionary events in Russia and struggles against class-based voting systems in Germany and Austria, kept the issue alive.²⁰

In a pair of articles published in 1903 and 1905, Hilferding sought to incorporate the general strike into Social Democracy's parliamentary strategy.²¹ He examined the context of the SPD's recent electoral successes by focusing on the historical development of parliamentary institutions as a means for the bourgeoisie to control the state. For him, capitalist development and the rise of the bourgeoisie as a class necessitated the formation of a representative political system. This system ensured that disputes between conflicting elements of the bourgeoisie remained controlled; it also strengthened bourgeois domination over the rest of society.

The establishment of a proletarian political party with access to parliamentary representation threatened the power of the bourgeois state. Electoral politics, Hilferding suggested, offered workers a peaceful alternative to violent revolution because the winning of a socialist majority in parliament would transform that institution into "an instrument of proletarian dictatorship."²² It was essential, then, to preserve universal suffrage because it ensured a steady increase in working-class power.

Like Engels in his last years, Hilferding believed that the working class could no longer fight on the barricades against modern military forces.

Instead, workers had to use their economic power as producers to defend gains achieved through parliamentary and trade union struggles. He thought it likely that the dominant classes would not permit the workers to continue their electoral progress indefinitely; capital eventually would restrict universal suffrage. It was only at this point that the working class, as a defensive measure, should mobilize its economic strength in a general strike. Thus, the general strike became “the regulative idea of Social Democratic tactics.” It was not to be used as a regular tactic to win reforms or an adventurist means of seizing power but, rather, as a last resort to defend the franchise as a means for the socialist movement’s further development.²³

Although Hilferding’s 1905 article went a step further by postulating that, in economically-advanced countries like Germany, the mass strike could also represent the final battle in the struggle for socialism itself, his premise that the tactic remained a fundamentally defensive one did not change.²⁴ Published just prior to the SPD’s Jena Congress, his view proved acceptable to a majority of the party leaders because it used theoretical language emphasizing class struggle, but also adopted a tactical position that left their parliamentary methods unchallenged. Hilferding conceded the possibility of a violent, even revolutionary, struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, but it would be a cataclysm initiated by the latter. This argument implicitly removed the initiative from the working class and postponed any decisive revolutionary confrontation until the distant future. In the meantime the proletariat, represented by Social Democracy, could continue along the electoral road.

Hilferding’s analysis of the general strike makes clear that, in the pre-1914 period, he hewed closely to Marx’s view of the state as an historical institution that served as an instrument of class rule. At the same time, however, he downplayed the need for the violent, revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois state, emphasized by many of his radical Marxist contemporaries. His argument implied, instead, that the parliamentary road to socialism, while by no means inevitable, was a distinct possibility.

In *Finance Capital*, Hilferding undertook a study of the “latest phase of capitalist development” and attempted to ground Social Democratic tactics in an analysis of the contemporary economic and political situation. In his view, modern capitalism’s most characteristic features were “those processes of concentration which, on the one hand, ‘eliminate free competition’ through the formation of cartels and trusts, and on the other, bring bank and industrial capital into an ever more intimate relationship. Through this relationship . . . capital assumes the form of finance capital, its supreme and most abstract . . . expression.” Without a knowledge of the laws and function-

ing of finance capital, Hilferding believed, “no understanding of present day economic tendencies, and hence no understanding of scientific economics or politics,” was possible.²⁵ He aimed to apply the abstract model of Marx’s *Capital* to the study of those laws.

In a nutshell, *Finance Capital* described the process by which credit institutions merged with and gained control over large-scale industry.²⁶ The merger of bank and industrial capital, Hilferding argued, placed control of society’s productive forces in the hands of a continually smaller number of decision makers. This new elite, in alliance with the large landowning classes, came to occupy the highest and most influential offices of the state, the army, and the bureaucracy.²⁷

But the expansion of finance capital was not limited to the domestic sphere. With the formation of industrial monopolies, internal competition decreased, markets became saturated, and profitability declined. Capitalists were forced to look abroad for new markets and sources of raw materials in order to maintain and increase production and the rate of profit.²⁸

Under these circumstances the role of the capitalist-controlled state became increasingly important as many industrial nations attempted to keep out foreign competition through the erection of high tariff barriers. This policy, Hilferding asserted, created a scramble among the capitalist powers to secure overseas markets and resources among the less developed nations of the world.²⁹ Worldwide capitalist competition fueled military rivalry and threatened to unleash an international conflagration that would, in turn, lead to open conflict between the capitalist and working classes, (i.e., to revolution). He wrote:

Finance capital, in its maturity, is the highest stage of the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of the capitalist oligarchy; it is the climax of the dictatorship of the magnates of capital. At the same time, it makes the dictatorship of the capitalist interests of the other countries and the internal domination of capital increasingly irreconcilable with the interests of the mass of the people, exploited by finance capital but also summoned into battle against it. In the violent clash of the hostile interests, the dictatorship of the magnates of capital will finally be transformed into the dictatorship of the proletariat.³⁰

Hilferding did not argue that war was inevitable, but, unlike Bernstein, he held that the economic tendencies of finance capital made it very probable. The workers’ task was to remain the implacable foe of imperialism and militarism. “For only then,” he claimed, “will the proletariat be the beneficiary of the collapse to which [finance capital] must lead, a collapse

which will be political and social, not economic; for the idea of a purely economic collapse makes no sense.”³¹ But Hilferding said nothing about the role of the party in precipitating this upheaval. While focusing on finance capital as the determining factor in a vaguely defined political and social “collapse,” Hilferding did not explain by what means the proletariat or its political party should bring about finance capital’s overthrow.

This silence on the party’s role in the revolution stems from the nature of the book itself, which was more than an analysis of modern capitalism; it was also a theoretical justification of Social Democracy’s reformist strategy and an attempt to strengthen party unity. By analyzing capitalist development from a Marxist perspective and by simultaneously ascribing to the proletariat a passive role in the revolutionary process, *Finance Capital* was at once an attack on the theoretical premises of revisionism and an attempt to reconcile party radicals to parliamentarianism.³² Acceptance of Hilferding’s argument meant that Social Democracy could continue on its reform-oriented path, while looking toward a revolution in which the proletariat would be the passive “beneficiary” of an upheaval brought about by capital.

As a Marxist, Hilferding believed that “the sole aim of any inquiry—even into matters of policy—is the discovery of causal relationships.” To know the laws of commodity producing society, he thought,

was to be able, at the same time, to disclose the causal factors which determine the willed decisions of the various classes of this society. According to the Marxist conception, the explanation of how such class decisions are determined is the task of a scientific, which [sic] is to say a causal, analysis of policy. The practice of Marxism, as well as its theory, is free from value judgments.³³

This passage illustrates well Hilferding’s conception of Marxism, one that was decisive in shaping his actions at the end of the Weimar Republic. For him, Marxism was a means of understanding historical development and the underlying factors that determine the actions of social classes in that process. Socialism would be the outcome of economic changes that could be explained by Marxist economics. At the same time, socialists could make use of Marxism as a tool in their political struggle. Their ability to take advantage of this instrument would be of much importance in determining the speed with which they achieved victory.

The coming of the First World War ultimately destroyed the centrist project and illustrated the limits of Hilferding’s theoretical work for uniting the party’s reformist and radical wings. It forced the party leaders to

take sides as the SPD divided on the issue of whether or not it should support the government's war effort. Hilferding opposed the war from the outset. Although he recognized Germany's right to defend itself in principle, he viewed the war's outbreak as the result of German and Austrian expansionism. Unlike many comrades, he was not willing to place the SPD at the disposal of German imperialism in exchange for government promises of democratic reform.³⁴

This opposition to the war drove Hilferding to break with the majority in the party leadership, which saw wartime cooperation with the state as a means for the SPD to gain political equality in Germany. Along with the rest of the editorial staff of *Vorwärts*, he protested against the executive's wartime policy and argued that the SPD should remain in the opposition and work to prepare the masses for future political struggles.³⁵ He remained on the embattled board until the Austrian army drafted him and sent him to the Italian front in 1915. There he served as a doctor in a number of military hospitals until November 1918. Had he not been drafted, he probably would have been removed from his editorial post in 1916, when the executive purged the *Vorwärts* editors because of their criticism of the party's pro-war strategy.³⁶

During his years at the front, Hilferding stayed abreast of German politics and pondered their relation to economic developments. In October of 1915 he published an article analyzing the political situation in the SPD and revising the economic theses worked out in *Finance Capital*.³⁷ With the onset of the imperialist war, he argued, the "opportunists" within the SPD had won a total victory and the entire workers' movement now stood under the dictatorship of its right wing. The opportunists had transformed a revolutionary party into a reformist one with the task of adapting the workers' movement to capitalist society. The ideological victory of opportunism represented a danger for the future of the entire workers' movement because it supported certain tendencies of capitalist development that could prevent the future realization of socialism.

Hilferding held that Marx's analysis of the "objective tendencies of capitalist development" was essentially correct, but that the development of a revolutionary working-class consciousness had not occurred as he had expected. Whereas Marx thought that the class struggle would enhance the worker's revolutionary consciousness, it actually had had the opposite effect. The more victories the workers won in the class struggle, the more bearable life under capitalism became. The idea of radical revolution was, therefore, less appealing.

As he had done in *Finance Capital*, Hilferding again sought the explanation for these developments in the economy. The most recent phase of

capitalist development, he now believed, had moderated the workers' movement. The rise of finance capital resulted in shorter periods of economic crisis, reduced chronic unemployment, and more importantly, tended to transform the anarchy of capitalist production into an "organized capitalist" economic order that was further supported by the growth of state power. Instead of socialism being victorious, it was now possible for an organized, nondemocratic economy to develop headed by monopoly capital (organized into cartels and trusts) and the state. The continuation of the war, which increased state involvement in the economy, only strengthened the development of "organized capitalism."

To Hilferding it was now a choice between organized capitalism and democratic socialism. To follow the path of the opportunists could only lead to the former. It was the task of the Marxists in the party to continue the struggle against the accommodationist policies of the right wing and to instruct the masses concerning their long-term interests. These interests, Hilferding wrote, would become clearer to the workers as the effects of the imperialist war intensified. He was hopeful that they would then decide against opportunism and in favor of democratic socialism.

Hilferding derived his theory of "organized capitalism" from his earlier work in *Finance Capital* and he continued to develop it further for the next several years. It was this theoretical construct that shaped his conception of Social Democracy's tasks for the remainder of the war and throughout the Weimar period. Of particular importance was his new assertion that the coming of socialism was by no means assured. On the contrary, instead of the socialist transformation predicted in *Finance Capital*, it now seemed possible that a system of "organized capitalism" could establish itself. Finance capital had unleashed the world war, the state was directing economic activity on an unprecedented scale; and most disturbingly, the workers had followed the opportunists in the party, accepted the war, and given up the struggle for democracy and state power. Unless they resumed this struggle, Hilferding believed, proletarian democracy and socialism could not be achieved.

Like his analysis of finance capital, Hilferding's examination of organized capitalism served a dual purpose. On the one hand, it interpreted recent changes in the capitalist economy; on the other, it analyzed the victory of "opportunist ideology" within the SPD leadership. But Hilferding did not analyze the social roots of opportunism. Instead, he focused his analysis on the impact of capitalism's "objective tendencies" on the development of workers' consciousness. Mechanistically tying working-class conservatism to the evolution of organized capitalism, his analysis failed to

clarify how the reformists were able to take control of the party apparatus. While criticizing its policies, Hilferding did not examine the long-term development of the party's reformist wing or the impact of the SPD's centrist-supported, reform-oriented prewar strategy on working-class consciousness. He implicitly denied the shortcomings of the Center's prewar theoretical and practical program and ascribed the victory of opportunism to conditions created by capitalist development.

The coming of the war had transformed Hilferding into an opponent of his own party; the collapse of the monarchy transformed him into a revolutionary. Following the SPD leadership's expulsion of the opposition in January 1917, he joined the USPD. Within a week of the Kaiser's fall he was back in Berlin as chief editor of the new party's flagship paper, *Die Freiheit* (*Freedom*). Over the course of the next three years he played an important role as a journalist, as a member of the USPD's executive committee, and as a member of the government's Socialization Commission, in the struggle to create a new order in Germany.

For Hilferding, the hour of socialism in Germany had arrived. Unlike Russia, with its underdeveloped industries and small urban working class, Germany's advanced industrial system and large, class-conscious proletariat had laid the foundations for socialism. In Russia, the working-class minority had to use the soviets to assert its hegemony by force; in Germany the transition could be peaceful and democratic. Hilferding favored the creation of a mixed economy with a private sector dominated by small-scale and non-cartelized businesses and a public sector in which large-scale industries, such as mining, would be socialized (with compensation) and subject to state-led planning. Consistent with his prewar views, he saw the creation of a parliamentary republic as essential for the establishment of democracy, but he also supported an important complementary role for workers' councils, which had been decisive in bringing down the monarchy and should now help institutionalize proletarian power in the economic sphere.³⁸ Hilferding sharply criticized the SPD for dragging its feet in carrying out political and economic reforms necessary for the establishment of a new democratic socialist system, but he was also very critical of those who desired a soviet-type government for Germany. Condemning the use of revolutionary terror in Russia and resisting Bolshevik and Comintern interference in USPD affairs, Hilferding again tried to steer a middle course among conflicting factions of the German left.³⁹

It was a course that proved untenable. While the new republic represented a democratic advance over the imperial order and the working class had won substantial gains such as the eight-hour day, collective bargaining,

and the constitutional right to form factory councils and receive welfare benefits, Germany's socialist forces ultimately were unable to transform the country socially and economically. Divisions among the socialist parties, their failure to win a majority in the National Assembly, recurrent civil war, and the resurgence of the radical right not only blocked the implementation of radical reforms but also left the republic vulnerable to the forces of counterrevolution. By 1921, it was clear to Hilferding that the revolutionary wave had ebbed and that defense of the republic had to be the labor movement's highest priority.

Success, however, would require socialist unity. Hilferding had opposed the USPD's entrance into the Bolshevik-dominated Communist International in 1920. After two-thirds of the party's members defected to the KPD in October of that year he had remained in the USPD. He soon concluded, however, that in the face of Germany's deepening economic crisis and the rise of the radical right, its continued separation from the SPD was counterproductive. In 1921 he called for the reunification of the two parties, which occurred one year later in the wake of Walther Rathenau's assassination.

The events of the immediate postwar years dashed many of Hilferding's hopes for radical change and forced him to take a more sober view of what the socialist movement could achieve given Germany's political and economic realities. Along with his recommitment to the SPD, he now fully supported the parliamentary republic as a means for the gradual achievement of socialism through reform. As he wrote in a leading liberal daily:

The great goals remain the same, but . . . it is necessary [for the party] to show the practical way and place the next step for the carrying out of immediate tasks in the foreground. [The party] must conquer a majority or form alliances in order to carry out the demands [it] made while in the opposition. It must reckon with the call to carry out its program and must, therefore, hold its demands within the limits of the possible.

Extra-parliamentary tactics, Hilferding added, were of only limited use in a developed country.⁴⁰

Thus, for all practical purposes, Hilferding had now openly adopted Bernstein's political program of the prewar era. Between 1922 and 1933, as the SPD pursued its reformist agenda, he emerged as the party's most outstanding theoretician and finance expert. During those years he was elected to the SPD's Executive Committee, was a key member of the party's *Reichstag* delegation, and served as Finance Minister in the coalition governments of Stresemann (1923) and Müller (1928–1930). In 1924 the

Executive appointed him editor of the party's new theoretical journal *Die Gesellschaft*. As the SPD's "chief ideologue" and as a practical politician and economist, it was Hilferding's task to work out the theoretical justifications for the party's reformist strategy. He did so within the framework of his theory of organized capitalism.

According to Hilferding, the economic and political processes that he had identified and analyzed before and during the World War were continuing at an accelerated pace.⁴¹ The expansion and further consolidation of capital, the formation of cartels and trusts, and the increasing influence of finance capital were bringing the era of competitive capitalism to an end. In place of the anarchic system of capitalist competition a new system characterized by economic regulation and planned production was developing. If left undisturbed, this process would result in a hierarchical social order, in which the economy was indeed "organized," but in which private ownership of the means of production would be retained.

These developments had important ramifications for workers, Hilferding thought, because the increased use of planning would accelerate their integration into capitalist society. Planning would reduce the incidence and severity of economic crises and minimize the threat of widespread unemployment. Increasingly specialized workers and a large class of "employees" (*Angestellte*) would develop as a result of the intensified mechanization of the work process. The introduction of comprehensive insurance programs, satisfactory wages, and a reduction of work time would tend to make the workers more conservative.

For Hilferding, the "antagonistic foundation" of this system, i.e., its class structure, necessitated struggle rather than complacency. In such a consciously organized, but undemocratic, system the contradiction between the increasingly socialized character of production and the private control and appropriation of the social product was clear. The elimination of this contradiction required the transformation of the hierarchically organized economy into a democratically organized one.

The accomplishment of that goal depended, firstly, on the degree to which the working class could use the institutions of the democratic republic to carry out extensive reforms to secure its interests in all spheres (e.g., social security, educational opportunity, and access to cultural goods) and, secondly, on the ability of the trade unions to achieve "economic democracy" by extending workers' decision-making power within individual enterprises as well as over the economy as a whole. The expansion of workers' democratic control over the state and the growth of union influence in the economy would facilitate the gradual shift in the locus of

power from capital to labor. Socialism, then, would be achieved gradually as a result of tenacious struggle within the framework of the republic.

Whereas in *Finance Capital* Hilferding had argued that international capitalist rivalry would probably unleash “revolutionary storms” that could bring down the system, in the postwar era he suggested that the nature of imperialism had changed. With the Anglo-Saxon world victorious in the World War, the center of European politics had shifted westward and the west had emerged as intellectually and economically dominant. Imperialist expansion had brought colonialism in its train, but it had also created the social forces that were fighting for national liberation. Partly to secure their empires, but also because no power was willing to unleash another great war, Hilferding naively suggested that the industrial countries were no longer interested in acquiring markets and raw materials through conquest. Instead, they would pursue a policy of “realistic pacifism” in which they would jointly seek to secure and utilize the world market.⁴²

Thus, Hilferding continued to stress the centrality of class struggle but, grounded in the economic theory of “organized capitalism,” he channeled it completely into the institutions of the parliamentary order. Hilferding had once viewed the state as an instrument of class rule, but now he treated it as a neutral institution to be wielded by whatever groups dominated the electoral competition. Effectively jettisoning the possibility of extra-parliamentary action (e.g., the mass strike), violent revolution, and hopes for rapid social transformation, this conception envisioned a gradual, orderly, evolutionary advance to socialism.

The theory of organized capitalism won wide acceptance during the Weimar years in part because many of the trends of capitalist development that Hilferding described had been identified by a number of other economists, socialist and nonsocialist, who concurred that they were “experiencing modern capitalism’s transformation into a late capitalist or early socialist economy.”⁴³ Used to underpin the party’s new *Heidelberg Program* of 1925, the theory also received the general support of the majority in the SPD leadership because it advocated the continuation of its parliamentary strategy. It allowed the SPD to hold up a vision of a future socialist society to the working class without having to face the prospect of economic crisis or violent revolution.

As economic and political events soon demonstrated, however, although the theory contained important insights on the nature of capitalist development, it also contained serious analytical flaws. Hilferding overvalued corporate planning as a means of minimizing the effects of capitalist economic crises and he exaggerated the political strengths of the working

class within the framework of parliamentary democracy. He tended to ignore the close relationship between economic strength and political power in parliamentary politics, and he overlooked the state itself as an institution with social and political interests that often overlapped with those of the propertied and social elites. These weaknesses in his theoretical outlook undercut his ability to respond to the crisis of the late republic in practical terms.

In virtually all of his major writings and speeches after 1923 Hilferding reiterated his unequivocal support for the parliamentary republic and for economic democracy.⁴⁴ Arguing in the tradition of Carl Grünberg, he urged the party to educate the workers about their tasks in the struggle for change. It had to convince them that money, trade, tax, labor, and insurance policies were political in nature and that progressive reform depended upon the growth of workers' power. "We must hammer it into the head of each worker," he insisted, "that the weekly wage is a political wage, that it depends . . . on the strength of the parliamentary representation of the working class."⁴⁵

Despite some resistance primarily from the party left wing, Hilferding's ideas increasingly influenced party and trade union policy. In 1923 and 1928, for example, he successfully argued in favor of the SPD's participation in governments with the moderate bourgeois parties in order to protect or advance workers' interests.⁴⁶ In 1928 the Hamburg Congress of German Trade Unions adopted the concept of economic democracy into its official program.⁴⁷

Hilferding's two stints as Finance Minister well illustrate his support for a stable republic as a framework for the achievement of socialist reforms. In August 1923 he supported the SPD's entrance into the Stresemann government at the height of the hyperinflation not in order to transform the economy along socialist lines, but rather to save it from complete collapse.⁴⁸ In office for only two months, he was unable to stabilize the mark, but the policy he pursued—the introduction of a new currency backed by gold—was a traditional one that had the basic aim of restoring confidence and the normal operations of the capitalist economy.⁴⁹

Five years later, when he served in the SPD-led coalition cabinet of Hermann Müller, Hilferding initially hoped to bring the state's chaotic finances under control so that the new government would be able to advance the party's reform agenda. His efforts foundered, however, due to the extent of the financial morass he inherited, political resistance to reform, and the onset of the depression. He responded to deepening financial deficits and rising unemployment with orthodox budgetary policies that

included cuts to social expenditures and new taxes that hurt the working class and benefited capital. Chastened by the experience of hyperinflation, he followed a “sound money” policy that eschewed government spending as a means of stimulating demand and reflatting the currency. This “supply-side” approach did nothing to stem the decline of the German economy and infuriated many in his party. When he resigned in December of 1929, in the midst of a controversy around a state loan he had been negotiating with American banks, few Social Democrats lamented his departure.⁵⁰

Hilferding’s essentially pro-business approach had a variety of sources. At the time he assumed office, Social Democracy suffered from a dearth of economic strategies that it could call its own. Like Hilferding, most socialist economists had little practical policy experience running a capitalist economy. Marxism helped them to understand capitalist development, but it provided little by way of a practical guide for managing crises or economic growth. It was not until the early thirties that economists such as Vladimir Woytinsky began to provide Social Democracy with a specific policy profile of its own.⁵¹ In addition, while the SPD’s left wing certainly made specific tax and spending proposals that would have benefited labor rather than capital, Hilferding knew that the bourgeois parties in the cabinet, especially the business-oriented DVP, would never accept them. Convinced that the party could do much more for the workers from inside the government than from outside, he was unwilling to defend policies that could break up the coalition.⁵²

The most important influence on Hilferding’s budgetary strategy was his basic belief that it was imperative to manage a faltering capitalist economy by removing factors that interfered with its laws of operation. He had become a Marxist during his student days in Vienna, but the ideas of Böhm-Bawerk and the Austrian School had also influenced him.⁵³ Along with conservative economists such as Friedrich von Hayek—a student of Ludwig von Mises, who also had participated in Böhm-Bawerk’s seminar—Hilferding held that the cause of capitalist crises was not to be found in under consumption but, rather, in a disturbance of the price mechanism, and he was convinced that the government should not undertake policies that artificially stimulate demand, distort the system’s operations further, and hinder recovery. This attitude, combined with shell shock from the inflationary debacle of 1923, made him suspicious of anything but orthodox budgetary responses to the depression.

Hilferding recognized that the economic crisis represented a serious challenge to his theory of organized capitalism because it seemed to undercut his view that increased corporate planning and state influence over

the economy diminished the frequency and severity of crises. As we have seen, by 1931 he had responded to this challenge by arguing that the depression was not rooted in capitalist development at all, but rather stemmed from the upheavals brought about by the World War. Once the economic crisis had played itself out, he thought, the development of organized capitalism would proceed as he had outlined and Social Democracy could pursue its reformist aims. The question that remained unanswered, however, was how the republic could survive the political crisis that the economic disaster had unleashed.

At the Kiel party congress of 1927 Hilferding had argued passionately that, in the event of an attempt to destroy the democracy, “republicans had the duty to use all means, including violence, to protect it.” In the midst of civil war they had the right to “beat, shoot, and stab” their opponents because, once thrown onto the defensive, there was no other choice. But he also made clear that such actions were measures of the last resort. Destructive civil war was the greatest hindrance to the emergence of socialism making it critical for socialists to preserve the democratic order. Peaceful progress, not violent struggle, best served the interests of the proletariat.⁵⁴ It was with this imperative in mind that Hilferding attempted to shape Social Democratic strategy between the collapse of the Müller government in March 1930 and the demise of the republic three years later.

Hilferding sharply criticized the SPD’s decision to leave the government due to its conflict with the DVP over unemployment insurance policy. From the outside it would be impossible for the party to carry out administrative reforms to strengthen the republic and it would be much more difficult to protect social programs from right wing attacks. Most importantly, Hilferding believed that leaving the government endangered the republic. The new cabinet under Brüning had little support in the *Reichstag* and his intention to rule by means of Article 48 threatened that body’s power. The inability of parliament to form a majority government, Hilferding argued, would result in the expansion of the *Reich* President’s functions (since he had to sign all emergency decrees) and make it easier for antidemocratic forces to undermine parliamentary rule. Thus, Hilferding foresaw that it was not a putsch from without that endangered parliament but, rather, the threat from within that body itself.⁵⁵

Events following the elections of September 1930 soon substantiated his worst fears. The Nazi electoral breakthrough and the KPD’s strong showing greatly strengthened antirepublican forces in the *Reichstag*. They could not work together for positive aims but, along with the DNVP, they were in a position to seriously hamper parliament’s work. Neither the leadership of the

moderate bourgeois parties nor conservatives like President Hindenburg and Chancellor Brüning were willing to reconstruct a broad coalition government that included the SPD. As a result, Brüning continued to lead a minority cabinet that governed by presidential decree. Without majority support, however, he remained exposed to the threat of a parliamentary vote of no confidence that could force new elections.

Hilferding quickly concluded that, although the SPD would not be a part of the new government, it had to “tolerate” Brüning. To go into “pure” opposition risked either the government inviting the Nazis to share power or another election that could strengthen the extremists. Hilferding knew Brüning personally. On September 23, one week after the elections, he convened a meeting at his Berlin apartment between the Chancellor and his predecessor, SPD leader Hermann Müller. Out of this conversation emerged the informal arrangement that ultimately became the SPD’s policy of supporting the lesser evil as a way of preserving the republic. It would be at the center of Social Democracy’s strategy for the next two years.⁵⁶

Hilferding was the architect of the toleration policy, but the majority of his colleagues in the SPD leadership needed little prodding to sign on. Although some, such as Aufhäuser and Sender, argued for a policy of opposition, most agreed with the logic of his argument despite knowing full well that the SPD could lose considerable popular support by backing such a right-wing government. On October 3, 1930, the *Reichstag* delegation agreed to adopt the policy.

Lower-level party leaders and the rank and file, however, were more difficult to convince. At a congress of district party leaders meeting on October 4, some participants tried to shout Hilferding down, but he refused to be cowed and countered that, “if they lost the parliamentary and democratic order they would lose everything.” He criticized those who favored allowing the Nazis to enter the cabinet in order to “expose” their reactionary nature. Once in power they were not likely to give it up, he argued, and extra-parliamentary efforts to dislodge them, such as a general strike, had little chance of success with unemployment so high and the labor movement divided. His listeners were not convinced; they passed a resolution calling for opposition to Brüning’s cabinet and, if necessary, extra-parliamentary action to defend the republic.⁵⁷

A few days later, in Breslau, Hilferding addressed another resistant crowd. This time he stressed that not only would opposition to Brüning bring the Nazis to power, but it would also undermine the SPD-led coalition with the Center Party in Prussia and reduce Germany’s ability to at-

tract much-needed foreign loans. Toleration, he insisted, would give the party breathing space to prepare itself to fight later on. Although many speakers at this meeting opposed propping up Brüning's government, this time there was no resolution for or against toleration.⁵⁸

The SPD supported Brüning until his fall in May 1932. The gamble cost the party dearly as it stood by and swallowed one decree after another cutting wages, unemployment benefits, and social services. In June 1931, when Hilferding and the SPD leadership tried to get Brüning to moderate a series of draconian decrees, he made no concessions and refused even to discuss the matter with the *Reichstag's* budget committee. This response fueled a groundswell of opposition to toleration within the SPD and the unions, and leaders of both organizations protested vociferously. It also angered Hilferding, who fulminated against Brüning's intransigence and the paralysis of the *Reichstag* in the *Die Gesellschaft* but, like most of his colleagues, he did not urge a change of policy. Instead, he grasped at straws noting that Brüning might succeed in eliminating Germany's reparations payments. Such a success, he thought, might strengthen his hand against the radical right.⁵⁹

Hilferding protested against Brüning's more extreme antilabor economic measures, but he was in basic agreement with his deflationary strategy. As he told a gathering of economists at the Friedrich List Society, he believed that capitalist crises could only be overcome through "self-healing" and one should reject state-led reflationary credit schemes.⁶⁰ He also recognized, however, that this strategy entailed no quick fixes and that the longer the crisis dragged on, the greater became the popular frustration. One year after the adoption of the policy of toleration, just after the SPD expelled rebellious leaders of the party's extreme left, he wrote to Kautsky that "the worst aspect of the situation is that we can't say anything concrete to the people about how we would end the crisis." Capitalism had been shaken "far beyond our expectations," but the solution of the credit crisis lay in France and the United States, where Germany had little influence. With no socialist solution at hand and the Communists and Nazis gaining support, the political crisis deepened "because the struggle to preserve democracy alone does not satisfy the psychological needs of the masses."⁶¹

Four days later, in his speech to the AfA congress, this profound sense of helplessness was not obvious to his listeners, but his speech, strong on historical analysis and weak on policy options, reflected the degree to which the political initiative had passed to Social Democracy's opponents. It is true that he called for more state regulation of the banks and industrial monopolies, but such proposals were chimerical in light of the SPD's

political isolation and dim prospects for wielding power anytime soon. To reverse the party's loss of support to the KPD and undercut the growth of Nazism, it had to present options that were imaginative and practical, but Hilferding remained committed to orthodoxy. As late as February 1932 he convinced a majority in the party and trade leadership to reject an innovative proposal by Vladimir Woytinsky and others to stimulate economic recovery by initiating large-scale public works programs funded by the state in part through *Reichsbank* credits. His belief that capitalism had to undergo "self healing" and his fear of rekindling inflation thus undercut the party's ability to present the masses with a viable economic alternative and left the initiative in the hands of its opponents.⁶²

Hilferding was also leery of using extra-parliamentary means to defend the republic. He supported the formation of the Iron Front in December 1931 but viewed it as a means of channeling rank-and-file frustration with the toleration policy into electoral activity rather than as a realistic paramilitary response to Nazi and Communist violence. Hilferding, along with most of his comrades in the leadership, did not believe that even the combined power of the *Reichsbanner*, the unions, and the party could effectively win an armed confrontation with the SA, the *Stahlhelm* and the *Reichswehr*. Holding fast to the constitution, they feared provoking their enemies into open warfare. Their reluctance to shed blood and their conviction that they could not win in such a confrontation weakened their resolve to use "all means" to save the democracy.⁶³

These attitudes also underlay Hilferding's political outlook during the months between Brüning's fall and Hitler's appointment to the Chancellorship. He supported the SPD's decision to rely on the courts following Papen's coup in Prussia and, in August, in the wake of the Nazis' strong electoral showing in the July elections, he even argued against overthrowing Papen, whose antirepublicanism was clear, out of fear that Hitler would then have his chance.⁶⁴ The SPD leaders saw the decline of Nazi support in the November election as a success, but Hilferding was troubled by the growth of the KPD, which had won 100 seats compared to the SPD's 120, and seemed poised to overtake the latter in electoral support. Now he urged the party to step up its opposition to Papen's government, to fight for a return to parliamentary rule, and, most importantly to use this struggle as a means to combat the KPD in the competition for workers' support. The SPD had to leave no doubt in the minds of the latter that it was the true representative of their interests and to do that, he insisted, "We have to fight not only against the right, but also against the left."⁶⁵ He saw no other realistic options.

In the January 1933 issue of *Die Gesellschaft*, Hilferding asserted that the SPD's policy of toleration had successfully blocked the Nazis from entering the government. Now that the NSDAP was in decline, the threat of fascism appeared to ebb. With Hitler "beaten" the Party's main political tasks were to oppose the "Presidential regime" of the newly appointed Chancellor, General von Schleicher, to restore the viability of parliament, and to combat the parties supporting dictatorship, especially the Communists. He had little to say, however, about how the party could accomplish these goals and concluded by noting that Germany's political future hinged on economic developments.⁶⁶ By the month's end, Hitler's appointment made clear that he had fundamentally misjudged the political situation.

He continued, however, to counsel caution. Over the course of the next seven weeks, even as the Nazis began the ruthless, but gradual, dismantling of the democratic system, Hilferding rejected demands of the more radical party leaders for mass action. Instead, he opted for a parliamentary "fight for freedom" in which the SPD would call for rent reductions and the expropriation of heavy industry, the banks, and large landowners as a means of winning over the KPD's supporters. Arguing that the constitutional order was still intact and that the government remained a coalition, he dismissed calling a general strike against Hitler's government because it would unnecessarily put the unions' very existence at risk. He, thus, effectively ignored the point that he had often repeated since 1930: that once they had power the Nazis were not likely to ever give it up. His prediction quickly proved to be quite prescient. Following the passage of the Enabling Act, Hilferding fled the country. Acting on a tip from Brüning about his pending arrest, he barely escaped over the border into Denmark.⁶⁷

Hilferding had recognized early on that the antirepublican forces in the *Reichstag* constituted the republic's most dangerous enemies, yet he was unable to construct an effective response to this threat. In part this stemmed from his view of economics, which, shaped by Marxism as well as the Austrian School, tended to overemphasize capitalist development as an inexorable process that human intervention could not substantially change. More importantly this reticence derived from his longstanding commitment to realizing the goals of socialism by peaceful means. Hilferding had joined the socialist movement because he saw it as a vehicle for human emancipation. As a young theorist and activist, he promoted parliamentary strategies as a means of achieving reform and maintaining socialist unity and he regarded radical action, such as the use of the general strike, as only appropriate in the face of reactionary aggression by the ruling classes. He

carried this outlook forward as he developed socialist strategies in the Weimar republic, which most Social Democrats regarded as their creation and whose institutions, they hoped, would insure the peaceful transition to socialism.

Like many of his colleagues in the leadership, over the course of decades Hilferding grew accustomed to the norms of parliamentary politics and the *Rechtsstaat* (constitutional state). In a modern democratic society he saw little room for spontaneous mass politics outside of the system's institutional norms. He was, moreover, a humane person who was hesitant to shed the blood of others, especially when the outlook for success seemed dim. It was these attitudes and sentiments that made him ill prepared to respond to the Nazi and Communist movements, which essentially knew no quarter in the struggle for power.⁶⁸

Notes

1. Rudolf Hilferding to Margarete Meyer, September 22, 1932, Nachlaß Oscar Meyer, Leo Baeck Institute.

2. The three most important studies of Hilferding's life and work are my *Rudolf Hilferding: The Tragedy of a German Social Democrat*; F. Peter Wagner, *Rudolf Hilferding: Theorie and Politics of Democratic Socialism* (Atlantic Highlands: Prometheus Books, 1996); and Wilfried Gottschalch, *Strukturveränderungen der Gesellschaft und politisches Handeln in der Lehre von Rudolf Hilferding* (Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 1962). Useful shorter essays include William Smaldone, "Rudolf Hilferding and the Theoretical Foundations of German Social Democracy, 1902–1933," *Central European History* 21, 3 (September, 1988): 267–99; Horst Klein, "Zu den Gesellschaftsideen Rudolf Hilferdings," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 33, 1 (1991): 25–36; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, "Rudolf Hilferding: Theoretiker des Finanzkapitals," in Peter Alter, et al., eds., *Geschichte und politisches Handeln. Studien zu europäischen Denken der Neuzeit* (Stuttgart: Klett Cotta, 1985), 282–300; Heinrich August Winkler, "Eine Wirklich nie dagewesene Situation: Rudolf Hilferding in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik," in Jürgen Kocka, et al., eds., *Von der Arbeiterbewegung zum modernen Sozialstaat. Festschrift für Gerhard A. Ritter zum 65. Geburtstag* (Munich: Sauer, 1994), 131–55; Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, "Rudolf Hilferding," in Hans-Ulrich Wehler, ed., *Deutsche Historiker, Bd. VIII* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 56–77; Walter Euchner, "Rudolf Hilferding (1877–1941). Kühne Dialektik und verzweifelt Zaudern," in Peter Lösche, et al., eds., *Vor dem Vergessen bewahren*, 170–92; Harold James, "Rudolf Hilferding and the Political Economy of the Second International," *Historical Journal* 24 (1981): 847–69.

3. Rudolf Hilferding, "Gesellschaftsmacht oder Privatmacht über die Wirtschaft. Referat, gehalten am 6. Oktober 1931," reprinted in Cora Stephan,

ed., *Zwischen den Stühlen oder über die Unvereinbarkeit von Theorie und Praxis* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1982), 239–43.

4. Hilferding, “Gesellschaftsmacht,” 244–45.

5. Hilferding, “Gesellschaftsmacht,” 262–65.

6. Alexander Stein, *Rudolf Hilferding und die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung, Gedenkbblätter* (Hamburg: Hamburger Buckdruckerei und Verlagsanstalt Auerdruck, 1946), 5.

7. Minoru Kurata, “Rudolf Hilferding, Wiener Zeit: Eine Biographie (2),” *Economic Review* 29, 2 (1978): 26–27.

8. Kurata, “Rudolf Hilferding (2),” 22–23, 28–29; Karl Renner, *An der Wende Zweier Zeiten* (Vienna, 1946), 245, 250, 278–79.

9. “Beschlüsse des Parteitag der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei Österreichs am Parteitag zu Hainfeld (30–31. Dezember 1888 und 1. Januar 1889) ergänzt am Parteitag zu Wien (Pfungsten, 1892),” in *Austromarxismus: Texte zu “Ideologie und Klassenkampf von Otto Bauer, Max Adler, Karl Renner, Sigmund Kufni, Bela Fogarasi und Julius Lengyl*, edited by Hans-Jörg Sandkühler and Rafael de la Vage (Vienna: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1970), 370–71.

10. On the role of Judaism among in Hilferding’s generation of Marxist thinkers see, Isaac Deutscher, “The Non-Jewish Jew,” in *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (Oxford: Hill & Wang, 1968), 26–27; Walter Grab, “Leistung und Funktion jüdischer Intellektuellen in Deutschland (1840–1933),” *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 38, 3 (1986), 193–207; Helga Grebing, “Jüdische Intellektuelle in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 37 (1997): 19–38.

11. On Grünberg see Günther Nenning, “Biographie Carl Grünbergs,” in *Indexband zum Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung* (Graz: Limmat Verlag, 1973), 126–28, and Tom Bottomore and Patrick Goode, eds., *Austro-Marxism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 9–10. On Mach see Marc Blum, *The Austro-Marxists, 1890–1918: A Psychobiographical Study* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1985), 20. For Böhm-Bawerks influence on Hilferding see note 53.

12. Bottomore and Goode, *Austro-Marxism*, 18; Nenning, *Indexband*, 65.

13. Stein, *Rudolf Hilferding*, 5. On Hilferding’s interest in the study of political economy see his letters to Karl Kautsky, International Institute for Social History (ISH), KDXII 580 and 581.

14. See, for example, “Zur Geschichte der Werttheorie,” *Neue Zeit* 21, 1 (1902–3): 213–17; “Der Funktionswechsel der Schutzzolles,” *Neue Zeit* 21, 2 (1902–3): 274–81; “Das Zuckerkontingent: Ein Beitrag zum Staatskapitalismus,” *Deutsche Worte* 23 (Vienna, 1903): 22–34; “Zur Frage des Generalstreiks,” *Neue Zeit* 22, 1 (1903–4): 134–42.

15. For an outline of *Marx-Studien’s* theoretical perspectives see Hilferding’s and Max Adler’s preface to volume one (Vienna: Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1904).

16. Eugen Böhm-Bawerk, *Karl Marx and the Close of his System*, edited and introduced by Paul M. Sweezy (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1949).

17. Hilferding to Kautsky, April 23, 1902, KDXII 580 (ISH).
18. For the classic statement of revisionist principles see Eduard Bernstein, *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., reprint 1971). For Rosa Luxemburg's response see *Sozialreform oder Revolution* (Leipzig, 1908) reprinted in *Politische Schriften, I*, edited and introduced by O. K. Flechtheim (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1966), 47–133. On the revisionist-radical split in the SPD see Carl E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905–1917*, and Peter Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952).
19. On centrism see Eric Matthias, "Kautsky und der Kautskyanismus," in Iring Fetscher, ed., *Marxismusstudien* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1957), 151–97; Hans Josef Steinberg, *Sozialismus und deutsche Sozialdemokratie* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1979), 75–87, and Schorske, *German Social Democracy*, 185–90.
20. Julius Braunthal, *History of the International, I 1864–1914* (New York, 1967), 299.
21. Hilferding, "Zur Frage des Generalstreiks," and "Parlamentarismus und Massenstreik," *Neue Zeit* 23, 2 (1904–05): 804–16.
22. Hilferding, "Zur Frage," 140.
23. Hilferding, "Zur Frage," 141.
24. Hilferding, "Parlamentarismus und Massenstreik," 809, 815.
25. Rudolf Hilferding, *Finance Capital. A Study of the Latest Phase of Capitalist Development*, edited and introduced by Tom Bottomore (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 21.
26. Hilferding, *Finance Capital*, 95, 225.
27. Hilferding, *Finance Capital*, 339–42.
28. Hilferding, *Finance Capital*, 310–18.
29. Hilferding, *Finance Capital*, 317.
30. Hilferding, *Finance Capital*, 370.
31. Hilferding, *Finance Capital*, 366.
32. Minoru Kurata, "Die Entstehung vom Hilferdings Finanzkapital," *Review of the Liberal Arts* 62 (1981, Japan): 55–98; Cora Stephan, "Geld und Staatstheorie in Hilferdings Finanzkapital," in Günther Busch, ed., *Beiträge zur Marx'schen Theorie*, 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974), 118.
33. Hilferding, *Finance Capital*, 23.
34. *Das Kriegstagebuch des Reichstagsabgeordneter Eduard David, 1914–1918*, edited by Erich Matthias and Susanne Miller (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1966), 14; Schorske, *German Social Democracy*, 299–308.
35. For the editors' views see their declaration in opposition to the war in Eugen Prager, *Geschichte der USPD* (Glashütten im Taunus: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1970), 30–31. Hilferding's comments to the party council are recorded in Dieter Dowe, ed., *Protokolle der Sitzungen des Parteiausschusses der SPD 1912–1921* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1980), 120–21.
36. On the purge of the editorial board see Schorske, *German Social Democracy*, 295–96.

37. Hilferding, "Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Klassen," *Der Kampf* 8 (1915): 321–23.
38. For Hilferding's views on the USPD's tasks immediately after the monarchy's fall see "Revolutionäres Vertrauen," *Die Freiheit*, November 18, 1918 and "Klarheit," *Die Freiheit*, November 23, 1918. On the socialization of industry see Hilferding, "Die Sozialisierung des Wirtschaftslebens (1918)," in Stephan, *Zwischen den Stühlen*, 96–108; *Zur Sozialisierungsfrage: Referat auf dem 10. deutschen Gewerkschaftskongress vom 30. Juni bis 5. Juli 1919 zu Nürnberg* (Berlin: Freiheit, 1919), and *Die Sozialisierung und die Machtverhältnisse der Klassen: Referat auf dem 1. Betriebsrätekongress, gehalten am 5 Oktober 1920* (Berlin: Freiheit, 1920).
39. *Protokolle der Parteitag der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, USPD, Leipzig, Nov.–Dez. 1919* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1975), 309–26.
40. Hilferding, "Wandlung in der Politik," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, December 31, 1922.
41. Hilferding, "Probleme der Zeit," *Die Gesellschaft* I, 1 (1924): 1–15.
42. Hilferding, "Realistischer Pazifismus," *Die Gesellschaft* 1, 1 (1924): 97–114.
43. Economist Hans Ritschl quoted in Günter Könke, *Organisierter Kapitalismus, Sozialdemokratie und Staat: Eine Studie zur Ideologie der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterbewegungen in der Weimarer Republik* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 1987), 73.
44. See, for example, Hilferding's speeches *Für die soziale Republik* (Berlin: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1924) and *SPD Parteitag Kiel, 1927*, 165–84.
45. *SPD-Parteitag Kiel, 1927*, 184–89.
46. Hilferding's support for joining a coalition in 1923 is discussed in Heinrich August Winkler, *Von der Revolution zu Stabilisierung*, 601. On his proposals for a coalition in 1928 see *SPD-Parteitag Kiel, 1927*, 221.
47. Franz Ritter, *Theorie und Praxis des demokratischen Sozialismus in der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus-Verlag, 1981), 34, 115.
48. Hilferding, "Die Aufgaben der Reichsbank," *Vorwärts*, August 9, 1923.
49. William A. Darity, Jr. and Bobbie L. Horn, "Rudolf Hilferding: The Dominion of Capitalism and the Dominion of Gold," *American Economic Review* 75, 2 (1985): 363–68.
50. Smaldone, *Rudolf Hilferding*, 153–61.
51. Knut Borchardt, *Wachstum, Krisen, Handlungsspielräume der Wirtschaftspolitik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 166–73; Bernd Weisbrod, "Die Befreiung von den 'Tariffesseln': Deflationspolitik als Krisenstrategie der Unternehmer in der Ära Brüning," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 11, 3 (1985): 321; Carl-Ludwig Holtfrerich, "Economic Policy Options and the End of the Weimar Republic," in Ian Kershaw, ed., *Weimar: Why did German Democracy Fail?* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 66.
52. *SPD-Parteitag, Magdeburg, 1929*, 88–90; Winkler, *Der Schein der Normalität*, 764–65.
53. Peter Rosner, "A note on the theories of the business cycle by Hilferding and Hayek," *History of Political Economy* 20, 2 (1988): 309–19.
54. *SPD-Parteitag, Kiel, 1927*, 173.

55. Hilferding, "Der Austritt aus der Regierung," *Die Gesellschaft* 7, 1 (1930): 385–89.
56. Winkler, "Endphase," 133.
57. *Vorwärts*, October 5, 1930.
58. *Breslauer Volkswacht*, October 8, 1930.
59. Hilferding, "In Krisennot," *Die Gesellschaft* 8, 1 (1931): 1–8.
60. Winkler, "Endphase," 137.
61. Hilferding to Kautsky, October 2, 1932, KDXII, 653(ISH)
62. On Woytinsky's proposal see his *Stormy Passage: A Personal History through Two Russian Revolutions to Democracy and Freedom, 1905–1960* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1961), 462–72; Heinrich August Winker, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 494–95; Rainer Schaefer, *Die SPD in der Ära Brüning: Tolerierung oder Mobilisierung? Handlungsspielräume und Strategien sozialdemokratischer Politik, 1930–32* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1990), 365–406.
63. Donna Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 169–90.
64. Though he came to this position only after considerable vacillation after considering the possibility of a Nazi coalition with the Catholic Center. See Winkler, "Endphase," 145; Keil, *Erlebnisse, II*, 456–57.
65. Schulze, *Anpassung*, 40–41.
66. Hilferding, "Zwischen den Entscheidungen," *Die Gesellschaft* 10, 1(1933): 1–9.
67. Stein, *Rudolf Hilferding*, 27; Heinrich Brüning, *Memoiren: 1918–1934* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1970), 660.
68. Hilferding paid a heavy price for his party's failure. Living in Switzerland and France, he continued to participate in Social Democratic exile politics. He wrote regularly for the party newspaper, *Neuer Vorwärts*, and served as chief editor of its theoretical journal, *Die Zeitschrift für Sozialismus*, from 1933 to 1936. Following the Nazi invasion of France in May 1940, Hilferding fled to Marseilles, where he attempted to leave for the United States. He was arrested, along with Breitschied, by Vichy French authorities, and turned over to the Germans on February 8, 1941. Transported to Paris, he committed suicide in the Gestapo dungeon of Le Santé two days later. On Hilferding's life in exile see Smaldone, *Rudolf Hilferding*, chapter 6, 173–207.

**Marie Juchacz (1879–1956):
Mobilizing Women**



Marie Juchacz (1879–1965) Courtesy of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

“To have equal rights does not mean to be the same. With our full entrance into political life, we should not only increase the number of voters, but we should also add our special female influence to shape and enrich it.”

—MARIE JUCHACZ, 1920¹

AS THE SPD’S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DEBATED its response to Hitler’s appointment to the Chancellorship, Marie Juchacz was the most important, and sometimes the only, woman in the room. The long-time head of the SPD’s Office for Women’s Concerns, a member of the executive since 1917, and one of the most effective leaders of the party’s important and growing female constituency, Juchacz figured prominently in Weimar Social Democracy’s efforts to broaden its base and to mobilize its supporters for elections and street demonstrations. At the height of the republic’s crisis, however, she played almost no role in formulating the party leadership’s strategy. Largely silent during the executive’s deliberations and then ignominiously dropped from that body in May 1933, Juchacz’s marginal role in party affairs at that critical juncture and her treatment by her male colleagues speaks volumes concerning Social Democratic attitudes toward women and the “women’s question” under Weimar.

Born Marie Gohlke in provincial Landsberg in 1879, Marie’s father, Theodor, was an impoverished carpenter who lost his independence and became a wage-laborer. After receiving the equivalent of a fourth grade education, Marie worked in a variety of jobs including stints in a net factory and in an insane asylum, where she worked long hours under difficult conditions and experienced gender and class tensions that made a deep and lasting impression on her. In 1902, while working in a tailor’s shop, she married the proprietor, Juchacz, with whom she soon had two children. When the marriage proved unhappy, she divorced him and, in 1906, moved to Berlin with her children and her younger sister, Elisabeth. For the next two decades the deeply attached siblings managed their household together and worked closely in politics.²

Juchacz came to socialism through her family and work experience and through the intellectual influence of her father and older brother, Otto, who were involved in workers’ struggles in industrializing Landsberg. She was an eager learner and, as a child, made good use of books that her father brought home from his carpenters’ guild library. More importantly, however, she witnessed at close range the founding of the first trade unions in the city and her own family members’ engagement in their activities.

Together with Elisabeth, Juchacz grew interested in the work of the newly-founded SPD local, as well as Landsberg's socialist consumers' cooperative. By the time of her move to Berlin she had become a convinced Social Democrat and, despite her reticent demeanor, was ready to plunge into the activities of the fledgling socialist women's movement.

Life in the capital was hard for the young single mother and her sister. To make ends meet, they sewed at home, worked in laundries and in confectionary shops, and shared child care and household duties (even after Elisabeth married and moved out for a time). Money was tight, but working together left time and energy for politics. Beginning as an unpaid grassroots activist, in 1907 Juchacz was elected chair of the Women's and Girls' Educational Association in Berlin-Schöneberg and over the next ten years proved herself to be a skilled organizer and effective speaker. In 1913 the party leadership appointed her to a paid job as the women's secretary (*Frauensekretärin*) of the party's "upper Rhine" district that included Cologne and its rural hinterland. Given the task of building up the socialist women's movement in the region, she had a tough assignment. In relatively cosmopolitan Cologne there was a substantial population of women attracted to Social Democratic politics, but in the surrounding area, particularly in the conservative and heavily Catholic Eifel Mountains, it was difficult to make headway. Juchacz did not lose heart and learned much about how to adjust the party's work to deal with different regional cultures and conditions. It was experience that served her well in the years ahead.³

In August 1914 Juchacz sided with the majority of the party leaders, who supported the government's decision to go to war. Thereafter, she directed the efforts of Cologne's socialist women's organization to provide assistance to families affected by the conflict. With millions of men drafted into the military and millions more women engaged in war-related production, "welfare work" became the highest priority for SPD women. Instead of agitation for the promotion of socialist revolution, they now focused on helping families deal with food and fuel shortages, child-care needs, difficulties brought on by illness or injury, and other hardships created or exacerbated by the war. The Social Democratic women aimed to provide this "wartime help" or *Kriegsfürsorge* in ways that avoided the humiliating treatment usually meted out to the poor by government agencies. At the same time, entering seriously into this sphere brought them into temporary cooperation with bourgeois women's organizations, which had much longer experience and different attitudes toward "welfare" and its purposes.⁴

As it did for many other Social Democratic women, Juchacz's wartime experience exerted a profound influence on her view of the party's practical

work; this experience also had a major impact on her career. Following the expulsion of the antiwar opposition in January 1917, SPD Chairman Friedrich Ebert appointed Juchacz to replace Luise Zietz as the head of the party's women's department and, shortly thereafter, the Würzburg Party Congress elected her to the twenty-one-member executive. Juchacz held these posts throughout the Weimar Republic and, thus, remained the most important among the handful of women serving in that body.

Juchacz's appointment and election exemplified the movement of what Jean Quataert describes as the "second generation" of female leaders into the upper ranks of the party.⁵ Unlike the more theoretically-oriented radicals of the first generation, such as Clara Zetkin and Zietz, Juchacz and her cohort had come up through the ranks of the party machine, were skilled administrators, and focused their work on the more practical dimensions of party building rather than issues of doctrine. Ebert offered Juchacz a post in the leadership because he recognized her as a loyal team player. As her memoirs make clear, Juchacz never wavered in her commitment to the SPD despite her feeling of "horror" as the country and her party mobilized for war. On the contrary, she threw herself into the party's wartime work. Thus, from the perspective of an SPD leadership now more interested in integration than revolution, Ebert's choice was a good one. Juchacz proved herself to be a skilled, disciplined, and loyal administrator.⁶

Once installed in the party executive, Juchacz argued vehemently that the SPD should seek to attract female members by deepening and expanding its work in the social welfare sector. "Wherever women were active in social work," she said, "they won the sympathy (*Zuneigung*) of working women" who were in dire straits.⁷ Women traditionally had been active in such work and, in her view, experience had proven that "women talking to women," especially about important, practical matters, was the most effective means of expanding the party's influence among them. The SPD should not abandon the welfare field to the bourgeois women's organizations. Instead, she insisted, it should help struggling workers and their families to help themselves until such time as the socialist state could sweep away the causes of their oppression. In the process of promoting self-help, the party would win the interest of growing numbers of women, educate them about socialism, and recruit them to the movement. This strategy, developed in the midst of wartime social crisis, would be the cornerstone of Social Democratic women's policy under the Weimar Republic.⁸

Following the German Revolution of 1918, Juchacz believed that the granting of suffrage created a number of new opportunities for German women. They now had the chance to achieve legal equality with men and

to participate more fully in political and intellectual life. Women's general situation, however, remained very difficult. They were still economically dependent on men and the Allied peace terms promised continued economic hardships for families. To improve women's social condition, Juchacz believed that the SPD would have to pursue an aggressive strategy of *Sozialpolitik* in parliament, but in the short term she called on women to fulfill three basic tasks: to lead the way in the restoration of the German economy by increasing productivity, to combat "social chaos" (*Verwilderung des Volkes*) by standing up for the weak and defending law and order, and to participate in the shaping of the national will.⁹

Juchacz's writings and speeches during and immediately after the war make clear that, for her, the achievement of a parliamentary republic represented the fulfillment of the SPD's primary political aim. She did not believe it would bring about women's equality in a single stroke, but she viewed it as the framework for its later achievement. Like Ebert and most other SPD leaders, Juchacz strongly opposed further radicalization of the revolution; in her view the electoral arena held center stage. To win women's support, the SPD had "to learn to use democracy in practical ways" and to avoid making promises it could not keep. By setting clear, realizable goals for itself and by stepping up its educational efforts, the party would garner women's electoral backing.¹⁰

Juchacz won election to the National Assembly in 1919 and then to the *Reichstag*, where she held a seat until the Nazi seizure of power. On February 6, 1919, she became the first woman to address the German parliament and her speech indicated her strong support for the young democracy in which the "women's question" had assumed a new form. Newly-enfranchised women, she argued, were now in a much stronger position to win equality in all spheres, including public service, the workplace, and civil law. Women were, however, "especially suited" for work in the area of social policy (*Sozialpolitik*), in which they had a "special interest." She called on them to pursue legislation that would improve the rights and protection of mothers and children, provide adequate shelter for families, and establish unemployment insurance for workers.¹¹ Juchacz's emphasis on *Sozialpolitik* as women's "special area" (*Spezialgebiet*) reflected and reinforced the dominant attitude of most female (and male) legislators in parliament, and for the next fourteen years she and most of her socialist and nonsocialist female colleagues focused their efforts primarily in that arena. As the record of the republican era shows, their work met with mixed results. The Weimar constitution and subsequent legislation embedded a wide variety of social guarantees into the legal

system, but political and institutional conflicts and scarce resources hindered their implementation.¹²

The SPD had been the only party in imperial Germany that stood foursquare for women's suffrage as well as for their civic and economic equality with men. The party had done more to organize women politically and to invite them into its leadership than any other and, following the empire's collapse, the Ebert government had immediately granted women's suffrage. In light of this history, many Social Democrats expected to reap the benefits of women's electoral support. Hoping that women would cross class and confessional lines to help the party achieve a socialist majority, the SPD reemphasized its support for women's political equality, supported women's rights in the workplace, and called for the expansion of maternity and other social welfare benefits in its early post-revolutionary electoral campaigns. Although from 1919 to 1932 Social Democracy consistently won the largest absolute number of German women's votes, party activists—both male and female—were deeply disappointed that, for much of that time, a smaller proportion of women than men backed the SPD, and instead gave the bulk of their support to the religious and nationalist parties. Many male comrades criticized women's "ingratitude" and held them responsible for the failure of socialist legislation in the Reichstag.¹³

In response to this "gender gap" among socialist voters, party activists debated the extent to which the SPD should stress gender rights, material concerns, welfare, or cultural issues in its propaganda aimed at women, and it took several years to find an effective strategy. Male voices, however, were largely absent from this discussion, a fact that reflected the widespread male sentiment that women's recruitment, like their employment, was a matter of secondary importance and should be relegated to female comrades. This attitude was not lost on the latter and some women activists protested against it as early as 1919 in meetings of the Party Council and the women's conference following the Weimar party congress.¹⁴

While a minority of the SPD women's activists, such as Clara Bohm-Schuch, asserted that the party should stress economic issues in its effort to win women's support, Juchacz won the backing of a majority by arguing that it had to take a different approach to women than to men. She observed that, early on, some female newcomers had left the party because, after joining in the flush of revolutionary excitement, they were "psychologically" and politically unprepared to deal with the difficulties of the postwar period and had "succumbed" to the agitation of the SPD's opponents. More important than these defectors, however, were those women who later left the party. The reasons for their departure centered on women's different rela-

tionship to the labor market than men's and, consequently, their different conception of class solidarity, which made them harder to organize. The party had to learn to speak to women, who saw work as a temporary measure to meet household needs, who had to or wished to remain at home, and who either did not have the resources to support two party memberships or believed that one, their husband's, was enough.¹⁵

To attract voters and recruit more women to the party Juchacz urged the SPD to improve its methods of agitation and enlightenment. Now that both women and men had the franchise, she argued, it was no longer useful to organize gender-segregated electoral assemblies. Meetings targeting only women should be small and should deal with issues that had received little attention in broader party debates. The SPD had to do a better job targeting its literature to female audiences and, most of all, it needed to focus more attention on issues of special interest to women such as reproductive rights, prostitution, and youth policy. It was important, she insisted, to continually raise the intellectual level of the membership in order to recruit more effectively and overcome some activists' feelings of intellectual inferiority versus the bourgeois feminist organizations.¹⁶

The debates concerning women's policy intensified as the SPD's electoral fortunes reached their postwar nadir in May 1924 with 21 percent of the vote. At the Berlin party congress in June, Juchacz spoke directly to those who claimed that it had been a mistake to grant women the franchise, since their votes were strengthening the right rather than the SPD. She recognized that the bourgeois parties were having substantial success in attracting a disproportionate part of the female electorate, but insisted that the fault lay not with the women, but with their political education and with the SPD's failure to reeducate them and win them over. The party's task was to convince working and middle-class women that it was in their class interest to support Social Democracy. In order to reach that goal, it had to modernize its propaganda methods to attract their attention and to draw them in. The party knew full well, she observed, that even poor women would spend money on popular films, novels, and magazines in order to escape the harsh pressures of their day-to-day lives. It needed to borrow from the techniques of the film and print industries to develop more effective messages, materials, and methods for its agitation.¹⁷

There were challenges to this general approach. It was difficult to determine the substance of the SPD's message and the party was largely unwilling to take women's activism and political concerns seriously. On the substantive side, the content of the party's new bimonthly women's magazine, *Frauenwelt* (*Women's World*) was a case in point. As its title implies, the

magazine aimed to appeal to women in their “separate sphere,” in particular those who were difficult to reach through agitation at political meetings, in factories, or in the daily press. It sought, instead, to conduct “socialist cultural work” that influenced women in their management of the household, their lifestyle, and, gradually, in their political outlook. To that end, under Dr. Richard Lohmann’s editorship, *Frauenwelt* focused on household matters, light entertainment (novels published in installments), short articles dealing with legal, political, and economic themes, fashion (four to five pages in each twenty-page issue), health and child rearing questions, advice, gardening, and cooking recipes.¹⁸

Frauenwelt’s content displeased a number of women activists who had been upset in 1923 when the SPD decided to cease publishing *Die Gleichheit* (*Equality*), its long-time women’s newspaper. Edited for most of its life by Klara Zetkin (now a KPD leader), it had had a much more radical and theoretical bent. To assuage demands for a politically substantive women’s magazine, the SPD published *Die Genossin* (*The Comrade*), edited by Toni Sender, but unlike *Frauenwelt*, it primarily targeted party functionaries rather than a broader audience. This situation was unacceptable to many activists who had to promote the party’s publications.

At the party congresses of 1924, 1925, and 1927, women debated *Frauenwelt*’s content and Lohmann’s editorship. While some were displeased with the SPD’s selection of a man to edit its most visible women’s publication and viewed the content of the magazine as bourgeois and unserious, others expressed satisfaction with its purpose and content and believed it was an effective recruitment tool. Lohmann responded to his critics by asserting that the increase in *Frauenwelt*’s circulation from 65,000 to over 100,000 in three years was proof of its success in competing with bourgeois magazines. He rejected the notion that its content was bourgeois and claimed that “thousands” of letters to the editor found *Frauenwelt* to be too socialist! He was particularly upset that some women activists were publicly agitating against their own publication and demanded that they halt this practice, keep their criticisms internal, and fire the editor if they wished. Soon after the Kiel party congress, the party executive decided to replace Lohmann with Toni Sender, but not much changed in the magazine until 1932.¹⁹

The internal conflict over women’s publications exemplified the divisions that hindered Social Democratic women as they worked to improve female recruitment and to build the party’s voting base. Another key issue was the degree to which women had an equal voice in party affairs. They protested against the lack of women in party leadership posts and against the executive’s repeated nomination of only a small number of women for

seats in the *Reichstag* and in the state assemblies (*Landtage*). When it was suggested that organizing a socialist women's organization within the party would help them to promote their interests, a majority of female activists responded negatively and insisted that women and their concerns be better integrated into the party and its message. While some believed that abolishing the regular women's congresses, which followed those of the party, was a way of achieving that aim, a substantial number argued that the women's meeting should immediately precede that of the party congress in order to hinder the executive from shelving its resolutions and requests until the following year. In answer to those who claimed that male comrades had no conception of female oppression and saw women as unwanted rivals within the party, others insisted that women had to be less sensitive and more prepared to fight for their rightful place.²⁰

Marie Juchacz agreed with many female comrades' complaints concerning their second-class treatment within the SPD, but on most organizational issues she refused to rock the boat. She believed that the party statutes already in existence made it possible for women to achieve proportional representation within the Party Council and other key governing bodies.²¹ Many women had difficulty assuming positions of leadership, she argued, because they faced obstacles, such as motherhood and family responsibilities, that made it practically and psychologically difficult for them to get involved. Rather than blame men for hindering women's advance, women needed to cultivate younger comrades through training and education to build their skills and confidence and overcome their sense of inferiority. In that way women would rise into leadership positions "naturally."²²

She also dismissed the suggestion of forming a separate women's organization within the SPD because she believed it would hinder women's mobility (*Bewegungsfreiheit*) within the party and would not improve recruitment. To organize the masses of women, Juchacz asserted, required reaching out to them through efforts targeting them separately, as well as through more general party recruitment efforts. The party needed flexible strategies to draw them directly into its ranks and for that it required no separate women's organization.²³

That Juchacz, ever the loyal party soldier, would object to any suggestion of creating a new women's organization even within the party was not surprising. More surprising, however, was her support for Lohmann, whose appointment contradicted her insistence that "women talking to women" was the most effective way of building female support, as well as her unwillingness to challenge the party executive's decision to hold regular women's congresses, which she earlier had defended as a means of giving

female comrades the chance to discuss issues most important to them. In my view, these decisions reflected her belief that party unity was of overriding importance. Lohmann's conception of *Frauenwelt* was in any case similar to hers, and she certainly hoped that, with the detachment of the women's meetings from the party congresses, their issues would be better integrated into the larger party congress.²⁴

Operating under the fundamental premise that, in order to attract women, Social Democracy had to aim for practical achievements in areas of key interest to them, such as social policy, Juchacz worked diligently toward that end in the *Reichstag*. Her greatest practical achievement, however, was the creation of the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* (Workers' Welfare) organization, which, operating in the private sector came to rival the bourgeois women's welfare associations in the provision of social services around the country. The *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* recruited tens of thousands of volunteer and paid workers, mostly women, who provided advice, education, and different forms of material help to millions of disadvantaged people during the republic. By focusing on improving the circumstances of the family, it addressed the very immediate interests particularly of working-class housewives, who continued to outnumber working women and whose families would be far more likely to need assistance than middle-class women.

As Juchacz had foreseen, the SPD's commitment to building the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt*, in combination with vigorous electoral campaigns that downplayed its critique of religion and emphasized social and reproductive themes important to women, succeeded in recruiting women to the SPD and boosting its voter support. Between 1924 and 1931 the proportion of female members increased from 15 percent to 23 percent (230,000) and this rise in membership was paralleled by the elimination of the gender gap in the party's electoral support. These gains represented a significant achievement for the socialist women's movement, but the growth was slow and, in the context of the republic's snowballing economic and political crises, it did not lead to an increase the party's overall support.²⁵

In the late twenties, Juchacz and her comrades were pleased that they had reversed the decline in female membership and voting patterns, but they were also acutely aware that the party's progress was slow, especially among retail workers and the middle classes. At the Kiel Congress of 1927, Juchacz expressed particular concern about the SPD's apparent inability to attract many of the "new women" of Weimar lore, (i.e., those "factory, office, and department store workers" of the younger generation, who "sharply dressed, stream into the streets after work to meet young men who rarely belong to the workers' movement"). The debates about the

party's publications and methods of agitation focused on developing means to connect with these women, but they did not bring about any fundamental change to the strategy of engaging them on what was considered to be their key terrain (i.e., that of *Sozialpolitik*).²⁶ To most Social Democratic women (and men), this policy continued to make sense.

That their strategy failed to attract larger numbers of female members or voters to the SPD was due to a set of complex internal and external factors. Internally, as Julia Sneeringer has argued, the SPD was similar to all Weimar parties in its basic assumptions about women's political roles. Men tended to see women "as ultimately capable only of political action consistent with "female nature" (politics of the heart), while simultaneously discouraging them from deploying that femininity in ways that could seriously challenge the status quo."²⁷ Thus, most male party and trade union members did not see the full achievement of women's equality as particularly important or even desirable, and many of them feared female competition within the party and in the workplace. The leadership's turning a deaf ear to calls for the equal representation of women at all levels in the party reflected this sentiment. The executive regarded organizing women as the job of female comrades and assigned it a relatively low priority. The founding of the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* served to channel women's activities in directions that reaffirmed male authority (and patriarchal values) within the party.²⁸

In addition to such difficulties within the SPD, the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* itself was beset with organizational problems, a lack of resources, and fierce competition from rival Catholic and Protestant welfare organizations.²⁹ The key factor, however, in the slow growth of the socialist women's movement was that most German women continued to harbor conservative social views. Many certainly were disaffected by the republic's recurrent political and economic crises and its failure to achieve important reforms, such as equal rights under civil law, but the bulk of German women remained attached to the values of "*Kinder, Küche, und Kirche*" (children, kitchen, and church) that had long shaped their lives. They rejected aspects of the socialist program that challenged their traditional understanding of gender roles, such as its call for a woman's right to work and economic independence. At the same time, they were not attracted by elements of socialism more in keeping with traditional views of a woman's proper sphere, such as its emphasis on their role in social work, because in that arena there were already plenty of more conservative options to choose from.³⁰

By focusing their political work on the sphere of social welfare as a means of recruitment, the Social Democrats challenged entrenched conservative

social and religious organizations on their own ground. It proved difficult, however, for them to attract large numbers of women to the ranks of a movement that publicly promised to alter the status quo between the sexes and whom many identified with the troubled republic. In this difficult situation the SPD's leaders saw few options. Most socialists shared Maria Juchacz's view that recognized women's right to work but continued to stress women's roles as wives and mothers. To appeal to women on the grounds that the party would struggle to improve their rights as individuals and broaden their opportunities for self-realization was not typically regarded as a viable strategy by most socialist women or men.

As the foregoing discussion has emphasized, even as the stability of the republic reached its high water mark in the late 1920s, Social Democratic women faced daunting challenges. They had little inkling, however, of the economic and political disasters looming just ahead. Writing in *Vorwärts* on January 19, 1929, with the SPD in power on the tenth anniversary of the elections to the National Assembly, Juchacz stressed women's legislative achievements over the course of the decade, lauded the role of women delegates to the *Reichstag*, and urged women and men to increase their engagement in politics.³¹ A few months later, at the party congress in Magdeburg, she delivered a major address on "Women in Politics and the Economy" in which she emphasized their growing role in all sectors of the economy, urged the party to reach out to protect the interests of working women and housewives, and called on the SPD to recognize that, as mothers, women also needed special legislation that would provide social security and workplace protection.³²

The onset of the depression, the collapse of the Social Democratic government, and the Nazi electoral breakthrough in 1930 certainly stunned Juchacz as it did the rest of the SPD leadership. These events did not, however, lead to much change in her political message. Indeed, her report to the party in 1931 was quite upbeat in noting the increased number of female party members, their broadening range of activities, and women's growing political engagement in the context of the deepening economic slump and rising fascist threat. Although she recognized the importance of the latter and stressed women's need to fight against the disempowerment that certainly would accompany a Nazi victory, she made no recommendations for fundamental changes in the party's strategy or tactics. As far as her personal interests were concerned, little changed and her writings over the next two years continued to focus on social welfare issues.³³

She was, of course, deeply worried about the rise of fascism and expressed herself most clearly on this subject in an impassioned speech to the

Reichstag in February, 1932, during the run up to the German presidential elections. Speaking, she hoped, on behalf of the majority of German women, Juchacz asserted that,

Women want no civil war. Women want no war between nations. Women want no worsening of the economic emergency through domestic and foreign adventures. Women ... see through the hollowness of a politics that portrays itself as especially masculine, but actually is derived from shortsightedness, vanity, and ambition. This National Socialist politics forces us to fight for our people and our country. Enough poverty, enough blood!³⁴

Nazi politics, Juchacz asserted, forced women to fight against the “barbarization” of Germany. The Nazi “nation destroyers” (*Volksverderber*), who now were inciting German youth into a civil war, “would not hesitate tomorrow to plunge them into another international war of annihilation.” No woman who rejected war at home or abroad, she concluded, could support the candidates of the extreme left or right. Instead, German women had to fight for their rights and dignity by voting for the incumbent President, Hindenburg, the candidate of the Center and Social Democratic parties.³⁵

Marie Juchacz was not a social or political theorist. As the passages above make clear, her arguments in the face of the Nazi threat were derived primarily from her strong sense of moral outrage. They were fully in keeping with her longtime focus on women’s special political roles as mothers and protectors of the family, and they were similar to those she had made in the immediate postwar years, when she had believed that the threat stemmed more from the left than the right.

By the fall of 1932 Juchacz was convinced that Germany had entered into “a revolutionary period,” in which broad sections of the populace were sinking into the working class. Although they had not yet developed a proletarian outlook, these groups had become intensely anticapitalist. This combination of underdeveloped proletarian consciousness and anticapitalist sentiment, she argued, was leading them into the arms of the Nazis. It was the SPD’s job to learn to understand these people, find common ground with them, and win them over. It was the task of women activists, in particular, to reach out to women in order to shape their politics.³⁶

The question was how. Even as the economic crisis deepened and the country appeared to move toward civil war, Juchacz could not contemplate a revolutionary solution to the crisis. She believed that many women had come to support the principle of violence under the influence of the radical right and that they did so because they were ignorant of the consequences. SPD

women had to respond by working harder to enlighten them, despite all the obstacles in the streets and in the now-paralyzed *Reichstag*, in which there were few women remaining.³⁷

These were noble sentiments, but the SPD's efforts to enlighten the non-socialist masses made virtually no headway as the country's misery intensified and the party's electoral support shrank. Although women's membership continued to grow in the midst of the Iron Front activity of 1931, that moment represented the peak of the SPD's success among women. By July of 1932 the Nazis were making serious inroads among female voters, the majority of whom continued to give their allegiance to either the Catholic Center or to the parties of the right. Desperate for a way out of the crisis and attracted to the Nazi promises of order, unity, and prosperity within the "people's community," many German women were ready to join their male counterparts in backing a party that aimed to bring the Weimar system down.³⁸

Along with the rest of the top SPD leaders, Juchacz was nonplused about what to do as Hitler's appointment to the Chancellorship loomed in January 1933. When that appointment became a reality, she backed the executive's decision to support an electoral response and, through March 1933, continued to plan for upcoming meetings of the international women's movement and the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* as if they still had a future in Germany.³⁹ That she had little to say, unless it had to do with the activities of the women's movement, is not particularly surprising. When it came to organizational questions that had an impact on the party as a whole, she had always gone along with the majority. As the party went into its penultimate crisis in the face of Hitler's dictatorship, she had little to offer that would have changed the situation.⁴⁰

Following the Nazi victory in the March elections and the passage of the Enabling Act on March 23, there was little time left to debate about strategy. As Nazi terror swept down on the members and institutions of the SPD and the unions, the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt*, too, was shattered. On May 2, 1933 the Nazis seized its bank assets along with those of the trade unions and on May 26 they banned the organization. By then the fifty-four-year-old Marie Juchacz was on the run. She escaped to Saarbrücken, which was still under French administration. In late May the executive, now relocated in Prague, dropped her from its membership. Although this treatment reportedly deeply embittered her, it is difficult to ascertain the motives of the executive's decision.⁴¹ It is likely that, for the male SPD leaders, salvaging the remnants of the party was the main task and women's specific concerns, rarely in the forefront of their thinking, were of little importance to them. At a time when resources were particularly scarce they may have

considered it superfluous to have a representative of the women's department in the executive.

Marie Juchacz survived the war as an exile, first in Saarbrücken, then in France, and finally in New York. In exile she remained politically active but focused most of her energy on organizing valuable assistance for emigrants and refugees. After returning to West Germany in 1949, she became active in the newly refounded *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* organization. Her career as a political leader of the SPD was effectively over, however, following Nazism's triumph. In many ways it had been a stellar career and had reflected the promise, and the shortcomings, of the Social Democratic movement as a means of promoting women's equality.

Juchacz had risen through the SPD's ranks due to her talents and energy as an organizer, administrator, and speaker, but also as a result of loyalty to the male leadership and an unwillingness to challenge the institutional status quo. She worked diligently to build women's support for the party, to pursue SPD and women's interests in the *Reichstag*, and to create new institutions, like *Arbeiterwohlfahrt*, to expand the party's reach and simultaneously provide real assistance to needy families. Her efforts brought a substantial degree of success as more women joined the SPD and voted for its candidates. But Juchacz was not prepared to challenge the party leadership to place women's equality either within the party or within German society in the forefront of its policies. Nor was she prepared to put forward any innovative policy suggestions in Social Democracy's struggle against Nazism. Here she concurred with the rest of her colleagues that the parliamentary road was the only responsible and feasible option. Like them she paid the price of exile, but unlike them, she also had to face exclusion from the party leadership, a reflection of women's continued second-class status in the German labor movement.

Notes

1. Marie Juchacz, *Praktische Winke für die sozialdemokratische Frauenbewegung*, hg. Vom Vorstand der SPD (Berlin: Buchhandlung Vorwärts, 1920), 4.

2. For biographical material on Marie Juchacz see her "Kindheit, Jugend, und erste politische Tätigkeit," in *Marie Juchacz: Gründerin der Arbeiterwohlfahrt, Leben und Werk*, (Bonn: Arbeiterwohlfahrt, 1979); Fritz Michael Roehl, *Marie Juchacz und die Arbeiterwohlfahrt*, (Hannover: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1961); Antje Dertinger, "Marie Juchacz (1879–1956). Ein gutes Herz ist nicht genug. SPD und Wohlfahrtspflege: Sozialpolitik als frauenspezifisches Arbeitsfeld," idem., *Die bessere Hälfte kämpft um ihr Recht: Der Anspruch der Frauen auf Erwerb und andere Selbstverständlichkeiten*, (Cologne: Bund-Verlag, 1980), 119–43.

3. Juchacz, *Gründerin*, 45–66.
4. Dertinger, “Marie Juchacz” 127–31.
5. Jean Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 220–23.
6. Susanne Miller, “Marie Juchacz als Frauensekretärin der SPD,” in *Marie Juchacz: Gründerin der Arbeiterwohlfarht. Leben und Werk*. Hrsg. Arbeiterwohlfarht Bundesverband (Bonn: Arbeiterwohlfarht, 1979), 121.
7. *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, Abgehalten in Würzburg vom 14. bis October 1917*, (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1973), 265–66, 441–42 (hereafter cited as *SPD-Parteitag*).
8. Marie Juchacz, “Berufsarbeit und politisches Interesse der Frau,” *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 23, (1919): 831–35; Marie Juchacz and Johanna Heymann, *Die Arbeiterwohlfarht, Voraussetzungen und Entwicklung*, (Berlin, 1924), 5–9.
9. Marie Juchacz, *Der kommende Friede* (Berlin: Moeser, 1919).
10. Marie Juchacz, “Rede” in *Einigkeit, nicht Selbsterfleischung, Sozialdemokratische Reichskonferenz* am 5. und 6. Mai, 1920, Vorwort von Friedrich Stampfer (Berlin: Buchhandlung Vorwärts), 21.
11. For the text of Juchacz’s speech see, *Verhandlungen des verfassungsgebenden Reichstags, Bd. 326, Stenographische Berichte* (Berlin: Verlag der Buchdruckerei der Norddeutscher Allgemeiner Zeitung, 1920), 177–81.
12. On the work of women legislators under Weimar see Claudia Koonz, “Conflicting Ideologies. Political Ideology and Women Legislators in Weimar Germany,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1 (1976): 671–75; Christl Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten. Sozialdemokratische Frauen im Deutschen Reichstag und im Preußischen Landtag 1919–1933, Bd. 1*, (Göttingen: Sovec VG, 1986). For appraisals of the Weimar welfare state see Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1987), 128–46; Werner Abelshausen, “Die Weimarer Republik—ein Wohlfahrtsstaat?” in Werner Abelshausen, ed., *Die Weimarer Republik als Wohlfahrtsstaat. Zum Verhältnis von Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik in der Industriegesellschaft* (Stuttgart: Steiner-Verlag, 1987), 15–31; David Crew, *Germans on Welfare: From Weimar to Hitler* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 204–12.
13. Julia Sneeringer, *Winning Women’s Votes: Propaganda and Politics in Weimar Germany* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 58–59.
14. Sneeringer, *Winning Women’s Votes*, 59, 93; and the speech by Gertrud Hanna at the *SPD-Parteitag Weimar, 1919* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1973), 486–99.
15. “Reichsfrauentag” in *SPD-Parteitag Görlitz, 1921* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, 1973), 46–47.
16. *SPD-Parteitag Görlitz, 1921*, 49.
17. *SPD-Parteitag, Berlin, 1924* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1973), 225–26.

18. Elisabeth Vormschlag, *Inhalte, Leitbilder und Funktionen politischer Frauenzeitschriften* (Göttingen: Göttingen Universität Dissertation, 1970), 154–56.
19. *SPD-Parteitag Kiel, 1927* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, 1974), 318–20; Vormschlag, *Frauenzeitschriften*, 159.
20. *SPD-Parteitag, Berlin, 1924*, and *SPD-Parteitag, Heidelberg, 1925* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1974), 230–42 and 343–67, respectively.
21. *SPD-Parteitag, Kiel, 1927*, 304–05.
22. Marie Juchacz, “Das Führerinnenproblem,” *Die Genossin* 6, 3 (June, 1926), 187–89 and 7, 3 (July, 1926), 208–10.
23. *SPD-Parteitag, Heidelberg, 1925*, 117–19.
24. *SPD-Parteitag, Heidelberg*, 117–19.
25. Christiane Eifert, *Frauenpolitik und Wohlfahrtspflege: Zur Geschichte der sozialdemokratischen “Arbeiterwohlfahrt,”* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 1993), 16; Ute Frevert, *Women in German History*, (Oxford and New York, Berg Publishers, 1989), 176–77; Renate Pore, *A Conflict of Interest: Women in German Social Democracy, 1919–1933*, (Westport and London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1981), 34; Adelheid von Saldern, “Modernization as Challenge: Perceptions and Reactions of German Social Democratic Women,” Helmut Gruber and Pamela Graves, eds., *Women and Socialism, Socialism and Women: Europe Between the Two World Wars* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1998), 97; Boak, “Our Late Hope,” 290–93; Jürgen Falter, *Hitlers Wähler* (Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliches Buchgesellschaft, 1991), 140.
26. On the problem of recruiting younger women workers, see the extensive debate during the women’s conference at the *SPD-Parteitag Kiel, 1927*, 301–20.
27. Sneeringer, *Winning Women’s Votes*, 15.
28. Von Saldern, “Modernization as Challenge,” 97–99; Pore, *A Conflict of Interest*, 70–78; Eifert, *Frauenpolitik*, 236–39.
29. Eifert, *Frauenpolitik*, 236–39; Young-Sun Hong, *Welfare, Modernity, and the Weimar State, 1919–1933*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 46–58.
30. Compare Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, “Beyond Kinder, Küche, und Kirche: Weimar Women in Politics and Work,” in Berenice A. Carroll, ed., *Liberating Women’s History: Theoretical and Critical Essays* (Urbana, 1976): 301–29 and Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, 95–101.
31. *Vorwärts*, January 19, 1929.
32. *Protokoll sozialdemokratischer Parteitag, Magdeburg, 1929 vom 26. bis 31. Mai in der Stadthalle* (Glashütten im Taunus, 1974) 220–32.
33. See, for example, Marie Juchacz, “Absinken der Fürsorge,” *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* 7, 21 (1 November 1932), 641–43.
34. The speech is reprinted in Klaus Schönhoven and Hans-Jochen Vogel, eds., *Frühe Warnungen vor dem Nationalsozialismus. Ein historisches Lesebuch* (Bonn, 1998), 269–70.
35. Marie Juchacz, *Frühe Warnungen*, 270.

36. Marie Juchacz, "Genossinnen!" *Die Genossin* 8/9, 9 (August–September, 1932): 194–96.

37. Juchacz, "Genossinnen!," 195–96.

38. Sneeringer, *Winning Women's Votes*, 262–67; Hans-Gerd Jaschke, "Zur politischen Orientierung von Frauen und Frauenverbänden in der Weimarer Republik," in Detlef Lehnert and Klaus Megerle, eds., *Politische Teilkulturen zwischen Integration und Polarisierung* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990), 156–60; Rafael Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation: Right-Wing Women in Weimar Germany*, (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 2004), 200.

39. Schulze, *Anpassung oder Widerstand?*, 156, 158, 177.

40. In his very sympathetic treatment of Juchacz, Roehl also noted her silence in the crisis. "As always," he writes, "when an event deeply moved her, she remained silent." See *Marie Juchacz*, 163.

41. Roehl, *Marie Juchacz*, 164.

Carlo Mierendorff (1897–1943)

6



Carlo Mierendorff (1897–1943) Courtesy of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

“Democracy and Socialism were our polestars.”

—CARLO MIERENDORFF¹

UNLIKE MANY OTHER TOP SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LEADERS, Carlo Mierendorff did not elect to go into exile in the spring of 1933. Nor did he, as Nazi repression intensified, make the decision to wait out the storm by going into political “hibernation.” On the contrary, after narrowly avoiding arrest in Berlin following the Nazi electoral victory of March 5, Mierendorff escaped to Switzerland but remained there for only two weeks before returning to Germany. “What would the workers think,” he remarked to his friend, Carl Zuckmayer, “if we abandoned them? After all, they can’t all move to the Riviera!” For him the only choice was to go back and to fight.²

It proved to be a fateful decision. Arrested on June 13 in Frankfurt am Main, Mierendorff spent the next five years in concentration camps and, after his release, lived under constant surveillance. Undeterred by omnipresent danger, he still made contact with socialist and nonsocialist opposition groups and eventually became a leading member of the Kreisau circle, a multifaceted group that laid plans for a new, democratic Germany after the Third Reich. That Mierendorff did not share the fate of most of the members of this group, who were slaughtered following the failed assassination of Hitler on July 20, 1944, was due to his death in an allied bombing attack on Leipzig in December 1943.

Mierendorff’s willingness to return to Germany in the face of extreme adversity was characteristic of the man. Only thirty-three years old when first elected to the *Reichstag* in 1930, along with Kurt Schumacher, Theodor Haubach, and others he was a rising star among the “front generation” of up-and-coming SPD leaders and had made his mark primarily as one of the party leadership’s sharpest critics.³ Operating mainly on the provincial level, where he was employed in the Hessian Interior Ministry, Mierendorff had a keen sense of the realities of German politics on the ground. He developed a thorough critique of the SPD’s ineffective reaction to Nazism, laid out clear tactical proposals to turn the tide, and worked diligently to convince the leadership to implement them. That the party ultimately failed to pursue his suggestions effectively closed off its already slim chances of defeating the republic’s Nazi and Communist opponents.

Carlo Mierendorff was born on March 24, 1897, in the town of Grossenhain in Saxony. His father, Georg, sold textiles and provided well for his family, while his mother, Charlotte, ran the household. Of Lutheran background, there is little evidence that the family was religious. Carlo

later noted that his father was a man of liberal political views and an admirer of Friedrich Naumann. Raising his children in this spirit, he sent Carlo and his older brother, Wilhelm, to the humanistic Ludwig-Georg-Gymnasium after moving the family to Darmstadt in 1907.⁴

According to Mierendorff's boyhood friend, Ludwig Breitweiser, Carlo grew up in a "well kept" household in which music and a good laugh were appreciated. He played the violin, while his "temperamental," "cheery," and "naïve" mother accompanied him on the piano but, to judge by the laughter that often followed the duet's falling into disarray, neither took themselves too seriously. In Breitweiser's view, Carlo clearly inherited Charlotte's temperamental, outgoing personality, but it was the democratic convictions of his more taciturn (though not humorless) father that stamped his political outlook.⁵

At the *Gymnasium* Mierendorff became interested in art and literature and participated in the youth-oriented *Wandervogel* movement that challenged many of the social and cultural mores of imperial German society. He also befriended a number of like-minded boys such as Theodor Haubach, August Noack, and Breitweiser with whom he remained in close contact in the coming years. The events of August 1914 interrupted this youthful idyll. Infected by a wave of patriotic enthusiasm, Mierendorff and Haubach enlisted immediately following the outbreak of the war after hurriedly completing the requirements for graduation. A few months later the seventeen-year-old Mierendorff went into battle near Lodz on the eastern front.⁶

He was a very good soldier and soon received the Iron Cross, second class, for bravery. He also, however, became chronically ill. In March 1915 he entered the hospital with a severe inner-ear infection that cost him his hearing in his left ear. Frequent hospitalizations and, in February 1916, assignment to garrison duty, kept him away from the front for long periods, but in November 1917 the army sent Mierendorff (now a corporal) to the western front. The following year, while uttering the words "Brave, my son!" Kaiser Wilhelm II personally decorated him with the Iron Cross first class. By then, however, the young man had had enough of the war.⁷

As it did for many of his fellow soldiers, the front experience had quickly dampened Mierendorff's initial enthusiasm, as did the combat deaths of friends such as August Noack in 1914 and his brother, Wilhelm, three years later. In a 1916 essay, written in memory of fallen and a captured friends, he made his disillusionment clear:

You didn't just want to watch; you wanted to participate in laying the cornerstone of the new time that you sensed drawing near and whose construction you had to undertake and give meaning to . . . freed from the

leaden weight of the dead past. [...] Parts of the old groups are again slowly beginning to reassemble themselves, damaged, crumpled up, paralyzed by the scars of their experiences.⁸

To cope with such depressing circumstances, Mierendorff maintained close contact with his boyhood friends and pursued his literary interests. Convalescing in Darmstadt in the fall of 1915, he reconnected with Breitweiser who, along with several others, had just founded *Die Dachstube* (*The Garret*), an irregularly appearing magazine that published expressionist poetry and prose along with essays on literature and art. Driven by their enthusiasm and uninterested in making money, the youths produced the *Dachstube* themselves and circulated it at no cost primarily among friends. By 1916 they had access to enough equipment and technical competence also to publish books.

Mierendorff became one of the *Dachstube's* leading authors. Writing even while at the front, he published a variety of short texts along with two novels, *Der Gnom* (*The Gnome*, 1917) and *Lothringer Herbst* (*Autumn in Lorraine*, 1918). Mierendorff was possessed by the love of literature. The topic dominated his correspondence with friends and he sought out new acquaintances, such as Fritz Usinger, editor of the *Gazette de Lorraine* in Metz near the front, to discuss literary issues. He worked hard to develop his writing “as art” and was full of plans for future literary projects, but politics soon intervened to push such musings aside.⁹

“In October 1918,” Mierendorff later recounted, “I was part of an anti-tank unit on the western front defending a forward post from the Americans. News reports from Russia thrilled us. The common refrain of our evenings was that ‘we want to be good Bolsheviks.’” While it was true, as he noted, that German troops still held out, it was also clear that many, including Mierendorff, were ready for radical change.¹⁰

One month later, as revolution swept Germany, he urged readers of the *Dachstube's* final issue to “break their silence and not let events roll over them.” On the contrary, he called for action and encouraged his friends “to intervene” in shaping Germany’s future. After years of reacting “mechanistically” to the commands of others, it was time for people think for themselves and to “jump into the stream of history.” The pursuit of art, he argued, still remained their most “cherished goal” (*heißestes Ziel*), but in the current situation its value “could only be measured by what it had to offer in life’s struggle.”¹¹

An unpublished text, also written in November, provides an even clearer indication of the radically new emphasis in Mierendorff’s thinking:

At the Frankfurt train station a hungry man cries out, “We don’t need art, first we have to live.” This man is right. Away with art, it is a luxury. Away with this time wasting activity of the rich. Get rid of the artists. They are bums. No one has the right to live on the superfluous; each works so that the nation might live. Only doing what is necessary sanctions existence. Paintings, statues, poems, opera, and novels have no purpose. They absorb energy, money, material, and time. But because art will occur eternally . . . it requires further investigation and new interpretations of how we conceive it and understand its purpose. Art: it is, as one says, a barometer of our culture, a mirror of the time. It is a reflection of our selves, of the deadly division in the mental structure of the nation, of the century, and of Europe.¹²

What had happened to the aspiring expressionist writer? Why this turn from a pronounced literary focus to one in which political action took center stage? The answer, of course, is complex. As his 1916 essay noted, many in his generation had welcomed the coming of the war as a harbinger of a new world, however vaguely conceived. With their hopes to participate in its construction dashed by the catastrophe that they experienced, their trust in the state and society that had used them as cannon fodder also evaporated. As Richard Albrecht has argued, Mierendorff’s new outlook in 1918 derived from his conclusion that literature provided only limited possibilities for the individual writer to effect change as well as the context of the war and the outbreak of the Russian revolution.¹³ Mierendorff was, at heart, a man of action. Just as he was willing voluntarily to serve his country in 1914, now he was willing to serve the cause of radical change. Art, he believed, would not disappear, but in the midst of rapidly changing circumstances political activity took center stage. It was there, then, that he intended to make his mark.

And he did so primarily by wielding his pen. After returning to Darmstadt in November, Mierendorff, Haubach, and others founded a new publication, *Das Tribunal: Hessische Radikale Blätter* (*The Tribunal: A Radical Hessian Magazine*), which critically supported the new republic while “holding high the idea of socialism.” Calling for “justice” and “renewal” while condemning “discord” and “tepidity,” they were especially keen to win the active political support of intellectuals, whose previous detachment, they felt, had contributed to Germany’s recent debacle. Mierendorff was particularly interested in the youth. He urged them to insist on “the impossible” and “to make a thousand demands” with the goal of “driving the transformation of society rapidly forward.” They should “set the pace” against their fathers and “move beyond them” by placing “boldness” (*Kühnheit*) ahead of “doubts” (*Bedenken*). Mierendorff’s writing reflected his

pent-up energy and impatience with the pace of change. After losing four years of his youth at the front, he seemed to be racing to make up for lost time.¹⁴

From January 1919 until the middle of the following year, Mierendorff worked hard to recruit high quality authors, such as Kasimir Edschmid and Carl Zuckmayer, to the magazine. In fourteen issues they successfully gained the attention of the right, which attacked *Das Tribunal* for “playing with Bolshevik fire,” while the radical left criticized its rather vague socialism as “abstract propaganda for human happiness.” Despite their ability to stimulate polemics, however, Mierendorff and his colleagues failed to raise enough cash to keep the publication alive. By mid-1920, bankruptcy forced them to shut it down.¹⁵

Just as he threw himself into his work at *Das Tribunal* with “enormous elan” (Kasimir Edschmid), Mierendorff enthusiastically marched “directly from the trenches into the lecture hall.”¹⁶ In the fall of 1918 he enrolled in the law program at the University of Frankfurt am Main, but the following year transferred to Heidelberg where he studied political science (*Staatswissenschaften*) with Emil Lederer and Alfred Weber. In the summer of 1920 he moved to Munich in the hope of studying with Max Weber, but after the great sociologist’s death in June he decided to continue his education at the University of Freiburg. Finally, in May 1921 Mierendorff returned to Heidelberg where he completed a dissertation on “The Economic Policy of the German Communist Party” in 1923.¹⁷

During the winter of 1918–1919, as Mierendorff enrolled at the university and began work at *Das Tribunal*, he was sharply critical of the SPD’s “social-chauvinist” policies and its alliance with the military against the radical left. “The bitterness of the enslaved and the cheated gathered steam,” he wrote, as “blindness and political vagabondage throws Germany into a gruesome bloodbath. The unleashed soldiery was the tool of counterrevolution, which was now amongst them.”¹⁸

But Mierendorff’s own concrete political goals in the immediate aftermath of the republic’s collapse were not very clear. The conflict with Spartacus, the murder of Luxemburg and Liebknecht, the rise of the *Freikorps*, the destruction of the councils, and the imposition of the Versailles Treaty deeply disappointed him. As Carl Zuckmayer later remembered, however, despite these disappointments, Mierendorff “remained alive” and sought out others who, like him, were just beginning to mature and to think for themselves.¹⁹ At Heidelberg he and his friends considered themselves “ultra-leftists.” Unattached to any political party, they wanted to subject all of society’s hierarchical institutions, including the new govern-

ment, the National Assembly, the army, and Germany's reviving capitalism to thoroughgoing criticism. As intellectuals they believed they bore great responsibility for transforming the university and the society along antiauthoritarian lines.²⁰

This tendency to focus on the role of intellectuals in promoting change was characteristic of Mierendorff's political perspective throughout his career. Although he believed that the economic and political power of the proletariat, unfolding within the framework of the democratic republic, was the key to "overcoming capitalism," he did not come to socialism because he identified with the workers.²¹ On the contrary, he had first experienced workers "as comrades" at the front, where he became aware of them as "the most valuable part of our people" and where he committed himself to work for their integration into German society.²² He saw himself not as a worker but as an intellectual and held that the latter stood at the center of the process of political and social renewal. This outlook—rooted in moral idealism rather than Marxist materialism—shaped his activity at *Das Tribunal* and, later, within the SPD.²³

Mierendorff became a socialist because he regarded the socialist idea as the best hope for a just society. By the winter of 1919–1920 the rather abstract views he had espoused early in the postwar period began to give way to the very concrete immediate goal of defending the democratic republic. With right wing, ethnic-nationalist (*völkisch*) students disrupting the lectures of liberal thinkers like Max Weber and Albert Einstein, and with the reactionary right on the rise, he concluded that one could not withdraw into the "cloister" of the university "even for a few semesters." Thus, despite his earlier criticisms, he decided that the SPD was now the republic's best hope for survival and in January he joined the party.²⁴

At Heidelberg Mierendorff spent much time honing his research skills, but he also led the Association of Socialist Students and publicly criticized antidemocratic and anti-Semitic sentiments that were widespread on campus. On June 27, 1922, after Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau's assassination, he organized a controversial action against Professor Philippe Lenard, an antirepublican, anti-Semitic physicist and former Nobel Laureate (1905), who refused to comply with a government order for all state institutions to close and to fly the republican flag in Rathenau's honor. Instead, he flouted the law by keeping his institute open, not flying the flag, and requiring students to attend classes.²⁵

In response to this provocation, Mierendorff requested the rector of the university to take immediate action. When nothing happened, he led 500 students and trade unionists to Lenard's institute, where they demanded

that it close and raise the flag. After Lenard rejected these demands, Mierendorff convinced a policeman at the scene to place the professor under “protective custody” to ensure his safety. Thus, with no violence other than a broken glass door, the students and workers were able to close down the institute and raise the flag.

Although Mierendorff’s action had the support of most of the local press, on September 19 the state prosecutor in Baden charged him and several others with “breaking and entering,” “disturbing the peace,” and “fomenting a riot.” In April 1923 the court found him guilty and sentenced him to four months in prison, but—the record is sketchy here—it seems that an amnesty prevented him and his codefendants from actually serving any time. In July 1923 he also defeated university efforts to convict him of “disturbing the customs and order of academic life” and thereby deny him his degree. Mierendorff’s case, which was important enough to trigger a discussion in the *Reichstag*, reflected the growing political polarization of the country. The reaction of the state and university authorities illustrated their favorable attitude toward those who opposed the republic rather than those who defended it.

After completing his dissertation in 1922, Mierendorff’s academic mentor, Emil Lederer, helped him to find a job as a research assistant with the Transport Workers Union. Moving to Berlin in November, he settled down into a job that left little time for extensive research projects of his own. Instead he did editorial work on the union paper, the *Courier*, which served about 600,000 members, and wrote short articles on mail service, transportation and tariff policy, and the impact of the Versailles Treaty on the transport sector.²⁶ Thus, Mierendorff began his apprenticeship in the Social Democratic movement as an intellectual in its trade union bureaucracy. The leadership needed people like him because of their particular skills, but, as we saw in Breitscheid’s case, it tended to view such outsiders rather skeptically. As we will see, for his part Mierendorff maintained an equally critical attitude toward the party leaders.

As the republic’s political and cultural capital, Berlin was an exciting place to be and Mierendorff made the best of it. He had always relished café life and the Bohemian habits of the university student. In Berlin, too, he enjoyed the theater, cafes, and boxing matches. After meeting up again with Carl Zuckmayer, the two men stood at the center of a large circle of friends. One of them, the Swiss journalist Josef Halperin, became Mierendorff’s close confidant and advisor. Mierendorff wrote to him often of his career plans and of his hopes to eventually be in a position to influence SPD policy from the inside.²⁷

By 1925 Mierendorff had had enough of trade-union office routine. He decided to look for a full-time editorial post in the party press and applied for a position at *Vorwärts*, but he did not get the job. Instead, the party sent him back to Darmstadt, where he became deputy chief editor of the *Hessischer Volksfreund*, a small and unexciting paper with a circulation of about 12,000. As he had at the *Das Tribunal*, Mierendorff devoted great energy to his new job. Hoping to remove the paper from the grip of the “SPD-clique” and to give it a profile of its own, he recruited new writers from his own circle including Zuckmayer, Halperin, Fritz Usinger, and Alfred Vagts, another Heidelberg classmate, who served as U.S. correspondent.²⁸

While in Darmstadt Mierendorff became the chair of the newly-founded Association of Social Democratic Academics and joined the *Reichsbanner*, but he did not intend to settle down for very long. One of the key reasons for his departure from Berlin had been his sense of alienation from the older generation of party leaders who, rooted in the organizational traditions of the prewar era, had the party under its firm and—in his view—conservative control. Unlike them, Mierendorff did not view the world through the prism of Karl Kautsky’s brand of Marxist economic determinism; he was, rather, open to new ideas about the factors that motivated people for political action. Sharing the view of Wilhelm Michel that the SPD suffered from a “spiritual crisis,” he was open to the political insights of modern psychology proposed by the iconoclastic socialist Hendrik de Man, and he believed that socialist action was, at its core, the result of ethical motives. Thus, by the mid-twenties, Mierendorff’s intellectual outlook was quite distant from that of most older party leaders. In later years, as the crisis of the republic deepened, his criticisms of their theoretical and practical approach to politics intensified.²⁹

Mierendorff had been willing to go home to Darmstadt confident that his tenure at the *Volksfreund* would be brief. Indeed, within a year he again was ready to leave for more cosmopolitan climes. After mulling over the prospect of becoming a foreign correspondent in London or Paris, in February of 1926 he decided, instead, to take a job on the staff of the secretary of the SPD *Reichstag* delegation, Paul Hertz. From this position in the “anteroom of political power,” he hoped to join those who wanted to shake the delegation up, especially by attacking the “narrow-minded and weak” Paul Löbe, long-time president of the *Reichstag*.³⁰

In his official position as “second secretary” of the SPD *Reichstag* delegation, Mierendorff found himself charged primarily with gathering and analyzing information on a variety of issues facing the party.³¹ He helped

to edit the SPD's new *Year Book*, and, when Hertz had other pressing tasks, took over his editorial responsibility for its *Parliamentary Newsletter*. In addition to these responsibilities, Mierendorff published occasional analytical and informational articles in a variety of party publications. He took particular interest in the republic's military policy and in the work of the party press and, after participating in the election campaign of 1928, emerged as one of the party's leading figures in the area of agitation and propaganda.

Mierendorff's interest in the role of the military under Weimar derived from his concern for the republic's stability. In his view it was essential that the *Reichswehr* subordinate itself to civilian authority and he worked to combat its efforts to operate independent of state control. In 1925 he ferreted out and passed along information published in Carl Ossietzky's *Weltbühne* about the operations of illegal "Black" *Reichswehr* formations and right-wing death squads (*Femmemorde*), and in subsequent years he worked for the removal of *Reichswehr* Minister Gessler, who had allowed these developments to occur.

Following the SPD's victory in the May 1928 elections, the Party executive considered reassigning Mierendorff to a post more commensurate to his skills as an agitator and propagandist. In June it mulled over placing him on the staff of the Prussian Minister President, Otto Braun, and, in October, making him Prussian Interior Minister Severing's press chief. But Mierendorff dreaded such a prospect. Although his specific objections remain obscure, he had no desire to work for these veteran SPD leaders. As he wrote to Halperin in mid-June, "There are no bridges between us and the older generation."³²

By the fall, with his assignment still pending, Mierendorff's alienation from the party leadership intensified after the SPD-led government broke its campaign pledge and voted to build the pocket battleship. Fearing that the leadership would try to co-opt him by appointing him as a paid secretary in the executive, Mierendorff hoped, instead, that it would send him back to Darmstadt to work on the press staff of the Hessian Interior Minister, Wilhelm Leuschner, an old friend. He got his wish. In November the executive named the critical thirty-one-year-old to its newly formed commission on military policy and appointed him as Leuschner's press chief. Even after his election to the *Reichstag* in 1930, he remained in this post until the Nazi takeover four years later.³³

Once back in his hometown, Mierendorff came into his own as one of the party's most dynamic young intellectuals. Writing in journals aimed primarily at party leaders and activists, such as *Die Gesellschaft*, *Sozialistische Monatshfte*, and *Neue Blätter für den Sozialismus*, Mierendorff published dozens

of articles between 1929 and 1933 that aimed to steer the SPD leadership in new directions. As Jakob Reitz has noted, Mierendorff's work focused on four core themes: reform of Germany's system of proportional representation in parliament, the rise of the Nazi party, the development of new Social Democratic agitation and propaganda techniques, and foreign policy.³⁴

In Darmstadt Mierendorff was well placed to grasp the nature of the rapidly changing political impulses sweeping across the country during the later years of the republic. His work for the party *Reichstag* delegation had allowed him to develop in-depth knowledge of the Weimar political spectrum, while his familiarity with developments in provincial Hesse put him close to political realities on the ground. Using his well-developed research skills, Mierendorff proved to be one of Social Democracy's most effective synthesizers of these perspectives.

Until the onset of the depression, Mierendorff's main concern about the future of the republic was the continued influence of antirepublican, monarchist sentiment on its core institutions. In 1926 he argued that most politically active Germans, i.e., active voters, had come to accept the republican *form* of government and given up serious hope of the monarchy's return. Strong forces, however, were still committed to undermining the republic's democratic character, so it was now the *content* of republican politics, rather than the state's form, that was at issue. This contest, exemplified by struggles over the proposed expropriation of the princes and the continued use of the imperial war flag, was intensifying, and he worried, rightly, that republicans underestimated the danger.³⁵

It was this fear of the monarchist spirit that motivated Mierendorff's sharp criticism of the government's lack of control over the *Reichswehr* and the continued influence of militarism in its leadership. Mierendorff did not support the dissolution of the military. He insisted, instead, that the SPD had to lead the struggle to eliminate militarism from the armed forces and, thus, transform them into reliable instruments of the parliamentary state.³⁶

But the parliament, too, had serious problems. A central issue, in Mierendorff's view, was the use of proportional representation (PR) to elect representatives to the Reich and state parliaments. He believed that this system, in which parties selected ranked lists of candidates to be seated in accordance with the percentage of the vote each party received, in effect denied citizens of the right to directly select their representatives. The negative results of this procedure included falling voting participation rates, lackluster campaigns, fragmentation of the political spectrum and subsequent difficulty in forming a government, and the evolution of the parties

into institutions representing narrow interest groups. These groups (e.g., the unions or capitalist organizations) then saw to it that the parties' parliamentary nominees were specialized professionals who worked to defend their interests once elected. These representatives often become entrenched, making it difficult for new, vigorous leaders to emerge. Many, especially those near the top of the electoral lists, paid little attention to their overly-large electoral districts and spent most of their time in Berlin. Voters felt increasingly alienated from them and from the democratic order as a whole. Ultimately, Mierendorff concluded, these trends would destroy the parliamentary system.³⁷

While Mierendorff exaggerated the degree to which many of these problems grew out of PR alone, many of his criticisms, especially regarding the fragmentation of the electorate, were apt. Instead of working for reforms that would have preserved strong elements of proportionality (as in the current German system), he argued, instead, that the SPD should support the abolition of the list system entirely, a reduction in the size of the electoral districts, and the elimination of double candidacies. In effect, such changes would have introduced the majority system of elections, which, he hoped, would force candidates to appeal directly to the voters, require representatives to be more accountable to their constituents, and promote broader regional alliances among groups backing specific candidates.³⁸

To Mierendorff's great frustration, the party leadership was uninterested in his proposed reforms. Politicized in an era in which the SPD had to struggle against a majority system that had been rigged against it, they saw PR as a democratic advance worth preserving. Mierendorff's recourse was to appeal to the youth to take this issue in hand, but with little effect.³⁹

In addition to being among the few Social Democrats to identify the problems of the electoral system, Mierendorff was among the first to recognize the threat of Nazism. In an informational overview of the German party landscape published in 1928, he had identified them as one of the constituent elements of the antidemocratic *völkisch* movement, but he gave them no special attention. Shortly thereafter, however, he took a very different view. Indeed, at the moment when Nazi support in the *Reichstag* was insignificant, and the SPD, during Hermann Müller's Chancellorship, was at the height of its influence, he held that fascism represented a clear threat to the republic.⁴⁰

He reached this conclusion by paying close attention to the NSDAP's successful operations on the local level. In the summer of 1930, well before its electoral breakthrough in September, Mierendorff published an ar-

ticle in *Die Gesellschaft* that represented one of the most perceptive early analyses of the Nazi party. Noting that, beginning with the local elections of May 1928 and continuing through 1929, Nazi strength had been increasing in much of the country, he credited their success to their having built a strong, nationwide organization staffed by enthusiastic members. The Nazis skillfully used social anxiety caused by the deepening economic crisis and racial hatred to win support from the old middle class, white-collar employees, and peasants. They were especially effective in attracting young workers and students, whose economic prospects were dim and who responded enthusiastically to the party's culture of action (uniforms!), to the intellectual simplicity of its slogans, and to the opportunities it provided for youth to take positions of leadership.⁴¹

The NSDAP, Mierendorff argued, also effectively mobilized previous nonvoters. The secret of its success in this regard was its programmatic chaos, which promised something to virtually every group, no matter how contradictory. He was especially impressed with the emotionally loaded propaganda of Nazism. Unlike the SPD, whose propaganda appealed to citizens' "reason" (*Verstand*) and consisted of "enlightenment" through the "instruction" of the voters, National Socialist agitation, taking advantage of widespread resentments, appealed to the irrational and aimed to produce waves of emotion from its audience.⁴²

It was clear to Mierendorff that the Nazis were an expansive, dynamic movement. Their membership was largely male, but they were now reaching out to female voters and their influence was growing among government officials. Although he did not think they would win much support from the core of the SPD's constituency, he was quite certain that they immediately threatened the bourgeois parties, whose members would be attracted by Nazism's nationalism and anti-Marxism. Mierendorff thought it was quite possible that the Nazis could win sixty seats in the next *Reichstag* elections. If so that would strengthen the anti-parliamentary forces in that body considerably.⁴³

Mierendorff urged the SPD leadership not to be deceived by the programmatic contradictions of Nazism or by its internal factional rifts. The party needed to take the Nazi threat seriously and to mobilize against it. The SPD leaders, however, paid little attention. Preoccupied with the crisis of the Brüning government, it went into the September 1930 parliamentary elections unprepared to deal with the Nazi onslaught. When the NSDAP won 107 seats, the result more than confirmed Mierendorff's worst fears.

Following this defeat Mierendorff felt compelled to broaden and deepen his criticism of the SPD leadership. In his preelection comparison

of Nazi and SPD propaganda, he had observed that “The National Socialist movement has too much of that which is lacking in the SPD.”⁴⁴ This remark was intended to remind the SPD leadership that it had neglected the emotional element in building its base of political support. Now he reiterated this point relentlessly along with a litany of other criticisms. There was nothing inevitable about the SPD’s defeat, he argued. It had resulted from failed policies developed by a failed leadership.

The SPD’s two most immediate errors had been its decision to back the dissolution of the *Reichstag* that summer when it was unprepared to carry out an effective campaign and then to train its fire on Brüning rather than its main enemies, the Nazis and the Communists. But these mistakes, Mierendorff asserted, were just the last in a series of errors that had cost the party dearly. Now he traced the SPD’s difficulties back to misplaced priorities after forming the coalition in 1928, its decision to build the pocket battleship, its financial policies, and its willingness to overlook the strength of antisocialist forces in the Center party. The leadership was aware of the NSDAP’s strong showing in the earlier Prussian local elections. Despite its claims of surprise in September 1930, it should have known better.

To defeat the Nazis the SPD had to organize a systematic campaign that used new technical and tactical approaches. These were not yet available. It would also have to refocus its effort on the extra-parliamentary plane where it had essentially abandoned the field. Perhaps the defeat had done the party a service by waking it up to its errors. In any case it was clear that great damage had been done to the republic and that the defeat of Nazism was now the demand of the hour.⁴⁵

Mierendorff spent much of the next two-and-one-half years developing his analysis of fascism and attempting to provide the SPD with the techniques and tactics it had lacked that September.⁴⁶ By 1931 he was convinced that anti-Semitism was no longer one of the key attractions of Nazism. Its growing constituency, he thought, fed on the NSDAP’s anticapitalism, its opposition to the Marxist workers’ movement, and its aversion to democracy. To successfully combat it, he argued that the SPD must do more than simply increase its anti-Nazi agitation or strengthen its own organization. It had to present an alternative and *positive* political program. Mierendorff did not demand that the SPD break with its policy of tolerating Brüning. Instead he called for giving it a different and positive content.⁴⁷

In developing its programmatic alternative, Mierendorff urged the party not to focus solely on reversing the economic crisis. That was important, but it wasn’t enough. National Socialism’s success derived from

several sources of discontent and the party had to respond to them all. It was particularly important to grasp the psychological challenge this effort posed. Mierendorff suggested the SPD focus its propaganda on four core areas. It should set internationalism against Nazi nationalism and, in the face of the NSDAP's exploitation of the Versailles Treaty, it should call for reconciliation with France, an essential step toward peace, economic recovery, and a united Europe. To increase the legitimacy of parliament he urged support for electoral reform and a reform of Germany's federal system in a way that was understandable to the masses. Shutting down the sources of Nazi strength, he argued, and further developing democratic institutions would allow for the reintegration of those who had supported fascism into the republican order.⁴⁸

Developing the message was one thing, getting it across to the masses was another. To Mierendorff, time seemed to be running out. In September of 1931 he and his boss, Wilhelm Leuschner, uncovered internal documents that revealed how the Nazis planned to react in the event of a left-wing uprising. These so-called Boxheim Papers (named after the farm where they were hidden) made clear that, to secure their power, the Nazis would resort to martial law, the death penalty, and even the withdrawal of their forces to the countryside as a means of blockading the cities and starving out the urban workers. On November 25, when he and Leuschner made the documents public, they caused a sensation, but the effort to charge Werner Best, the Nazi leader in Hesse, with treason before the German Supreme Court, failed. Interested in eventually cutting a deal with the Nazis, the leaders of the bourgeois parties at the national level refused to press the case.⁴⁹

Although the effort to prosecute the Nazis went nowhere, the Boxheim Affair gave substantial impetus to the founding of the Iron Front in December. Together with Serge Chakotin, an exiled Russian revolutionary who had worked with the behavioral scientist Ivan Pavlov, Mierendorff now had the opportunity to promote new approaches to the propaganda that could be used in the IF's campaigns. Recognizing the importance of developing new symbols and positive, simple, hard-hitting slogans that appealed to people's hearts as much as to their heads, they proposed the symbol of the "three arrows," representing "unity, activity, and discipline," to counter the swastika and introduced the greeting of "freedom" with a raised fist to counter the Nazi "Heil Hitler." They also set out new systematic strategies for organizing rallies, mass demonstrations, and the dissemination of propaganda. Through the use of these symbols and propaganda techniques, Mierendorff and Chakotin aimed to reach out to the many

voters who were indifferent to the party's traditional means of attracting support, such as the press and public meetings. They wanted to develop methods that they could wield in the streets.⁵⁰

Mierendorff hoped that such an approach would reinvigorate an SPD divided between a reformist right wing that believed the republic could only be saved by holding onto its institutional power (e.g., in Prussia) and pursuing parliamentary politics, and an "old" left-wing that had more radical aims, used a more militant rhetoric, and opposed the right's focus on governing but was itself "trade unionized," bureaucratic, and "economistic." He called for the creation of a "new revisionism" to unite all of the SPD's activist elements, reenergize the left, and overcome the right's conservative grip. These forces could then shift the party's focus more in the direction of extra-parliamentary struggle.⁵¹

With Mierendorff's help, Chakotin led the way in developing the "new methods of combat."⁵² After experimenting on the fly in Heidelberg, in February 1932, just prior to the March Presidential elections, he sent his proposals for the new symbols and a new propaganda plan to party headquarters in Berlin but received no response. The following month, Mierendorff arranged for him to come to Berlin and present his ideas to the *Reichsbanner* leadership. Although he received a mixed response, at Mierendorff's urging the *Reichsbanner* leaders put him in charge of the IF's propaganda department.⁵³

Chakotin quickly issued instructions for the introduction of the new symbols and agitation methods around the country. These changes generally were quite popular among the rank and file—who were hungry to take the initiative—but they met with considerable resistance from top IF leaders who, due to institutional rivalries, inertia, and discomfort with the content of the new propaganda, failed to coordinate their respective organizations' activities or to put their resources behind the new policy. According to Chakotin, at one point, in the midst of the preparations for the Presidential runoff elections on April 10, *Reichsbanner* leader Otto Hörsing simply cut off the funds for the new propaganda arguing that the new ideas were "too modern," "too dangerous," were "contrary to police regulations," and were likely to be misunderstood by the public!⁵⁴

Although Hörsing's intervention was reversed, with the crucial Prussian Assembly elections approaching on the April 24, Mierendorff and Chakotin felt it necessary to plead with the SPD leaders to throw their full support behind the new policy. But the leaders continued to hesitate. Vogel, Breitscheid, Hilferding, Hertz, and others all privately agreed that much could be done to overcome the inertia and routine at the top that

was hindering effective change. When brought together, however, “they all rejected the new ideas.” Wels, in particular, was adamant. “We shall make ourselves look ridiculous with all this nonsense,” he asserted, and, like Hörsing, talked about “trouble with the police.”⁵⁵

After much discussion, Wels ultimately gave in but the party’s effort was belated and disjointed and the Prussian elections ended with the Nazis winning 37 percent of the vote and increasing their number of seats in the *Landtag* from 8 to 162. Meanwhile the SPD lost 800,000 votes and its delegation shrank from 137 to 94 seats. In the wake of this disaster the SPD leadership began to pay more attention to the reformers who pointed to regions of the country, such as Hamburg and Berlin, where their methods seemed to have had good results. The party leaders agreed to give Mierendorff and Chakotin the opportunity to fully apply their new techniques in the Hessian *Landtag* elections coming up on June 19. They also adopted the new “three arrow” symbol for party uniforms, flags, and propaganda materials.⁵⁶

Mierendorff and Chakotin went all out in the Hessian campaign, which, over a period of four weeks, gradually unfolded into a crescendo of carefully planned and managed activities. The SPD unleashed a “symbol war” against the Nazis. Iron Front flags and banners were omnipresent, activists distributed 50,000 “three arrow” buttons and greeted their neighbors with the “Freedom!” salute. Aiming to attract the youth and indifferent voters, the campaign used younger speakers whenever possible and it peaked with a series of well-orchestrated marches and rallies designed to illustrate the Iron Front’s unity and readiness to fight.⁵⁷

Unquestionably, the SPD’s efforts in Hesse outstripped those of the vaunted Nazi electoral machine. The Socialists staged ten major events during the campaign while the Nazis held only four and, during the last eight days of the contest, the SPD organized three parades in Darmstadt, the capital, while the Nazis did not organize any.⁵⁸ For Chakotin, the work there paid off. “The numbers are convincing,” he asserted, “[because] all the [bourgeois] parties, even the Center, lost votes. [In Darmstadt] the Nazis had lost 600 votes and the SPD, against all expectations, had increased its total by 1,500.”⁵⁹

Mierendorff, too, was enthusiastic. Statewide the party won 4,000 more votes than in the previous election and increased its support from 21.4 to 23.1 percent. In his view, these promising results were due to “the systematic use of new propaganda methods, which rested for the first time on exact psychological studies.”⁶⁰ He conceded that the gains were limited to certain areas. The Nazis’ backing had slipped in Darmstadt, but they had

increased their overall support in the region from 37 per cent to 44 per cent. Moreover, despite Mierendorff's claims to the contrary, with overall participation down from 82 to 74 percent, there was little evidence that the SPD's efforts had met the goal of mobilizing new and indifferent voters. Indeed, the SPD's propaganda in Hesse and in subsequent Iron Front campaigns continued to use traditional militant class-based rhetoric, the same language that Mierendorff had argued limited the party's ability to reach out to different groups. Thus, it proved more difficult to break with tradition than he had thought.⁶¹

It is clear, however, that Mierendorff's and Chakotin's efforts invigorated the Iron Front's rank and file by giving members a sense of going over to the offensive. Whether their ideas could have reversed the party's fortunes, however, remains open to question. In the run up to the national election of July 31, the Iron Front deployed the new symbols, slogans, songs, and mass mobilization techniques with great élan in the face of brutal street fighting with Nazi and Communist paramilitary formations. Campaigning amidst what Wels and Breitscheid viewed as "civil war conditions," ninety-nine people were killed in political violence between mid-June and mid-July and hundreds of socialist activists were arrested. But the party seemed to take heart. As Donna Harsch has observed, despite the powerful efforts of the NSDAP and the KPD, the party's energy and activities in this struggle appeared to be effective and its opponents took note: "In comparison with its earlier self the SPD [had] leapt forward."⁶²

In the end, however, as far as the leadership was concerned, not much had changed. As the Prussian debacle of July 20 showed, for Social Democracy's leaders the main struggle remained the electoral arena and not the conflict in the streets. Without the stomach for civil war, when push came to shove in Prussia and elsewhere, the Iron Front's leaders were not prepared to challenge the right in a pitched battle for power.

Mierendorff believed that the Prussian defeat and the Nazis' emergence from the elections of July 31 as the largest party in the *Reichstag* (with 37 percent of the votes) signaled the *de facto* end of the republic. "The Weimar Constitution essentially exists only on paper," he wrote, "In such an historical moment the party had one essential task: to recognize reality." Only if it grasped that a specific historical epoch was coming to an end, and then drew lessons from that experience, would the new era that was just beginning result in the victory of socialism.⁶³

Building on his earlier critique of the SPD's policies under Brüning, Mierendorff argued that there were four core sources of the republic's failure: a nationalist foreign policy, structural flaws in the constitution, the lack

of a socialist economic vision, and a mistaken political strategy. In the realm of foreign policy, he criticized German governments for pursuing a nationalist course that had caused continued conflict with Germany's neighbors and left it more isolated than ever. The SPD had done little to reverse this policy and to move it in an internationalist direction that favored a united Europe and reconciliation with France.

Along with the other republican parties, the SPD also shared the responsibility for failing to revise the Weimar constitution's weak federalism and dysfunctional system of proportional representation. The former made it difficult for the republic to make effective policy and the latter had fueled massive alienation from the parliamentary system. By rejecting reforms, the democratic parties played directly into the hands of the National Socialists who relentlessly attacked the ineffectual "system," and railed against the "bossism" of the "party state."

The SPD's failure to put forward a clear socialist vision was also decisive. Mierendorff believed that the social structure of the republic and the postwar economic situation provided Social Democracy with all of the prerequisites to build a true "people's movement," but the SPD's inability to present an exciting alternative left the field to the "primitive" but effective propaganda of the Nazis. Only after the defeat of July 31 had the SPD begun to remedy this problem by publishing a program calling for "the socialist restructuring of the economy." But this effort had little effect, because the party leadership could not see the importance of extra-parliamentary struggle and the need for new methods of agitation and propaganda. It failed to grasp the gravity of the real situation.⁶⁴

To conquer the "republic of tomorrow" Mierendorff concluded, the SPD needed a "clear, positive, and thoroughly worked out economic program, an equally clear socialist program for a new constitution and, above all, a program for a socialist foreign policy. While he believed that, in the economic sphere, the movement had made a start toward developing its programmatic goals, its attitude toward constitutional reform was mired in conservatism. If the party did not recreate the constitution in ways that enhanced democracy, it would be unable to prevent its right-wing opponents from carrying out a reactionary reform of their own. Finally, Mierendorff urged Social Democracy to work for a socialist foreign policy that, instead of seeking the right to rearm, worked for international security through the "systematic organization of peace."⁶⁵

Mierendorff repeated and enhanced these criticisms of SPD policy throughout the fall of 1932. Following the November parliamentary elections, when the Nazis slipped to 33.1 percent of the vote and 196 seats

(down from 37.4 percent and 230 seats in July) and the KPD won 16.9 percent and 100 seats (up from 14.5 percent and 89 seats), he feared that some workers were becoming increasingly radicalized as the economic situation deteriorated and the political system broke down. As they turned away from democracy, they abandoned the SPD, whose support had dipped to 20.4 percent and just 121 seats (down from 21.6 percent and 133 seats). The party stood on the verge of being overtaken by the Communists.

The situation was not hopeless, however, and Mierendorff insisted that, with the “correct therapy,” the SPD could regain the initiative. The key was the creation of a socialist vision of the state, economy, and society whose goals would capture the imagination of the masses. A strong state to guide economic life for the benefit of all and a constitutional model that was transparent and responsive to the people’s needs had to be core elements of this vision. Above all, democracy had to be at its center. Like the Communists and the Nazis, the SPD had to put forward great goals “in order to capture the soul of the masses.” And the party had no time to waste. As the crisis of the presidential system came to a head, the SPD had to position itself to take the lead.⁶⁶

But events were moving too fast for the party leadership. On January 3, in a letter to his friend Josef Halperin, Mierendorff noted that the political situation was “bleak.” “There is no one interested in our agitation,” he wrote, “and the work to reform the party from within—oh God, that, too, looks anything but encouraging. Where are the forces with whom one can work?” But, despite this depressing situation, he was still full of life and had no intention of giving up. He told Halperin about his decision to move in with his girlfriend, Franziska Kinz, and explained his plans to use the newspaper, *Deutsche Republik*, to promote extra-parliamentary struggle.⁶⁷

In the wake of Hitler’s appointment to the Chancellorship, Mierendorff threw himself into organizing protests in Frankfurt and Darmstadt, but he felt “overwhelmed” by the weight of events. It was difficult to combat the growing pessimism in the movement, and he was “disgusted” by the leadership’s response to the political crisis. He observed to Halperin that, “The cowardice, lack of character, and idiocy of the bosses knows no bounds.”⁶⁸

But he, too, was unsure of what to do. Underestimating Hitler’s skills and ruthlessness, he was not sure which forces in the cabinet, those of monarchist DNVP leader Alfred Hugenberg, or those of Hitler, would eventually dominate. Like many other Social Democrats, he believed that Hitler’s government would be unable to fulfill its promises to the impatient masses in the economic sphere and that therein lay Social Democracy’s chance to regain the initiative. The party had to prepare for that moment

by focusing on extra-parliamentary agitation to build opposition and an action program to rally the disappointed to Social Democracy's banner.⁶⁹

But Mierendorff was also worried that, by the time Hitler's government ran itself into the ground, the SPD would find itself without the "room for maneuver" necessary to launch a counter offensive. His fears proved to be well founded. Hitler's emergency decrees following the *Reichstag* fire undercut the Social Democratic press, destroyed the party's ability to campaign, and allowed the Nazis to ratchet up their terror operations against their opponents.

By the time of his reelection to the *Reichstag* on 5 March, Mierendorff was already a hunted fugitive. Charged with "corruption" in his job at the Hessian Interior Ministry, his office and apartment were searched and a warrant was issued for his arrest. Fleeing the police, he flagged down a passing car and was able to escape over the border to Switzerland where he made his way to his friend Halperin in Zurich. There he prepared for his fateful return to Germany.⁷⁰

Notes

1. Carlo Mierendorff, "Nach 14 Jahren. Heidelberg 1918 and 1932. Wie wir uns damals dachen und was daraus geworden ist," copy of an unpublished manuscript, AsD, Kleine Erwerbungen, Sign. 260, Document 184, 1.

2. Carl Zuckmayer, *Carlo Mierendorff. Porträt eines deutschen Sozialisten* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1947), 33.

3. Dorothea Beck, "Theodor Haubach, Julius Leber, Carlo Mierendorff, Kurt Schumacher: Zum Selbstverständnis der 'militanten Sozialisten' in der Weimarer Republik," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 26 (1986): 87–123; Dan S. White, *Lost Comrades: Socialists of the Front Generation, 1918–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

4. See Richard Albrecht, *Der militante Demokrat. Carlo Mierendorff, 1897–1943, Eine Biographie* (Berlin/Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1987), 16–20. In addition to Albrecht's comprehensive study, shorter biographical works on Mierendorff include Jakob Reitz, *Carlo Mierendorff, 1897–1943, Stationen seines Lebens und Wirkens* (Darmstadt: Justus-von-Liebig Verlag, 1983) and Ullrich Amlung, Gudrun Richter, Helge Thied, "von jetzt an geht es nur noch aufwärts: entweder an die Macht oder an den Galgen," *Carlo Mierendorff (1897–1943). Schriftsteller, Politiker, Widerstandskämpfer* (Marburg: Schüren, 1997).

5. Albrecht, *Der militante Demokrat*, 20.

6. Amlung, et al., *von jetzt*, 18–19.

7. Amlung, et al., *von jetzt*, 23; Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 22–23.

8. Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 28.

9. Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 24–30.

10. Mierendorff, "Nach 14 Jahren," 9.
11. *Die Dachstube*, Blatt 65, November 1918, reprinted in Albrecht, *Die militante Sozialist*, 31.
12. Quoted Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 32.
13. Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 30–31.
14. On Mierendorff's work at *Das Tribunal* see Albrecht, *Die Militante Sozialist*, 36–38; Beck, "Zum Selbstverständnis," 90; Amlung, et al., *von jetzt*, 26–27.
15. Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 38.
16. Edschmid quoted in Amlung, et. al., *von jetzt*, 26; Mierendorff, "Nach 14 Jahren," 1.
17. Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 35.
18. Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 39.
19. Zuckmayer, *Carlo Mierendorff*, 12–13.
20. Carl Zuckmayer, quoted in Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 49.
21. Carlo Mierendorff, *Arisches Kaisertum oder Juden Republik* (Berlin, Buchhandlung Vorwärts, 1922), 6.
22. Carlo Mierendorff, "Lebenslauf," AsD, Kleine Erwerbungen, Sign. 265, 2.
23. Beck, "Zum Verständnis," 92; Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist.*, 39–40.
24. Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 50–51.
25. Recounted in detail in Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 52–62 and Amlung, et al., *von jetzt*, 34–36.
26. Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 68–69.
27. Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 70–72.
28. Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 74–77.
29. Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 90–92; Wilhelm Michel, "Die geistige Krise in der Sozialdemokratie," *Der neue Merkur* 7 (Sept. 1924): 953–61.
30. Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 78–81.
31. On his tasks in this period see Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 82–91.
32. Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 86.
33. Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 88–91.
34. Jakob Reitz, *Carlo Mierendorff*, 74–81.
35. Mierendorff, "Republik oder Monarchie?" *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (hereafter cited as *SM*) 32, 7(1926): 435–39.
36. Mierendorff, "Aufgeklärter Militarismus. Über Staatsethos des Heeres," *Die Gesellschaft* 6, 1(1929): 136–37.
37. Mierendorff, "Die Gründe gegen die Verhältniswahl and das bestehende Listenwahlverfahren," in Dr. Johannes Schauff, hrsg., *Neues Wahlrecht. Beiträge zur Wahlreform* (Berlin: G. Stilke, 1929), 14–31.
38. Mierendorff, "Die Gründe gegen die Verhältniswahl," 31–35.
39. Mierendorff, "Wahlreform, die Losung der jungen Generation," *Neue Blätter für den Sozialismus* 1, 8 (1930): 342–49.
40. Mierendorff, *Zehn Jahre nach dem Kapp Putsch* (Berlin: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1930), 8.

41. Mierendorff, "Gesicht und Charakter der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung," *Die Gesellschaft* 7, 1 (1930): 489–98.
42. Mierendorff, "Gesicht und Charakter," 498–500.
43. Mierendorff, "Gesicht und Charakter," 501–04.
44. Mierendorff, "Gesicht und Charakter," 500.
45. Mierendorff, "Lehren der Niederlage," *NBS* 1, 11 (1930): 481–85.
46. Eike Hennig, "Von der Analyse der NS-Erfolge zur Bekämpfung der NS-DAP: Carlo Mierendorffs 'Kampf um die Massenseele,'" in Helga Grebing and Klaus Kinner, eds., *Arbeiterbewegung und Faschismus* (Fulda: Klartext, 1990), 262–83.
47. Mierendorff, "Was ist der Nationalsozialismus," *NBS* 2, 4 (1931): 149–50.
48. Mierendorff, "Überwindung des Nationalsozialismus," *SM* 37, 3 (1931): 225–29.
49. Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*, 416–17; Donna Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 149; Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 119–20.
50. S. Tschachotin and C. Mierendorff, *Grundlagen und Formen politischer Propaganda* (Magdeburg, 1932)
51. Mierendorff, "Aufbau der neuen Linken," reprinted in Wolfgang Luthardt, ed., *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterbewegung und Weimarer Republik, I* (Frankfurt am Main, 1978), 179–85; Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 176–77.
52. Serge Chakotin, *The Rape of the Masses. The Psychology of Totalitarian Political Propaganda* (London: Labor Book Service, 1940), 190.
53. Chakotin, *Rape*, 191–95; Karl Rohe, *Das Reichsbanner Schwarz Rot Gold. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Struktur der politischen Kampfverbände zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1966); 406; Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 178.
54. Chakotin, *Rape*, 197–98.
55. Chakotin, *Rape*, 201–03.
56. Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 180–81; Rohe, *Reichsbanner*, 407–08.
57. Hennig, "Bekämpfung," 270–71; Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 182.
58. Hennig, "Bekämpfung," 275.
59. Quoted in Hennig, "Bekämpfung," 271.
60. Mierendorff, "Die Freiheitspfeile siegen in Hessen," *Neue Blätter für den Sozialismus* (hereafter cited as *NBS*) 3, 8 (1932): 387.
61. Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 182–83.
62. Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 189.
63. Carlo Mierendorff, "Die Republik von Morgen," *SM* 38, 9 (1932), 739.
64. Mierendorff, "Die Republik von Morgen," 740–43.
65. Mierendorff, "Die Republik von Morgen," 743–44.
66. Carlo Mierendorff, "Der sozialistische Weg," *SM* 38, 12 (1932): 990–92.
67. Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 131.
68. Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 131.
69. Carlo Mierendorff, "Sozialismus in Front," *SM* 39, 2 (1933), 87–90.
70. Albrecht, *Der militante Sozialist*, 134.

Antonie Pfülf (1877–1933)

7



Antonie Pfülf (1877–1933) Courtesy of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

“a socialist in deed”—PAUL LÖBE, 1954¹

T ONI PFÜLF’S FUNERAL TOOK PLACE AT THE CREMATORY of Munich’s Eastern Cemetery on June 12. It was, to put it mildly, an unusual ceremony. In accordance with her wishes, there were no speeches. Two red carnations decorated her coffin, but there were no other flowers or wreaths in the hall. After hundreds of Pfülf’s friends and comrades had gathered, a representative of the “Cremation Society” read a statement: “Antonie Pfülf, born on December 14, 1877 in Metz, died on June 8, 1933 in Munich.” That was it. After a few minutes of silence the mourners went their separate ways.²

For many of them it was good that Pfülf had requested this silence. Many were, like her, active opponents of Hitler’s “national revolution,” and there was no place for them in the Nazi “People’s Community” (*Volksgemeinschaft*) except prison, a concentration camp, or a grave. Just to appear at her funeral was dangerous. Nazi spies were likely to be in the crowd and anyone speaking positively about her risked being picked up. Pfülf had sensed what was coming when she composed her testament on February 17, over three months before taking her own life. Despite her despair, she sought to make it easier for her friends to deal with her decision and to avoid exposing themselves to unnecessary risk. The arrangements she requested reflected not only her own personal modesty, but also her abiding concern for the welfare of others. Her suicide, too, was consistent with her past adherence to principle. Once it became clear to this fervent democrat and pacifist that the socialist movement in Germany had suffered total defeat, she could not accept the options of violent resistance or accommodation. For her, suicide was the only way out.³ As the death rattle of the republic came to its excruciating end, she wrote to her older sister, Emma, that her own death was one “for which she had long waited.”⁴

Pfülf’s tragic decision reflected the helplessness and despair of the movement to which she had devoted her entire adult life. It also marked the end of a life, which in many ways had symbolized the promise of social democracy and the republic not only for workers, but also for women. For Toni Pfülf had fought in the ranks of the socialist women’s movement from its early days of illegal activity until its “triumph” at the founding of the republic. As one of the movement’s most active representatives in parliament, she played a key role in the struggle to realize the promise of emancipation embodied in the new constitution. This effort,

which started with high hopes, ground to a halt as the republic slipped into its fatal crisis.

Pfülf's social origins were quite different from those of most women who became active in the socialist movement prior to the First World War. The majority of these activists came from the working class, but Pfülf was born into privileged circumstances. Her father, Emil, came from a military family, while her mother, Justine, had been born into a lawyer's household. Emil rose to high rank in the imperial army and also served in the Bavarian War Department.⁵ He and Justine were politically conservative, Catholic (there were also high-ranking church officials in the family), and proud of their social status. As was common at the time for families in this class, Toni and Emma grew up supervised by a governess and surrounded by servants. They were not expected to be independent but, rather, to marry in accordance with their station.

Things did not, however, work out that way. Toni had a powerful independent streak. As a student at the Higher School for Girls in Metz she grew interested in the then illegal socialist movement and its principles of social equality and justice. She also developed a desire to live on her own. After graduation, Pfülf shocked and infuriated her parents by announcing that she wanted to attend the teacher training school in Munich. Undeterred by their refusal to support her, she left home in 1896 and, for the next six years, supported herself while completing the training program.⁶ In 1902 Pfülf began teaching in the Bavarian countryside at village schools in Peiting, Oberammergau, and Lechhausen. She returned to Munich in 1908 to take a teaching job at the *Volkshauptschule* in Milbertshofen. In the evenings she also taught in a "continuing education" program for salesmen.

Life for the young teacher was by no means easy. Female teachers earned the lowest wages and often lived in run-down accommodations. While working in the countryside, Pfülf lived in a shabby, unsanitary apartment provided by the state. After returning to Munich she learned that she had contracted tuberculosis and entered a sanitarium for treatment. Impatient with the regimen there, she withdrew to a cabin in the mountains and eventually got back on her feet. She never fully recovered, however, and a relapse in 1915 forced her to take a one-year leave. For Pfülf, whose powerful strength of will generally kept her going, this was an unusual step and reflected the seriousness of her illness.⁷

Pfülf joined the SPD in 1902 after hearing Clara Zetkin speak on women's equality at a conference of Social-Democratic women.⁸ At that time, women's political activity of any kind was outlawed in Germany, and it was particularly risky for someone who wished to enter state service as a

teacher. But such obstacles did not intimidate Pfülf. Attending party meetings dressed as a man, she stood up to urge her comrades to fight for women's right to assemble, to organize, and to vote even when her appearance repeatedly caused police to close down the meetings. It comes as no surprise, then, that in 1908, when the government lifted the ban on women's political activity, Pfülf's SPD local elected her to its executive committee. She threw herself into party work distributing leaflets and speaking to different groups on issues such as women's suffrage and the struggle for peace.⁹

The decision to join the SPD led to Pfülf's complete break with her parents, though not with Emma. Emil and Justine Pfülf were appalled at their daughter's lifestyle and political views. After moving to Munich in 1908, they refused to allow her to enter their home.¹⁰ While the roots of Toni's conflict with her parents were ideological, paradoxically, it may have been the influence of her Catholic upbringing that actually fueled her estrangement from them. Pfülf was not a devoted servant of the Catholic Church and left it in 1919, when it became legally possible for a teacher to be "without religion." She was, however, completely devoted to principles of self-sacrifice and solidarity with the downtrodden that were very much in keeping with the social teachings of Catholicism (as well as socialism) and which she practiced throughout her career as a teacher, social worker, and political activist.

In 1904, for example, while she was teaching a class of 71 girls in the village of Lechhausen, the District School Inspector described her eagerness, pedagogical skill, and occasional hot temper when the group got noisy. Most tellingly, however, he noted that he was "moved" by Pfülf's "unlimited devotion . . . to a class in which talent was sparse."¹¹ From her experience as a teacher, a party activist and, during the war, a councilor for orphans and the poor, Pfülf had plenty of firsthand knowledge of German workers' grinding poverty. She often loaned poor families money and brought them necessities. Even as a member of parliament she sometimes ran out of money and would borrow more to help those in need. It got to the point where friends recognized that they "should pay attention to Toni, otherwise she'll give away her last shirt."¹²

Pfülf clearly walked the talk of Christian charity, but she also fully recognized that lack of power and resultant poverty had their roots in concrete social relations that were anything but God given. It was her belief that working people could win power and improve their social condition that brought her to Social Democracy. Not an original theorist, she accepted the basic premises of Marxism as commonly understood by Social

Democracy's reformist wing. Her writings and speeches during the republican period reflect her belief that modern family, gender, and class relations were a result of a historical process of economic development and class struggle. It was Social Democracy's task to wield power in this process by introducing reforms to move society along the road to socialism.¹³

Once she joined the SPD, the party became Pfülf's political and spiritual home. She never abandoned it, even after August 1914, when the SPD *Reichstag* delegation betrayed its internationalist principles and voted to grant the government credits to finance the war. Although she publicly criticized party Chairman, Friedrich Ebert, for supporting this policy, she also opposed leaders such as Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, who favored opposition. Instead, she urged abstention. To simply vote against the war credits, she feared, would leave the SPD open to charges of disloyalty later on. This position was a highly ambivalent one for the usually decisive Pfülf. There is no evidence, though, that her loyalty to the party ever wavered. During the war the SPD encouraged its female members to participate in social work projects that also brought them into cooperation with bourgeois women's organizations. Pfülf joined in this effort through her work in Munich as a volunteer councilor for orphans and the poor.¹⁴

With the collapse of the empire in November 1918, workers and soldiers in Munich elected a new council to support Bavaria's socialist provisional government, headed by the USPD's Kurt Eisner. Pfülf wasted no time getting involved. One day, toward the end of the month, she showed up uninvited at a meeting of the all-male council to demand that it consider a range of women's and other social issues. Its Chairman, Erich Mühsam, told her to leave the hall, but Pfülf refused and shot back that "You'll have to use force to throw me out because I'm here . . . to represent women's interests." These included addressing women's unemployment in the arms industries, disastrous housing conditions, the spread of tuberculosis, and the provision of health benefits for women and children. Pfülf also demanded that the council improve the care of prisoners of war and wounded soldiers. Finally, she requested the council to urge the new government to free workers arrested for striking or opposing the war.

Pfülf was able to blurt out her demands, many of which were certainly of interest to the council but, in the end, its members were unwilling to allow her to join their ranks. By a narrow majority they voted to expel her from the meeting.¹⁵

Such rejection angered, but did not discourage, Pfülf. She remained active in the Munich SPD and was determined to push women's concerns to center stage. She helped organize Munich's League of Socialist Women,

and was elected its chair, but this effort to bring together radical middle-class and leftist women had a very limited impact. It certainly received little support from socialist men. As one woman activist, Gustava Heymann, noted, the men were “increasingly uncomfortable” with this type of organizing because “they felt that it went right to the heart of things and threatened their sense of authority.”¹⁶

Amidst these frustrations, however, Toni Pfülf experienced one of the greatest successes of her life: her election, on January 19, 1919, to the 416-member National Constituent Assembly. The forty-two-year-old teacher—the first Bavarian woman ever elected to parliament—was one of a total of 37 women delegates among whom 18 belonged to the SPD and 3 to the USPD. The main task of the Constituent Assembly was to write a constitution for the new German Republic. Pfülf was assigned to a committee charged with drafting the text.¹⁷

It had not been easy for Pfülf to secure the nomination of her party largely due to her antagonistic relationship with Erhard Auer, the “almighty” Chairman of the Bavarian SPD and Interior Minister in the Bavarian Provisional Government. When addressing the Munich workers’ and soldiers’ council she had sharply criticized him for not ensuring women’s representation in that body.¹⁸ She and Auer also were at odds due to her participation in the local temperance movement, a politically unpopular undertaking in beer loving Bavaria. Without Auer’s support she had little chance of being nominated, especially in Munich, but Johannes Hoffmann, Bavarian Minister of Culture and later Minister President, convinced the SPD executive to support her candidacy in the rural district of Oberbayern-Schwaben. In 1920, and again in 1924, she won reelection to the *Reichstag* there, despite its many breweries.¹⁹

In her work in the National Assembly Pfülf concentrated primarily on issues related to the achievement of women’s equality. This was no easy task, for the socialist parties were the only ones in favor of such a policy and they did not command a majority. In June, after her committee voted to condition women’s equality by adding the vague term “fundamental” (*grundsätzlich*) to the text of Article 109, Pfülf and her socialist colleagues vehemently objected, but to no avail. In July, in a full plenary session, they attempted to replace “fundamental equality” with the phrase “men and women have the same rights,” but again without success. Thus, women’s equality in the Constitution remained equivocal, a fact that made the struggle for equal standing in German civil law all the more difficult.²⁰

Along with all of the other female delegates Pfülf favored abolishing capital punishment. When Dr. Düringer, a male DNVP representative, de-

riden an SPD proposal because Pfülf, a young and “inexperienced woman,” had presented it to the constitutional committee, she responded by expressing her indignation on behalf of all women in the Assembly, irrespective of party. She then asserted that, contrary to his claims about the need for technical legal competence, this question ultimately was about dealing with people, who are products of society, humanely and compassionately. Pfülf’s arguments, however, failed to persuade a majority. The effort to abolish the death penalty failed.²¹

Although the Social Democrats also were unable to find enough votes to eliminate discrimination against illegitimate mothers and children, they did win equal status for female officials. Addressing the Assembly on this issue on July 17, Pfülf argued that, if the Constitution was to establish the framework for later legal changes, then here was a good place to start. One could not speak of women’s equality if female officials (including teachers) continued to face immediate dismissal upon marriage, as well as other forms of discrimination in the workplace. For her it was a question of fundamental individual rights and employers, in this case the state, should not judge workers on the basis of group membership but, rather, according to their individual performance. Such arguments carried the day in the Assembly.²²

Pfülf was also involved in the drafting of SPD proposals in other areas such as the provision of pensions and the expansion of the welfare state. She did not, however, always accept the views of the majority of her comrades. In a discussion over school reform, for example, she opposed complete separation of church and state. She believed it was important to protect the inviolability of religious feeling by providing regular instruction in school. As one historian has noted, this position helped keep the door open for an eventual compromise between the SPD and its coalition partner, the Catholic Center party.²³ When one considers that she also left the Catholic Church in 1919, it also reveals her flexibility on religious matters.

There were, of course, many difficult moments during the debates of the National Assembly, but perhaps the hardest for Pfülf, as for the vast majority of her colleagues, was the decision to sign the Versailles Treaty. Pfülf publicly opposed the SPD delegation’s decision to vote in favor of the treaty, but she acceded to party discipline and voted with her comrades. She found such compromises torturous. As she remarked in 1924, “We have to adjust our politics to the realities of the day. That is a difficult thing, and I confess that I sometimes find it hardest [to bear, W. S.]”²⁴

Pfülf clearly recognized that, despite its many democratic gains, the new Constitution was not a socialist document and, in the area of women’s

rights, fell far short of the party's goals. The Constitution, she wrote, "is not and cannot be the expression of a one single world view or party program."²⁵ Future improvements depended on winning a socialist majority in the parliament. Fully prepared to be a part of that effort, she became a candidate in the *Reichstag* elections of June 1920.

This time she hoped to run in a Munich district, but, once again, she fell afoul of Erhard Auer. On February 21, 1919, a reactionary officer, Anton Graf Arco-Valley, assassinated Kurt Eisner as he entered the *Landtag* to resign his post as Minister President following the USPD's defeat in the January elections. One hour later a Communist waiter named Alois Linder, mistakenly blaming the Social Democrats, took revenge by seriously wounding Auer in the *Landtag*. These shootings set off a series of events that ultimately led to the declaration of a Bavarian Soviet Republic that was bloodily crushed in May; they also brought Pfülf and Auer into intense conflict.

As Arco-Valley, who had been wounded, and Auer lay in the hospital, a daughter of the latter caused a scandal by bringing the Count a bouquet of roses. When this "Rosenstraus Affair" made it into the press, it angered many Social Democrats, including Pfülf, because it made the SPD appear to sympathize with Eisner's murderer. At an assembly of party members Pfülf criticized Auer's leadership and called on him to resign, but in the eyes of most of her comrades, her demands went too far. Auer's friend, Wilhelm Hoegner, defended the wounded chairman by describing his serious condition, his sacrifices for the party, and his ignorance of what his young and inexperienced daughter had done. In the end Hoegner won the day and Auer remained at the helm.²⁶

In this situation there was no way for Pfülf to receive the party's backing as a *Reichstag* candidate in Munich. With Hoffmann's continued support, however, the party nominated her again in Oberbayern-Schwaben and, after 1924, in Niederbayern. Regularly reelected, despite her abandonment of the Church and opposition to alcohol, Pfülf's ability to win the loyalty of the voters won the admiration of friend and foe in the party. Even her nemesis, Hoegner, who did not think much of most politically active women, had to give her credit. Physically, he regarded Pfülf as an "almost manly type," who "on occasion could still make use of her feminine wiles." Intellectually, he placed her among those women, "who appeared to be coolly rational but in fact let their emotions drive their political decisions." Still, despite these prejudices, Pfülf impressed him as one of the "few intellectually significant women in the National Assembly and the *Reichstag*," and he praised the "energy and staying power" that characterized her work with her constituents.²⁷

Pfülf certainly was capable of reacting emotionally to events. On occasion such reactions could lead to an error in political judgement, as occurred with her demands for Auer's resignation during the "Rosenstrauss Affair." On the whole, however, her obvious emotional commitment to the movement was one of her greatest strengths. Her sincerity and energy, when combined with her understanding of people's practical needs, was doubtless a major factor in her ability to win voter support and the backing of her comrades in the party.

Under Weimar, Pfülf became a "professional politician." She had little choice in the matter after the Bavarian school authorities, responding to her departure from the Catholic Church, refused to reappoint her to a teaching post. Until 1919 it was illegal for a Bavarian teacher to not register in either the Evangelical or Catholic Church. Although we do not know for sure, it is likely that Pfülf remained affiliated with the church in order to keep her job and then quit once the Weimar Constitution dropped it as a requirement. When Bavaria decided to simply ignore the constitution, however, Pfülf found herself out of a job. In 1920 she raised the issue in the *Reichstag*, which found in her favor, but Bavaria never restored her to active service. For over a decade she argued with the state authorities over the legality of their policy, to no avail.²⁸

But Pfülf did not need her teaching job to get by. Her *Reichstag* salary of 9,000RM per year provided more than enough income to cover the costs of her modest Munich apartment and style of life.²⁹ Not having to teach also allowed her to focus her attention on party and national political affairs. Pfülf's activity and speaking ability made her one of the SPD's best known activists. The Kassel Party Congress of 1920 appointed her to a commission charged with preparing a new party program and she served as deputy chairperson of the women's conference. Sharing the platform with Elisabeth Röhl, she delivered the main address on "The Political and Organizational Effectiveness of Women in the Party."³⁰

For Toni Pfülf the fight for women's equality was just one element of the larger struggle for socialism. Because the SPD was the key instrument in both efforts, it was essential that women achieve equality within the party. Pfülf recognized that the accomplishment of even this goal would be long in coming. At the Weimar Party Congress of 1919, she observed that the most important obstacle to women's political effectiveness was "not the lack of recognition from male comrades, but, rather, women's own failure to appreciate one another." In order to achieve human dignity "women had to become more self-conscious." This was a difficult task, however, because "those who have long been slaves cannot suddenly become free human

beings.” First and foremost, Pfülf asserted, women had to “cultivate human dignity in themselves in order to reciprocally appreciate one another and thus make their work easier.”³¹

At the Kassel party congress one year later, however, she devoted much more attention to the impact of male attitudes on women’s political effectiveness outside and inside the party. Pfülf was convinced that, regardless of their public pronouncements, the majority of men in the conservative and liberal democratic parties opposed female suffrage because they feared losing their monopoly of power in the family and the state. But most socialist men were no different. Despite their “intellectual” acceptance of women’s equality as an essential goal of socialism, “In their hearts the great mass of the organized workers are against women’s emancipation.” “Sexual pride,” Pfülf argued, “continued to triumph over principle.” This situation made clear that “women’s emancipation could only be achieved by women themselves and that they would have to focus on particular areas of political work.”³²

This conclusion did not mean, however, that women should organize a separate political movement. Women did not form a homogenous political bloc and sharp ideological and social divisions among them, to say nothing of strong male opposition, would prevent the formation of an effective political party. Pfülf proposed, instead, that Social Democratic women organize around a series of specific “women’s” issues that would expand their opportunities for individual development and promote their advance “from political freedom to political maturity.” As women secured their rights, she believed that a change in the political culture would follow. Rather than simply imitating men in the creation and implementation of policy (*Männerpolitik*), this transformation would allow women to bring their own perspectives into public life, one which Pfülf was convinced would make politics more humane.³³

When criticized for the slow progress of the women’s movement, Pfülf did not hesitate to point out that, if the women did not have to waste so much time overcoming internal party obstacles to their work, they would have accomplished more. Yet her arguments did not make clear how the socialist women’s movement could change male attitudes within the party. Instead of addressing this problem head on, Pfülf’s recommendation that socialist women fight for specific policy goals effectively avoided the issue. Thus, rather than focusing on ways to work together with men to achieve their aims, women party activists wound up working largely on their own as the SPD pushed their goals onto the back burner.

The political agenda that Pfülf outlined at Kassel was certainly ambitious. While Röhl’s speech focused on the need to recruit housewives as

well as female workers and on the methods for doing so, Pfülf elaborated a series of parliamentary goals derived largely from her experience in the National Assembly and the *Reichstag*. To bring women's place in German civil law into conformity with the equality promised by the constitution, the state had to rewrite marriage, divorce, family and labor law in ways that increased women's decision-making and economic power.

Pfülf believed that, as economic development undermined the bonds of traditional family life, the role of the state within the family would increase. With the constitution now promising support for families with children, the door was opened for a range of state policies to ease women's movement between the workplace and home. Protection for mothers, state support for children, equality for illegitimate mothers and children, improved housing conditions, and other positive forms of "social hygiene" would have a much more beneficial impact on population growth than laws, like the ban on abortion, which aimed to punish and had to be reconsidered.

For women to achieve equality as individuals, Pfülf argued that it was essential that they receive equal pay for equal work and full access to social and, especially, unemployment insurance. But she also believed that reforms had to extend beyond the economic sphere if men and women were really going to create a new political culture of freedom. To that end, she urged women to raise their voices against unjust forms of punishment large and small. They should fight not only against the death penalty, but also against the use of all forms as violence as a means of exacting retribution or imposing discipline, especially in the schools. By working to end such practices, women would be promoting the development of free individuals whose actions would reflect their sense of personal responsibility rather than fear.³⁴

The reforms that Pfülf advocated would have gone far to improve women's status under capitalism, but most of them were not achieved in Germany until well after the Second World War. While "forward looking" in most respects, Pfülf's thinking also reflected some very traditional ideas that were widely held in German society and exhibited considerable staying power within the socialist women's movement. By arguing, for example, that women's equality would raise the "heart" to the same level as the "head" in German politics, she reinforced the view that women were "emotional" and thus incapable of responsibly wielding power.³⁵ Pfülf opposed such conclusions in the SPD and in parliament but, paradoxically, she also stuck by her belief that women, by nature, would bring a fundamentally different dimension to German political culture.

Toni Pfülf's hopes that the German parliamentary system would facilitate the achievement of women's equality proved illusory. Along with most

of the other women in the SPD *Reichstag* delegation, she worked hard to achieve the reforms outlined at Kassel, but encountered tenacious and largely successful resistance from the nonsocialist parliamentary majority. Pfülf concentrated primarily on school reform, youth policy, reform of the criminal code, and family and divorce laws.³⁶ Her efforts in regard to the latter illustrate well the difficulties she and her comrades faced.

During the mid-1920s the left parties and the DDP made several unsuccessful efforts to craft legislation to provide women with legal equality within the family. As a result of these failures, male control over property and children remained intact and husbands could even force their wives to quit their jobs. Divorce generally still required that a court declare one of the two parties to be “guilty” of ruining the marriage. This process alone often made people’s lives miserable and the verdict, given the inequality of the system, was often disastrous for women.

In 1928, following the formation of the “Great Coalition,” the SPD attempted to push through legal changes that would have made voluntary divorce easier and fundamentally improved the position of women as well as illegitimate mothers and children. In a passionate address to the *Reichstag*, Pfülf demanded that civil law be brought into conformity with the equality promised by the Constitution. Capitalism was transforming society, she argued, and, with over 11 million women working, the traditional family was in a state of dissolution. Legislators should not only make voluntary divorce easier, but, they should guaranty women’s equal right to work, to own and administer property, and to retain authority over their children following divorce. She also insisted that the millions of illegitimate mothers and children deserved equal rights, and, to improve their condition, increased state support, not condemnation.³⁷

Right-wing delegates repeatedly interrupted Pfülf’s speech by shouting that women who wanted independence “should not marry!” When she noted that a “smart” woman might think twice before marrying and turning over all her property to her husband, the conservatives shouted that “a women who loves is not smart, but a woman who is smart usually finds no love!”³⁸ Such exchanges reflected the high level of condescension and hostility felt by many conservatives in the parliament for the women delegates, especially those on the political left. While they provide only a foretaste of the hostility and disorder that beset the *Reichstag* after the Nazis became a major party, for Pfülf and her colleagues they were surely depressing enough. In the end, none of their proposed changes to family law secured a majority.

Pfülf did not allow herself to be intimidated either in the *Reichstag* or in debates outside of parliament. Though she knew that the Nazis partic-

ularly despised her, she even was willing to walk right into their meetings and try to refute their attacks. In January 1932, for example, she attended a speech given in Weimar by Julius Streicher, the brutal Nazi political boss (*Gauleiter*) of Franconia and editor of the semipornographic and anti-Semitic newspaper, *Der Stürmer* (*The Stormer*). When she rose to ask a question, the crowd responded with laughter, while Streicher urged her to “Go on home. Grab a mop and cleaning rag and leave the politics to the men!”³⁹ For Pfülf and those in Germany like her, who attempted to persuade on the basis of reason, this kind of irrational dismissal must have been particularly galling.

By the late 1920s Pfülf was certainly frustrated with the SPD’s inability to achieve substantial reforms for women. Even within the party itself their advancement had gone very slowly. Few women occupied positions of authority in the SPD, and, when compared to their substantial party membership, few stood as candidates for election to public office on any level. Pfülf hesitated to respond to this problem by supporting a proposal requiring women to be appointed or nominated in proportion to their numbers within the party. Instead, as she had argued in 1920, she urged women to “get over their inferiority complex” and take the initiative, as individuals, to participate in party life and stand for office. This outlook illustrates clearly that Pfülf remained convinced that women could advance within the SPD, if they were willing to make the effort. At the same time it reflects a certain amount of impatience with female comrades who believed that other internal obstacles hindered their ability to gain power in the SPD.⁴⁰

The onset of the depression and rise of Nazism after 1929 pushed all of these problems into the background. Pfülf recognized early on that the Nazi movement was a serious threat to freedom and to peace. In 1930, during the summer electoral campaign, she warned her audiences of Nazi aims to roll back workers’ and women’s rights while raising a new generation on the barracks square.⁴¹ Still, the extent of the Nazi triumph on September 14 came as a shock. In her view, the “Praetorian Guard” of the antirepublican reactionaries, now backed by many economically-desperate workers, stood poised to destroy the republic. The SPD’s immediate tasks were clear: it had to defend the social insurance system and worker’s organizations, protect the youth, the sick, and the aged, and fight against efforts to reduce wages and worker’s living standards. By doing so it could erect a dam against the reactionary flood.⁴²

Pfülf was discouraged by the SPD’s inability to follow through on past legislative initiatives in the new parliament, but she urged her comrades not

to lose heart. Instead, they should close ranks for the hard work of defending democracy through popular enlightenment. Characteristically, she threw herself into this work as well as her duties in the *Reichstag*. The situation in that body, however, was anything but encouraging as the extremist parties obstructed legislative work and the SPD found itself supporting the “lesser evil” by tolerating Brüning and, in the spring of 1932, supporting Hindenburg’s presidential candidacy.

The policy of “toleration” was an especially bitter pill for Pfülf. The SPD essentially stood by while Brüning’s brutal austerity program attacked Germany’s workers and the poor, just the people she believed the party had to defend. One could give speeches—and she did—condemning National Socialism, but it was extremely difficult to defend the party’s policies in the *Reichstag*. Aside from appeals to defend the remnants of the meager social safety net, the party seemed to offer no way out of the economic and political crisis.⁴³

As violence, terror, and political chaos mounted, Pfülf increasingly placed her hopes on the Iron Front, which appeared to be a powerful instrument for the defense of the democratic order. Yet here, too, her hopes were dashed when the party and union leadership, fearing civil war, refused to confront Chancellor von Papen’s illegal overthrow of the SPD-led Prussian government in July 1932. Pfülf knew that many rank-and-file-comrades could not understand the SPD’s quiescence. But, aside from observing that, with millions unemployed, a general strike was not a viable option, she had no good answers for them and she knew it.⁴⁴

During the five weeks between Hitler’s appointment to the Chancellorship and the elections of March 5, Pfülf continued to bravely speak her mind. The police arrested and held her for two days after she gave a speech in Weiden on February 26 in which she condemned Nazi violence and murder, restrictions on political activity, and censorship of the press. She ended her speech by reminding her listeners of a recent Iron Front rally in Berlin at which 200,000 people had gathered to show that brutal oppression could not intimidate them. She spoke defiantly and confidently.

In fact, however, she sensed that catastrophe loomed. For Pfülf, the SPD and trade union leaders’ “wait and see” strategy ignored reality and reflected the movement’s weakness and the republic’s impending doom. On February 17 she wrote out her testament and named her sister as executor. She did not wish to go on if the party and the democratic state were destroyed.

Pfülf was reelected in March and was present later that month when the *Reichstag* passed the Enabling Act granting Hitler virtually unlimited power.

At first she thought that the SPD delegation should not participate in such a parliamentary farce. With the KPD banned, dozens of SPD delegates under arrest or in flight, and the rest of the parties cowed, why should the remaining 94 SPD representatives risk appearing in a hall filled with SA thugs? After heated debate, however, she agreed with her friend, Louise Schroeder, that the SPD delegation should attend and show the world that they had voted “no!” In the end all of the remaining SPD delegates joined in this futile act of defiance.

As the spring of 1933 unfolded, the workers’ movement crumbled in the face of state oppression and internal division. On May 2, the Nazi government banned the trade unions and arrested their leaders even after many of the latter had tried to reach an accommodation with the regime. The SPD was unable to develop a coherent response to the Nazi threat. While the executive advocated setting up a headquarters in exile and reorganizing for underground work, some members of the *Reichstag* delegation, including Pfülf’s close friend, Paul Löbe, argued that the leadership should weather the storm within Germany. Pfülf had helped comrades like Rudolf and Toni Breitscheid escape to Switzerland, but she was uninterested in going abroad herself. At the same time, she opposed any effort by remaining members of the parliamentary delegation to placate the Nazi regime.⁴⁵

The issue came to a head on May 17, when Hitler summoned the *Reichstag* and demanded that the parties join in support of a “peace resolution” intended to calm foreign concerns about his government’s intentions. All of the remaining 65 SPD delegates were inwardly torn about how to respond. They did not wish to lend Hitler’s regime support, but they also did not want to appear unpatriotic and feared for the safety of thousands of imprisoned comrades, who would be subject to reprisals by the Nazis if they voted against the resolution. Many were none too pleased when the leadership in exile sent Friedrich Stampfer and Hans Vogel to urge them not to participate in the meeting and to issue a separate statement, published abroad, attacking the Nazi state.⁴⁶

On the morning of the *Reichstag* meeting, the delegation agonized over its decision. Pfülf was clearly shaken by the strain. She agreed with Stampfer and Vogel and was horrified at the dissention and conflict among her comrades. At one point, according to Wilhelm Hoegner, while “shaking with nervous cramps” Pfülf repeatedly shouted that, “to sign onto the joint declaration of the bourgeois parties means war!” From Hoegner’s point of view—he was a supporter of the resolution—she had “lost it.” Disappointed in the outlook of long-time friends like Löbe, who had won a majority over to the opposite position, she could no longer see reason.⁴⁷

Following the 48 to 17 vote in favor of supporting the resolution, Pfülf left the *Reichstag*. For the first time she refused to follow party discipline and vote with the majority in the afternoon session. Instead, she took a room at a pension near the station and wrote letters saying goodbye to friends and comrades. The next day, on the train back to Munich, she attempted to kill herself with a drug overdose, but failed. She was discovered and sent to a Munich hospital where she recovered. A few days later she went home.⁴⁸

Over the next few weeks a number of comrades came to visit including Paul Löbe, Louise Schroeder, and Josef Felder. They tried to convince her that she was much needed and that it was possible to go underground. Löbe told her point blank that “suicide was no different than abandoning the comrades by going into exile.” All of these efforts failed to impress her.⁴⁹ Her last conversation with Felder tells us much about her state of mind in the face of the movement’s collapse. “It is really unimportant,” she said, “if my professional life comes to an end, even if it means that I have to sweep streets to get by. But that a great party like the SPD along with millions of trade unionists, doesn’t even try to defend itself—this is what I can’t bear.” Holding a packet of pills in her hand to illustrate her intentions, she told Felder that, “if our colleagues in the *Reichstag* delegation go back to Berlin again, I will not be there.”⁵⁰ On 8 June, two days before the delegation’s next scheduled meeting, she followed through on her threat. This time she succeeded.⁵¹

Notes

1. Paul Löbe, *Der Weg war lang. Lebenserinnerungen von Paul Löbe* (Berlin: Arani-Verlag-Gesellschaft, 1954), 79.

2. The funeral is described in Wilhelm Hoegner, *Der schwierige Aüssenseiter. Erinnerungen eines Abgeordneten, Emigranten, und Ministerpräsidenten* (Munich: Isar Verlag, 1959), 112; Irma Hildebrandt, “Nachruf auf eine Unbeugsame. Toni Pfülf 1877–1933,” idem, *Bin halt ein zähes Luder, 15 Münchner Frauenporträts* (Munich: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1991), 133–34; Michael Schröder, *Toni Pfülf*, (Munich: Bayerisches Seminar für Politik (Selbstdruck), 1984), 1.

3. Biographical information on Pfülf is sparse. The most important study is Antje Dertinger’s “biographical story” entitled *Dazwischen liegt nur den Todt. Leben und Sterben der Sozialisten Antonie Pfülf* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1984). Also useful are the essays by Hildebrandt and Schröder, cited in footnote 2; Eva Maria Volland, “Antonie (“Toni”) Pfülf- . . . die Interessen der Frauen zu vertreten,” in Harmut Mehringer, ed., *Von der Klassenbewegung zur Volkspartei. Wegmarken der bay-erischen Sozialdemokratie 1892–1992* (Munich: Saur, 1992), 187–91; Marie Juchacz,

“Toni Pfülf,” idem., *Sie lebten für eine bessere Welt* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1971): 89–92.

4. Text reprinted in Dertinger, *Dazwischen*, 60.

5. Dertinger asserts that Emil Pfülf rose to the rank of Colonel (Oberst). Juchacz, however, claims he was a major. See Dertinger, *Dazwischen*, 17 and Juchacz, *Sie Lebten*, 89.

6. It is not clear how she managed to support herself, Juchacz asserts that she borrowed money, Schröder and Dertinger claim she worked, while Hildebrandt says she did both.

7. Dertinger, *Dazwischen*, 15; Hildebrandt, “Nachruf,” 144, Christl Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten: Sozialdemokratischen Frauen im Deutschen Reichstag und Preußischen Landtag 1919–1933, Vol. II* (Göttingen, 1986), 174

8. Volland, “die Interessen der Frau,” 187.

9. Much of what we know of her political activity in these years stems from the testimony of Emil Holzapfel, born 1903, who, accompanied by his grandfather, attended political meetings where Pfülf spoke. In his description of a party meeting in 1911, he notes that Pfülf attended dressed as a man, but it is not clear why this would have been necessary since it was then legal for women to attend such meetings. Dertinger’s biography also contains descriptions of Pfülf speaking at meetings and causing them to be closed down due to her presence, but her source is unclear. Volland claims that Holzapfel describes Pfülf at a meeting in 1905, but his memoirs only refer to the meeting of 1911. See Oskar Krahrmer and Gerdi Müller, eds., *Der rote Emil. Ein bayeischer Sozialist erzählt* (München: O. Krahrmer, 1983), 109–10; Dertinger, *Dazwischen*, 12; Volland, “die Interessen der Frau,” 187.

10. Dertinger, *Dazwischen*, 18.

11. Dertinger, *Dazwischen*, 19 and Schröder, *Toni Pfülf*, 2–3.

12. Helene Joringer quoted in Dertinger, “Toni Pfülf (1877–1933). Geschichte einer Recherche,” in Peter Lösche, et al., eds., *Vor dem Vergessen bewahren*, 290–91.

13. For Pfülf’s views on social change see, for example, Toni Pfülf, *Kultur und Schulpolitik. Erläuterungen zum Görlitzer Programm* (Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1922): 3–6; idem., “Die Reform des Ehescheidungsrechtes,” *Arbeitswohlfahrt* 3,1 (January 1928): 3.

14. Hildebrandt, “Nachruf,” 140–41; Ute Frevert, *Women in German History*, 165–66.

15. Krahrmer und Müller, *Der rote Emil*, 111.

16. Quoted in Volland, “. . . der Interessen der Frauen,” 188.

17. Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten, II*, 62; Susanne Miller, “Die Parlamentarierinnen der ersten Generation sind ihren Lebenszielen treu geblieben,” in Antje Huber, ed., *Verdient die Nachtigall Lob wenn sie singt?* (Stuttgart/Herford: Seewald, 1984), 64.

18. Krahrmer und Müller, *Der rote Emil*, 111.

19. Wilhelm Hoegner, *Flucht vor Hitler* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1977), 48; Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten, I*, 148; Hildebrandt, “. . . in der Interesse der Frauen,” 142.

20. Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten, Vol I*, 169–70.
21. Toni Pfülf, *Die Deutsche Nationalversammlung 1919, vol. 6*, edited by Dr. Edward Heilfron, 16. Juli 1919, 58. Sitzung, (Berlin, Verlag der Buchdrucker der Norddeutscher Allgemeiner Zeitung), 3871.
22. Pfülf, Nationalversammlung, 17 Juli 1919, 59. Sitzung, 3982–983; Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten, I*, 171.
23. Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten, I*, 171.
24. Quoted in Schröder, *Toni Pfülf*, 11.
25. Quoted in Schröder, *Toni Pfülf*, 168.
26. Hoegner, *Der schwierige Aussenseiter*, 18.
27. Hoegner, *Flucht*, 48.
28. Dertinger, “Geschichte einer Recherche,” 286; Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten, II*, 174.
29. After the inflation ended in 1924, members of parliament earned 9,000 RM per year. In 1930, following the onset of the depression, this figure was reduced to 7,200. See Gerhard Loewenberg, *Parliament in the German Political System* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966), 49.
30. Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten, I*, 160–61; *SPD-Parteitag Kassel, 1920*, “Bericht über die Frauenkonferenz der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands. Abgehalten am 9. und 10. Oktober 1920 in Kassel,” (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1973), 348–57.
31. *SPD-Parteitag Weimar, 1919*, “Bericht über die Frauenkonferenz der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands. Abgehalten am 15. und 16. Juni 1919 in Weimar” (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1973), 476.
32. *SPD-Parteitag Kassel, 1920*, 349.
33. *SPD-Parteitag: Kassel, 1920*, 356–57.
34. *SPD-Parteitag: Kassel, 1920*, 351–56.
35. *SPD-Parteitag: Kassel, 1920*, 357.
36. For her views on these and other issues see, *Verhandlungen des Reichstages Bd. 387*, 101. Sitzung, 24. Juli 1925 (Berlin: Verlag der Buchdrucker der Norddeutscher Allgemeiner Zeitung, 1925), 347–3473; Toni Pfülf, “Die Disziplin der Fürsorgeerziehungsanstalt,” *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* 1, 1 (Okt., 1926): 14–18; idem., “Strafrechtsreform,” *Die Genossin*, 9, 4 (Sept., 1927): 307–311; idem., “Die Reform des Ehescheidungsrechtes,” *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* 3, 1 (Jan., 1928): 3–9.
37. *VdR, Bd. 423*, 22. Sitzung, 30. Nov., 1928, 564–69.
38. *VdR, Bd. 423*, 22. Sitzung, Nov. 1928, 566–67.
39. Quoted in Hildebrandt, “Nachruf,” 145.
40. *SPD-Parteitag Kiel, 1927*, 322; Dertinger, *Dazwischen*, 50.
41. Dertinger, *Dazwischen*, 67.
42. Toni Pfülf, “Vom Beruf dieses Reichstages zu großer Gesetzgebung,” *Die Genossin*, 11, 7(1930): 404–05.
43. Dertinger, *Dazwischen*, 68.
44. Dertinger, *Dazwischen*, 69–72.

45. Dertinger, *Dazwischen*, 91.
46. Heinrich August Winker, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 933–34.
47. Hoegner, *Der schwierige Aussenseiter*, 109.
48. Dertinger, *Dazwischen*, 117–18.
49. Emil Werner, *Die Freiheit hat ihren Preis* (München: Georg-von-Vollmar-Akademie, 1979), 170–71; Wickert, *Unsere Erwählten, I*, 237–38.
50. Felder, “Mein Weg—Buchdrucker, Journalist, SPD-Politiker,” in *Abgeordneter des deutschen Bundestages—Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen, Bd. 1* (Boppard: Boldt, 1982), 51.
51. In addition to a quiet, simple funeral ceremony, Pfülf asked her sister to publish the following death notice in newspapers such as *Vorwärts* and the *Münchener Post*: “On _____ Toni Pfülf returned home. She enjoyed her life and her friends and is grateful to them. She departs confident in the victory of the great power of the proletariat, which she had the privilege to serve. “By the time of her death both papers had been banned. The *Münchener Neuesten Nachrichten* refused to print the requested text, but Justine and Emma Pfülf submitted another version that was acceptable. It read: “My faithful daughter and my good sister, Frau Toni Pfülf, teacher and member of the Reichstag, died on Thursday, 8 June, and was cremated on 12 June.” See Volland, “die Interessen der Frau,” 191.

**Toni Sender (1888–1964):
German Rebel**

8



Toni Sender (1888–1964) Courtesy of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

“It is better to be defeated than to lose without a struggle.”

—TONI SENDER, 1939¹

IN THE DAYS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING Hitler’s appointment to the Chancellorship, Toni Sender agonized about the SPD’s response. A prominent parliamentarian, editor of the women’s magazine, *Frauenwelt*, and other socialist publications, and frequent critic of the leadership’s policies, Sender feared that the party’s inaction would allow the Nazis to establish a police state. Frustrated, one day she left her editorial desk and marched upstairs to the office of the party executive to urge her comrades to call a general strike. Finding only one of its members, a certain “Comrade C,” she told him that only the decisive action of the Iron Front could halt the advance of fascism in Germany.

“But Toni,” Comrade C replied, “what would be the immediate cause of this strike [and] with what slogan could we rally the workers?” Sender was not sure about the slogan, but she was certain that, unless the party acted, the Nazis would soon penetrate all key positions of the state. “The masses,” she insisted, “will understand [the party’s call].” Comrade C was not impressed. He argued, instead, that the “right moment” for the strike had not arrived. As we know, it never did.²

For Comrade C and other members of the party leadership it certainly came as no surprise when Sender called for radical action. As one of the SPD’s most outspoken and independent women leaders, she had a long record of challenging the party’s policies and traditions. A member of the antiwar opposition and a cofounder of the USPD, after the latter’s reunification with the SPD she opposed the executive’s willingness to form coalitions with the bourgeois parties and, after 1930, objected to its policy of tolerating right-wing governments to prevent the Nazis from assuming power. A dedicated trade unionist and committed women’s activist, when working in the *Reichstag* she rejected the assumption that, as a woman, she should concentrate on issues related to the “female sphere” and focused, instead, on policy in the “male” domains of finance and defense. By the early 1930s she was one of the SPD’s most respected leaders, whose clear principles and plain speaking enraged the party’s enemies and won her a place high on the Nazis’ enemies list.

Born in 1888 in Biebrich on the Rhine, Sender came from a prosperous Jewish family.³ Her father, Moritz, was a “deeply orthodox Jew,” who demanded obedience from his children, was well educated, and, despite his conservative inclinations, had a cosmopolitan streak. A successful salesman,

he sent Toni to a “higher school for girls (*höhere Töchterschule*),” which, despite its focus on obedience, also provided Sender with a good basic education, especially in French and English. Sender was a quiet, introspective girl who excelled in school and graduated early at the age of thirteen. Her parents then agreed to her request to attend a two-year commercial high school forty miles away in Frankfurt am Main, where, despite its stifling atmosphere, she also did very well.

Sender’s memoirs stress her frustrations with the traditional social and moral outlook of her parents. Although she loved and respected them, she chafed at their demands for obedience and their expectation that, despite her education, she ultimately should lead a conventional domestic life. Viewing her stint in Frankfurt as a way of escaping from their household and becoming independent, immediately after graduation the fifteen year old resisted her family’s vehement objections and took a job at a Frankfurt real estate firm. There she quickly won promotion and found the personal independence she craved. She explored new friendships and new ideas and soon left the Judaism and lifestyle of her childhood behind.

Once out on her own, Sender quickly concluded that, “working ten or eleven hours daily only to make profits for the firm did not seem to give more validity to my life.” Intensely curious, she read widely in religion, anthropology, and philosophy, attended evening classes, and joined discussion groups with friends. Looking back thirty-five years later, Sender observed that they were searching for ideals and a purpose in life.

Many of us had left comfortable homes and prospects of an easy life. . . . Not only did we want to live our own lives, but we felt an urge to render service to the community. Our objective was not to find satisfaction alone, but to make life fuller and richer for everyone.⁴

Sender initially was drawn to the writings of authors such as Henrik Ibsen, who criticized middle-class social conventions and morals, and to the liberal-democratic politics of Theodor Barth, but she soon became interested in the labor movement. Unfamiliar with socialist theory, she decided to join the newly organized office workers’ union because she “[did not] want to belong to the class of the idle, to the bourgeoisie,” and felt impelled “to demonstrate [her] active solidarity with labor.”⁵ She quickly became engaged in trade-union work, took part in demonstrations for democratic electoral reforms, and began to study socialist ideas. In 1910, despite the sharp protests of her parents, the twenty-one-year-old Sender joined the SPD.⁶

Sender's turn to socialism was a final step in a process of rebellion that began with her parents' effort to restrict her to the narrow, traditional role expected of women in conservative Jewish middle-class families. Instead of returning home prepared for a life of domesticity, she strove to live on her own and to think for herself. But her drive for independence was not simply self-serving; she built on her education and experience and developed a cosmopolitan view of the world in which social and political activism stood at the center. It was not economic hardship and the experience of exploitation that led Sender to the workers' movement. On the contrary, it was her search for a personally satisfying philosophical outlook, her observations of the world around her, and her sense of justice that brought her into the socialist fold.⁷

Sender's decision to join the SPD caused such friction in her family that, in 1910, she decided to move to Paris in order to avoid further conflict. There she took a job working in the office of a Frankfurt metals company where her knowledge of French and English was essential. Sender loved Paris, made many friends there, and also continued her political activity by joining the French Socialist Party (SFIO) and assuming the chairmanship of the party's fourteenth electoral district. With the outbreak of the First World War, however, she returned to Frankfurt via Switzerland. Finding work was no problem: despite her Socialist credentials and open opposition to the war, the metals firm she had served in Paris promoted her to run its department dealing with manufacturing and finances.⁸

Sickened by the SPD's abandonment of its internationalist principles, Sender was ready to leave the party following the *Reichstag* delegation's vote in favor of the government's war effort on August 4, 1914. She did not wish to isolate herself politically, however, and soon changed her mind. Rather than quit, she joined the SPD's small, but growing, antiwar faction. In the fall of 1914 she met Robert Dissmann, an energetic opponent of the war and a leader of the Metal Workers' Union and of the Frankfurt SPD. They established a close political and personal relationship and lived together until shortly before Dissmann's death in 1926.⁹

Sender and Dissmann were at the center of the antiwar opposition in southwestern Germany. After he was drafted into the military, she carried on alone. In March 1915 she ignored the SPD leadership's wishes and joined with Clara Zetkin and others to organize an international meeting of socialist women in Bern, which was, in effect, the first international conference against the war. The participants issued a manifesto calling on working-class women to organize a movement against the war and in favor of peace without annexations. Willing to take personal risks, she smug-

gled the manifesto into Germany and saw to its illegal distribution. This type of work resulted in the arrest of many friends and Sender, whose apartment was repeatedly searched, only avoided a similar fate due to her boss's protective influence with the police.¹⁰

In January 1917 the SPD executive expelled Sender from the party after she took part in a conference of the antiwar opposition. Two months later she helped found the USPD, which, in her view, included “the best minds of the German labor movement” and provided the dissidents with a “new political home.”¹¹ The following year, as revolution swept across the country, Sender threw herself into the fray without hesitation. When the upheaval reached Frankfurt, she and Dissmann hurried to the barracks of the local garrison to convince the troops that the war was over, secured the release of soldiers arrested for refusing to obey orders, convinced an assembly of factory councils to call a general strike, and saw to the arrest of the Frankfurt police chief. Sender also penned a USPD summons to Frankfurt workers, issued on November 9, “to use the workers’ and soldiers’ council to take control of the city until the central authority of the German social republic was secure.”¹²

Indeed, Sender became an enthusiastic proponent of a republic in which workers’ councils would have substantial power on a permanent basis and she disparaged the SPD’s support for an exclusively parliamentary regime. A bourgeois-dominated body such as the *Reichstag*, she argued, was incapable of breaking the power of the old bureaucratic-military apparatus or of transforming the economy along socialist lines. “New tasks required new means,” and the proletariat needed to use revolutionary workers’ councils to achieve the aims of the socialist movement.¹³

Well known in Frankfurt, Sender was elected secretary of its workers’ council, edited the local USPD newspaper, *Das Volksrecht* (The People’s Right), and later won a seat in the city assembly.¹⁴ She was a tireless campaigner for her party and a harsh critic of the SPD, but she did not follow the majority of her USPD comrades in the fall of 1920, when they voted to join the Communist International and to merge with the German Communist Party. Although she was sympathetic to many of the Comintern’s ostensibly internationalist goals, Sender rejected that organization’s efforts to impose its absolute authority on revolutionary workers’ parties around the world and to divide the labor movement further.¹⁵ She opted, instead, to remain in the weakened USPD and to work to rebuild that party.

Frankfurt politics certainly kept Sender fully engaged, but it was not long before the national stage beckoned. In June 1920 she entered parliament at the top of the USPD’s electoral list and retained her seat when the

SPD and the USPD reunited two years later. Sender had serious misgivings about this merger. In the context of the rising threat of counterrevolution, she recognized the need for the workers' parties to cooperate in defense of the republic, but she felt that the "new" party lacked clear goals and a viable political strategy. After considerable "inner struggle" she decided, however, that working within the party was better than isolating herself outside of it. Thereafter she once again became a tireless, though critical, SPD activist.¹⁶

Following reunification, Sender continued her frenetic political activity both inside and outside the electoral arena. Still parliamentary delegate, she also edited the *Betriebsrätezeitschrift* (*Shop Stewards' Magazine*), a publication targeted at the leadership of the newly founded factory councils, a job she had assumed as a member of the Metal Workers' Union in 1920. In addition, the SPD leadership entrusted her with the editorship of two important party publications directed at women, *Die Genossin*, a newsletter that circulated among party activists, and, after 1927, *Frauenwelt* which sought to attract nonsocialist women to the SPD. These appointments illustrate Sender's political versatility. Her activism encompassed a broad range of interests including trade union and parliamentary work as well as a consistent commitment to the women's movement.

In the years immediately following the collapse of the republic, Sender had agreed with Marie Juchacz and most other socialist feminists on many individual matters related to women. For example, she concurred that women should be brought into the institutions of proletarian struggle, that they were especially suited for dealing with issues related to children and the family, and that only the establishment of socialism would ultimately resolve the "women's question." She had disagreed with Juchacz, however, on the larger matter of how socialism should be achieved. Rejecting the SPD's parliamentary emphasis, she had urged the organization of women within the councils' movement and the use of the latter to promote radical change. In the councils, she believed, women could be represented in proportion to their numbers—both within the paid workforce and as unpaid homemakers. From there they could carry out the "complete transformation of social law" and end the exploitation of women on the job and at home. Sender foresaw a transition period in which many "petit-bourgeois" prejudices would have to be overcome. In the end, however, she envisioned a society in which communities and households would be reorganized in ways that allowed men and women to share the burdens of managing a family and provided women with the opportunity to enter the workforce as a means of achieving personal satisfaction.¹⁷

Sender's views on the "women's question" reflected one of the unresolved dilemmas of the Weimar socialist women's movement. On the one hand, along with most other women in the SPD, she believed that there were specific *feminine* interests that the party should struggle to defend. Such interests included helping women fulfill traditional gender roles, for examples as mothers, nurturers, and helpmates (both at home and in the realm of social welfare), and could be promoted by creating new institutions (e.g., housewives associations) and passing appropriate social welfare legislation (e.g., laws forbidding forms of labor unhealthy for women and mothers and the provision of social welfare benefits by the state). On the other hand, her outlook also reflected a *feminist* perspective that aimed to challenge and revise the traditional social codes that had restricted women's freedom in virtually all spheres and locked them into the status of second-class citizens.¹⁸

Sender's practical work illustrates this dichotomy. As an editor and author she often addressed issues facing women in a variety of contexts: in the home, in the workplace, in the factory council, or in relation to specific legislation.¹⁹ Personally, however, she expressed her feminism more through her determination to work and excel in areas that interested her, especially if that meant entering what had been exclusively male terrain. Unlike most of her female colleagues in parliament, she avoided concentrating on "women's issues." Instead, she became a financial expert and was engaged in trade, foreign, and defense policy work. She was one of the very few women to take on such tasks and win respect in these traditionally male spheres. Self-conscious about what she was doing, Sender later noted that, "Although I realized that it was my duty to participate in the solution of [women's] problems, my special interest was in the economic field and in foreign affairs." Here it was much harder for a woman to gain recognition, but it was also harder to mask ignorance behind oratorical skills. Sender was convinced that in the final analysis it was "knowledge and ability" that counted in this work. She was determined to succeed and believed that, on the whole, she was successful in winning the support of her male colleagues.²⁰

It is difficult to discern to what degree Sender actually won acceptance among the men in the *Reichstag*, but in general it appears that her confidence was not misplaced. In parliament she was appointed to the economic, agricultural, and foreign affairs committees on which she served for many years. At the same time, the SPD *Reichstag* delegation often called upon her to represent the party in debate on a wide range of issues. Sender's comrades in the delegation were willing to rely upon her despite

her vociferous opposition to many of the leadership's key policy decisions. In 1923, for example, and again in 1928, she argued strongly against the decision to join coalition governments that included parties of the right, such as the German People's Party, because, in her view, the SPD could never achieve its long-term positive aims in such a body.²¹ The reactionaries would block fundamental reforms of the state and economy, and the party would be implicated in the government's failed policies. It was better, she argued, for the SPD to remain in the opposition where it could "gather the whole power of the working class in decisive opposition to the bourgeoisie." From there it would be able "to raise once again our much diminished influence in society and in that way bring about positive changes."²²

While Sender may have won considerable respect among non-socialist delegates and party comrades in parliament, male views of her person also revealed the prevalence of misogynist attitudes even in the SPD. Outgoing and fashionable, ambitious and confident, Sender's independence, political interests and professional trajectory in many ways embodied the characteristics of the "new woman" of Weimar lore.²³ Yet for some male colleagues it was her appearance, rather than her effectiveness, that stood out most. At the SPD's women's conference of 1924 in Berlin, for example, Sender's predecessor at *Frauenwelt*, Richard Lohmann, attempted to defend the content of the fashion section of the magazine by noting that ninety-nine per cent of German working-class women identified with popular rather than "artistic" fashions and that at least half of the party's female activists did so as well. Then he named Sender as a prime example of a woman, "who was not only a fighter in the class struggle (*Klassenkämpferin*) but also managed to dress tastefully and fashionably." This remark, which would never have been made in respect to male comrades and implicitly insulted half of the female activists, aroused enough ire that Marie Juchacz attempted to make light of it in her closing remarks the next day. It illustrates well the tensions that existed between male and female activists in the party, tensions that were rooted not only in disagreements over how to recruit more women, but also in misogynist attitudes widespread among the men.²⁴

Despite such attitudes, Sender's independence of thought and her flexibility made her into one of the party's factional bridge builders on programmatic questions. In 1924, for example, she was appointed secretary to the commission charged with drafting a new party program and, in 1928, she was the only woman named to a special party committee formed to clarify the socialist attitude toward national defense. The debate over the latter issue provides a good illustration of how difficult it is to place Sender in any particular factional box. While joining the left in opposing the SPD's

entrance into a coalition government with the bourgeois parties, her views on defense policy differed substantially from those of her left-wing allies. Unlike Paul Levi and Kurt Rosenfeld, who called on the SPD to deny all military appropriations to the capitalist state, Sender asserted that some defense capability was necessary until other powerful states disarmed. It was the task of the SPD, she argued, to work actively to democratize the army while simultaneously promoting disarmament. Sender took this position at a moment when the SPD was experiencing intense internal conflict over the decision of the party's cabinet ministers to support construction of a new pocket battleship. The party leadership certainly viewed Sender as a representative of the "left," but it is likely that it also was aware that, in the seventeen-member commission, she would back financial support to the military.²⁵

Sender's activities in the party and in the *Reichstag* show that, by the end of the 1920s she had become a dedicated parliamentarian. Although she remained committed to the idea of class struggle and rejected the SPD leadership's propensity to compromise with the middle-class parties, she clearly recognized that the movement could use parliamentary institutions constructively to achieve important goals and she was willing to work within them. After 1929, when Germany was beset by severe economic and political crises, she responded by energetically defending the system that she had earlier opposed. Her efforts were focused in two areas: first she undertook an analysis of the sources of Nazism's growth and suggested policy options designed to take the wind out of its sails; second, she strongly supported the party's efforts to construct the "Iron Front" as an extra-parliamentary means of defending the republic, if necessary through the use of the general strike.

In a variety of newspaper and magazine articles published between 1930 and 1932, Sender concentrated her analysis on two core themes: the relationship of the state's fiscal disorder to the growing power of financial capital and the role of the economic crisis in creating a social basis for National Socialism. To Sender, one of the SPD's main tasks was to promote fiscal policies that would balance the budget, relieve the state of its dependency on the creditor class, and simultaneously protect the social benefits needed by workers to weather the economic crisis. In early 1930 she proposed a variety of tax measures and administrative reforms, such as an increase in inheritance taxes and an end to the *Reichsbank's* independence, as a means of achieving these ends. Without them, she insisted, the state's economic decline would only worsen and improve the conditions for the rise of a fascist strongman.²⁶

Following the Nazi electoral breakthrough in the fall of 1930, that strongman, Adolf Hitler, clearly had arrived. Sender believed Nazism's success was rooted both in the immediate economic crisis, which had brought economic ruin to millions of people, and in Germany's long-term economic development. The latter had resulted in the creation of a highly productive economy, but one in which the working masses had not benefited substantially from the new wealth. Economic "rationalization" in Germany had already caused millions of human casualties, and the depression was only another phase of a process that had created a growing concentration of capital while leaving workers to suffer impoverishment and rising unemployment. Such conditions, she argued, drove not only workers, but also salaried employees, middle-class professionals, and retail workers to the brink of ruin. Many of these people had no hope that the bureaucratic state would come to their assistance. Instead they sought salvation in the "Third Reich" that the Nazis promised to deliver.²⁷

Sender did not think that the Nazis had made much progress among working-class voters in 1930. She recognized, however, that the magnitude of their electoral success rested on their ability to build a broad alliance that included the aristocratic (*Junker*) elite, industrialists, the officer corps, and substantial sectors of the middle classes who feared falling into the proletariat. She believed that the Nazis saw themselves as a barrier against any potential collaboration between these groups and the organized, class-conscious workers. The Nazis, Sender asserted, built their support by blaming Germany's problems on the actions of outsiders. The Treaty of Versailles, the Dawes and Young Plans, Marxists, Bolsheviks, and Jewish capitalists were the focus of Nazi attacks, which distracted many Germans from the real sources of their problems. For Sender the central issue was not whether many people eventually would recognize the emptiness of the Nazi outlook, but when. If they did not wake up soon, the Nazis would be in a position to sweep away the democratic republic.²⁸

Like the vast majority of her comrades in the party leadership, during the republic's agonizing last two years, Sender was unable to suggest any viable strategy to enable the SPD to regain the political initiative. When, for example, in 1930 the SPD *Reichstag* delegation made the difficult decision to "tolerate" Brüning's conservative minority cabinet, Sender agreed with the delegation's reasoning that a dissolution of the *Reichstag* likely would lead to the formation of a new government that included the National Socialists. She did not believe, however, that the SPD should support Brüning at any price. Toleration was only justifiable, she insisted, if it "prevented capitalism from acquiring new weapons." In 1931, when it was clear that

Brüning intended to carry out draconian cuts to government benefits for the poor, she argued in vain to abandon the policy.²⁹

Sender agreed with those in the party who held that, to fight the Nazis effectively, it was essential to prove to the voters “that there was a way out of the depression and despair and [the SPD] must indicate the way.” It was imperative to create “a rational planned economy in which everyone would have bread and the right to live,” but, as she noted in retrospect, the protracted debate over the “restructur[ing] [of] the economy along socialist lines,” took too long and failed to capture the imagination of the masses.³⁰ Thus, although she developed a fairly elaborate social and political analysis of the rise of fascism, the practical solutions Sender advocated, like those supported by the SPD as a whole, were either too little or too late. Even if speedily implemented they would have required time to reverse the republic’s declining fortunes, and time was running short. In the fall of 1932, in a critique of Chancellor von Papen’s “aristocratic Nazi cabinet” she criticized Nazi proposals for deficit spending and autarchy to escape from the crisis. Her own argument, however, that the bankrupt policies of the right would open the eyes of the masses and usher in “the great hour of socialism” rang hollow. In the end Sender’s analysis left the initiative in the hands of the republic’s enemies.³¹

Sender’s view of how to respond to the Nazi threat differed from the majority in the party’s top leadership in one significant way. She believed that, when pushed to the wall, the forces that made up the “fighting detachments” of the Iron Front would serve as an effective means of defending the republic. Following Papen’s illegal coup in Prussia, and again after Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor, she called on the party to use all available means, including a general strike, to resist. She conceded that the SPD’s forces were weak. Mass unemployment had undercut the unions’ strength and, even more important, the KPD’s antirepublican policies made a joint effort of the two workers’ parties against the right impossible.³² Yet she remained adamant that the party should not go down without a fight. In late February 1933 she personally called on Otto Wels to summon the workers “to fight the decisive battle against fascism.” Insisting that, “it is better to be defeated in a battle than to lose without a struggle,” she reminded the Chairman that the SPD could only successfully appeal to the workers from the underground “if we have first used whatever is left of our power to prevent them from becoming enslaved.”³³

Although the party’s leaders could not bring themselves to take this step into open resistance, Sender never wavered in her loyalty. She rejected the decision of the SPD’s extreme left to break with the majority and found a

new party in 1931, and in the press and parliament she supported the Social Democratic effort to use constitutional means to fend off the Nazis. In the pages of *Frauenwelt* she urged readers to pressure the state to rein in Nazi terror, to vote for Hindenburg in the presidential elections of March 1932, and, in October of that year, to give the SPD the majority it needed to transform the capitalist economy into a socialist one.³⁴

She also threw herself into the political campaigns of the republic's last years with energy and courage. Constantly traveling in her electoral district, she spoke before crowds of tens of thousands in Dresden and hundreds in many smaller venues. Nazi thugs often attempted to break up the meetings by throwing stink bombs and starting brawls, but Sender was lucky and escaped without serious injury. She confronted Nazi speakers sent to disrupt SPD meetings and refused to be intimidated when Nazi goons slashed the tires on her car or lay in wait for her on her route home. Although she managed to avoid such traps, police protection was minimal and the justice system provided little hope. When the DNVP and Nazi press slandered her as a sexpot and prostitute, the German courts turned aside her efforts to achieve legal redress.³⁵

Sender continued her political activities during the run up to the election of March 5, 1933 until it became clear that she was in grave physical danger from the Hitler government. On February 27 she addressed a crowd of 65,000 in Dresden and the following day the local Nazi paper called on the government of Saxony to silence her. On the twenty-ninth, following the *Reichstag* fire and the declaration of the state of emergency, the Nazi *Judenspiegel* (*Jew's Mirror*) put her picture on the front page and hinted that she should be killed. The Nazis also began distributing leaflets with a similar message and, after she returned to Berlin, she received word that storm troopers were seeking to arrest her. It was time to get out of Germany. On the day of the election, friends helped her slip over the border into Czechoslovakia.³⁶

Toni Sender was not a member of the SPD's top echelon but she was a middle-level SPD leader with a substantial presence on the national stage. In the wake of the German revolution, she had made her decision for social democracy and against dictatorship and she remained committed to that choice until the republic's end. Under Weimar she was a tenacious fighter for her political and personal goals, even if it meant bucking the party leadership and taking unpopular positions. Like so many of her fellow party leaders, as the republic entered into its mortal crisis, she found herself faced with the difficult issue of either supporting constitutional means to defend the republican order or breaking with that constitution and taking radical action against Weimar's enemies. Although on different occasions she favored the latter

course, when the SPD leadership demurred, she did not abandon her party but carried on until her only remaining choices were one of three: arrest, going underground, or continuing the struggle from exile. She chose the latter.³⁷

Notes

1. Toni Sender, *The Autobiography of a German Rebel* (New York, Vanguard Press, 1939), 304.

2. Sender, *Autobiography*, 301–02.

3. For Sender's childhood and adolescence I am drawing primarily on her *Autobiography*, 9–32 and Annette Hild-Berg, *Toni Sender (1888–1964): Ein Leben im Namen der Freiheit und der sozialen Gerechtigkeit*, mit einem Vorwort von Susanne Miller, (Cologne: Bund Verlag, 1994); 21–31.

4. Sender, *Autobiography*, 18.

5. Sender, *Autobiography*, 26.

6. Sender, *Autobiography*, 27–31; Hild-Berg, *Toni Sender*, 29–30.

7. On Sender's career, in addition to her autobiography and Hild-Berg's biography cited above (footnotes 1 and 3, respectively), see Christl Wickert, "Sozialistin, Parlamentarierin, Jüdin. Die Beispiele Käthe Frankenthal, Berta Jourdan, Adele Schreiber-Krieger, Toni Sender und Hedwig Wachenheim," in Ludger Heid und Arnold Paneker, hrsg., *Juden und deutsche Arbeiterbewegung bis 1933. Soziale Utopien und religious-kulturelle Traditionen*, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992); Susanne Miller, "Toni Sender (1888–1964): Vielseitige Erfahrungen und praktischer Idealismus," in Peter Lösche, Michael Scholing, Franz Walter, eds., *Vor dem Vergessen Bewahren*, 315–31; Margot Brunner, *100 Jahre Tony Sender: Sozialistin, Demokratin, Rebellin, Internationalistin, Metallerin, Journalistin, Politikerin* (Wiesbaden: Referat Frauenbeauftragte der Landeshauptstadt Wiesbaden, 1996).

8. On Sender's stay in France and return to Frankfurt see, *Autobiography*, chapter 2, 32–59 and chapter 3 60–65, respectively.

9. Sender's autobiography recounts their political work together but says little about their personal relationship. On the latter see Hild-Berg, *Toni Sender*, 39–40.

10. Hild-Berg, *Toni Sender*, 42–43; Brunner, *100 Jahre*, 6.

11. Sender, *Autobiography*, 85–86.

12. Quoted in Brunner, *100 Jahre*, 7.

13. Toni Sender, *Die Frauen und das Rätssystem. Rede auf der Leipziger Frauenkonferenz am 29. November 1919* (Berlin, Verlagsgenossenschaft Freiheit, 1920), 5.

14. On Sender's career in Frankfurt see R. Stübling, "Toni Sender—Gewerkschafterin und Sozialistin," in Fritz König and Rainer Stübling, eds., *Gewerkschafter, Sozialdemokraten, Friedensfreunde in Frankfurt am Main, 1900–1933* (Frankfurt am Main: Dipa Verlag, 1985), 75–126.

15. Toni Sender, *Diktatur über das Proletariat oder: Diktatur des Proletariats. Das Ergebnis von Moskau* (Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Genossenschaftsdruckerei und Verlag "Volksrecht," 1920).

16. Sender, *Autobiography*, 199–200; Hild-Berg, *Toni Sender*, 86–87.
17. Sender, *Die Frauen und das Rätssystem*, 20–26.
18. For a concise discussion of the relationship between “feminine” and “feminist” interests see Peter Smith, *Democracy in Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 244–45.
19. See, for example, Toni Sender, “Die Frau im Betriebsrat,” and “Die Frau und der Entwurf eines Arbeitsschutzgesetzes,” *Die Genossin* 3 (1926): 80–82, 134–36.
20. Sender, *Autobiography*, 244–45.
21. Tony Sender, *Große Koalition? Gegen ein Bündnis mit der Schwerindustrie* (Frankfurt am Main: Union-Druckerei und Verlagsanstalt, 1923); Hild-Berg, *Toni Sender*, 95–97.
22. Toni Sender, *Fünf Jahre nach der Novemberrevolution! Vortrag von Tony Sender gehalten auf dem Sächsischen Landesparteitag der USPD am 1. Dezember 1923* (Zwickau: Bezirksvorstand der USPD, 1924), 19.
23. On the phenomenon of the “new woman” see Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, 95–101 and the excellent selection of primary documents in Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, eds. *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 195–219.
24. *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag in Berlin 1924, Protokoll mit dem Bericht der Frankkonferenz* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1974), 238–39, 245.
25. Hild-Berg, *Toni Sender*, 102; Toni Sender, “Kritik an den Richtlinien zur Wehrpolitik,” *Die Gesellschaft* 1 (1929): 113–24 and *Autobiography*, 248–49, 266–70; Heinrich August Winkler, *Der Schein der Normalität*, 628–35.
26. Toni Sender, “Finanznot und Sozialetat,” *Arbeitswohlfahrt* 5, 4 (Feb. 15, 1930): 97–102 and “Zölle und Steuern,” *Die Genossin* 7 (1930): 100–05.
27. Toni Sender, “Nach den Wahlen,” *Der freie Angestellte* 34, 19 (October 1, 1930): 297–98.
28. Sender, “Nach den Wahlen,” 298.
29. *Protokoll Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag in Leipzig 1931 vom 31. Mai bis 5 Juni im Volkshaus* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1974), 128.
30. Sender, *Autobiography*, 284, and idem., “Liebe Leserin,” *Frauenwelt* (10 January 1931), 9.
31. Toni Sender, “Adel von Hitlers Gnaden—Die letzte Rettung des Kapitalismus? Der Sozialismus muß siegen!” *Die Genossin* 9(1932): 165–68.
32. Sender, *Autobiography*, 285–86; Donna Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 195.
33. Sender, *Autobiography*, 302–04
34. Toni Sender, editorials in *Frauenwelt* 9, 1 (January 1932); 9, 3 (March, 1932); 9, 10 (October, 1932).
35. Sender, *Autobiography*, 294–97.
36. Sender, *Autobiography*, 304–08.
37. Sender adapted quickly to life in exile and, using her language and speaking skills, became a successful journalist. After escaping to Czechoslovakia, she moved to Belgium where she worked for several local and exile papers and became

involved in the politics of the exile community. In 1935, after a speaking tour in the United States, she moved to New York where she wrote for French, Belgian, and English papers as well as for the *New York Post* and the *Christian Century*. In the U.S. she remained involved in Social Democratic exile politics and, after 1941, was a member of the executive committee of the German-American Council for the Liberation of Germany from Nazism. During the Second World War, Sender worked for the United States Office of Strategic Services. After 1945 she remained in the U.S and represented the American Federation of Labor and the International Association of Free Trade Unions at the United Nations. For details on her life in exile see Hild-Berg, *Toni Sender. Ein Leben im Namen der Freiheit und der sozialen Gerechtigkeit*, mit einem Vorwort von Susanne Miller, (Cologne: Bund Verlag, 1994).

Carl Severing (1875–1952)

9



Carl Severing (1875–1952) Courtesy of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

“I will yield only to violence.”

—CARL SEVERING, 1932¹

On July 20, 1932, *Reich* President Paul von Hindenburg, acting at the behest of his antirepublican *Reich* Chancellor, Franz von Papen, used the emergency powers at his disposal to overthrow the constitutional government of Prussia. In place of the prorepublican, SPD-led coalition government, Hindenburg appointed Papen as *Reichskommissar* (*Reich* Commissioner) with full powers to run Germany’s largest state, which included two-thirds of the nation’s territory and population. In a single stroke Hindenburg and Papen undermined one of the republic’s key bastions of the rule of law and took an important step in the destruction of the democratic order.²

To implement this decree, Papen summoned the leading representatives of the SPD-led Prussian government to the Chancellery on the morning of the twentieth. With the Social Democratic Minister President, Otto Braun, on “sick leave,” the most important Prussian minister in attendance was his party comrade Carl Severing. Severing was one of the SPD’s most experienced and popular Prussian leaders, who, as a long-time Minister of the Interior, had a reputation for dedication to duty and for toughness with opponents of the republic. He was outraged, though not surprised, at Papen’s illegal action, and his control over the 80,000-strong Prussian police made him a force for the Chancellor to reckon with.³

At the meeting, the new *Reichskommissar* did not mince words. Papen declared, unjustly, that after observing developments for some time, the *Reich* government had concluded that the Prussian coalition was not capable of maintaining order and security in the province. To restore order, he announced the removal of Braun and Severing from their posts and their replacement by the conservative mayor of Essen, Dr. Bracht.

When Severing denied Papen’s charges and described his policy as unconstitutional, the Chancellor simply brushed these objections aside and asked him bluntly if he intended to voluntarily hand over his authority. Severing’s answer seemed unambiguous. “In this moment of world historical importance,” he declared, “a republican minister may not disgrace himself by leaving his post. I will yield only to violence.” This bold assertion moved Papen to call out the army. By noon, as Severing and a few colleagues sat in his office and mulled over what to do, the *Reichswehr* was imposing marshal law in Berlin and Brandenburg.⁴

Papen took this action because he feared that the SPD leaders would attempt to mobilize their forces to defend the Prussian government.⁵ If the

SPD's trade union allies launched a general strike, if the *Reichsbanner*, came into the streets, and if the Prussian police remained loyal to Severing, the *Reich* government and its antirepublican allies, especially the Nazis, would face formidable resistance. But Papen need not have worried. Neither Severing, nor the vast majority of the SPD's leaders, was ready to resort to violent resistance. In fact, despite his bold retort to Papen, it took little "violence" to remove Severing and his colleagues from their posts. On the evening of the twentieth the newly appointed Berlin chief of police appeared in the Interior Minister's office along with two policemen. Once they had declared their task of removing him, Severing simply went home. Though he did not leave his post willingly, he, like the rest of Prussia's republican leaders, withdrew without a fight.

The reasons for this capitulation are complex. The SPD was well aware that Papen was aiming for a confrontation in Prussia. Within two weeks of his appointment as Chancellor, at the end of May, he had lifted Brüning's earlier ban on right-wing paramilitary formations, such as the Nazi SA, knowing full well that massive street violence against the left would follow. At the same time, he cut off the *Reich's* financial assistance to Prussia making it difficult for the province to meet its obligations. The intense violence and financial crisis then served as pretexts for declaring a state of emergency.⁶

With rumors of a coup in the air since early June, Severing did everything he could to avoid provoking the intervention of the *Reich*. In the midst of widespread street violence and growing tensions, the SPD executive committee met on July 16 and concluded that the party should use only constitutional means to challenge any action against Prussia. In a nutshell they placed their hopes, however thin, on a strong republican showing in the coming elections of July 30 and on the courts.⁷ The massive Nazi electoral victory and, in October, the failure of the Constitutional Court to restore Braun's government to power, dashed these hopes. Papen and his reactionary allies retained control over the Prussian state (including its police forces) leaving the SPD and Germany's few other republican forces demoralized and vulnerable.

Severing's failure in the July crisis did not result from a lack of personal courage or a principled unwillingness to make decisions involving the use of violence. His feeble response to the coup had two essential sources: first, a deeply held belief, widely shared among SPD leaders, that the parliamentary institutions that they had worked to create were viable and second, simultaneously and paradoxically, a profound sense of weakness in the face of more powerful enemies. With six million workers unemployed and the KPD hostile to joint action with the SPD, the party and trade union leaders despaired of the possibility of launching an effective

general strike. They also were convinced, with good reason, that, even when mobilized together, the power of the *Reichsbanner* and the police could not match that of the heavily armed *Reichswehr* and the paramilitary forces of the Nazis and the nationalist *Stahlhelm*. To most SPD leaders, including Severing, launching a civil war that one would probably lose made little sense. It seemed more reasonable and was certainly, in an immediate sense, easier to try to salvage the republic using electoral and legal means that still seemed available.⁸

Carl Severing's career in the worker's movement reflected, in many ways, the strengths that made the SPD an agent for the political and social transformation of imperial and Weimar Germany, but it also illustrated how unprepared it was to meet the fascist challenge. Severing was a skillful political leader who, though poor and not well educated, moved up Germany's social ladder through hard work within the social democratic movement. By the time he emerged as a figure on the national scene, he was prepared to take on a variety of challenging tasks. He was not always successful, but there were few leaders in the late republic that could match his accomplishments and experience.⁹

In his 1932 biography of Severing, Hans Menzel noted that, as one of the republic's most important leaders, he "will be primarily remembered as the man [responsible] for public security and order," who aimed to "hold the dam" against the "flood of Bolshevism" and the "storm" of the reactionary right.¹⁰ This observation was quite accurate. Born in 1875 in the small Westphalian town of Herford, Severing's politics were a product of his early experience in the relatively conservative labor movement there and in the nearby city of Bielefeld. Convinced that the road to socialism was through gradual reform, first within the framework of the imperial system and, after 1918, within the republican order, his unwavering commitment to this outlook made him a firm opponent of radicals of both the right and the left.¹¹

Severing came from very modest circumstances. His father, Bernhard, was a cigar maker and his mother, Johanna, a seamstress. When Bernhard became mentally ill and entered the hospital, the family's poverty became acute. Beginning in 1882 Carl attended the "poor children's school" (*Armenschule*) until his father's return two years later made it possible for him to pay the fees for the "*Bürgerschule*," where students received better basic preparation for work. Carl's parents encouraged learning and he was an excellent student, especially in religion. The local pastor urged him to study theology, but Severing was uncomfortable with the idea of accepting private contributions from wealthy members of the congregation to cover his

expenses. He opted, instead, for an apprenticeship in a local locksmith's shop. There he worked regular twelve-hour days and also took on additional schooling.¹²

When he was sixteen, and had achieved journeyman's status, Severing joined the German Metal Workers Union (DMV). He had rarely discussed politics with his family and he was not drawn to the labor movement on the basis of intellectual interest. What attracted him to the union was more "a feeling, a desire for freedom and a better life" and the wish to be a part of a "greater whole."¹³ As a boy, Severing had often felt like an outsider due to his family's poverty and his father's illness, now his union activity gave him a sense of recognition and belonging. Within a short time the members of his local made him secretary and elected him their representative at regional assemblies.¹⁴

Severing's union work soon brought him into contact with the regional Social Democratic party newspaper, *Die Volkswacht* (*The People's Guardian*) based in Bielefeld, and with local party members. In 1893 he helped co-found the SPD local in Herford and won election to its executive committee. By the age of eighteen the young locksmith had established himself in the political and social milieu where he remained for the rest of his life.

In 1895 Severing decided to move to Bielefeld. This growing city, with its burgeoning industry, attracted many skilled workers from the surrounding area, who enjoyed above average housing arrangements, relatively stable jobs, and good wages. They tended to be politically moderate and the growing social democratic organizations in town reflected this attitude.¹⁵ Severing got a job in a machine building plant, became active in the union, and soon made a mark as an excellent speaker. In April 1896 the workers selected him to head a commission to represent their grievances to the owner, Nickolaus Dürkopp, who was uninterested in negotiating with "his" workers about anything. The result was a strike, which failed after a few weeks. Severing lost his job and was black listed in the local metals industry.¹⁶

With local opportunities limited, Severing decided to join some fellow journeymen as they "wandered" down the Rhine. The trip allowed him to see a good bit of western Germany and, after getting a job in a sewing machine factory, to settle for two years in one of European socialism's major intellectual capitals, Zürich. Within a short time his quiet self-confidence, speaking ability, and organizational talent led to his becoming an influential functionary of the local German Social-Democratic workers' organization and the head of the 1,000 strong German Workers' Educational Association.

The intellectual atmosphere in Zürich exposed Severing for the first time to a variety of different socialist and anarchist currents. Leftist debates in Zürich, influenced by intense conflicts between labor and capital there, tended to use the language of class struggle and revolution to a much greater degree than in Bielefeld. In this context he became radicalized. In his work as an agitator and organizer, he argued for a world socialist revolution, for the domination (not integration) of the working class, and for socialist abstention from elections that were rigged against the workers (e.g., the three-class system used to elect the Prussian Assembly). At one point he became so frustrated with the conservatism of his comrades in the educational association that he resigned from his offices there.¹⁷

As we will see, however, this radical turn was a relatively brief phase that ended soon after he returned to Bielefeld. During his time abroad, Severing had remained in touch with his family and followed political events in Westphalia closely through his subscription to the *Volkswacht*. With his father ill and his desire to help in the upcoming *Reichstag* elections strong, the homesick young man decided to return to Westphalia in 1897. Once there, however, political differences with his comrades, especially over the organizational work of the party, led to his isolation and drove him back to Zürich. After failing to find a job, though, he wound up back in Bielefeld by the summer of 1898.¹⁸

This move was decisive. Severing found a job in another sewing machine plant and settled down. In 1899, against the wishes of both families, he married his pregnant cousin, a seamstress named Emma Wilhelmine Twelker, with whom he raised two children. Their very traditional relationship was a strong one and they remained together until her death a half-century later.¹⁹ He also quickly immersed himself in trade union and political activity. A popular speaker, in August 1899 the party local elected him secretary (*Schriftführer*) and, in April of 1901, the Bielefeld branch of the Metal Workers' Union chose the twenty-six-year-old as chair of its executive committee.

Severing won election to this unpaid union post because he was able to convince most of the local activists of the need to reform the administration of the union and to broaden its activity. By December 1902 he had enough support within the Bielefeld organization to win appointment to its first paid secretarial post (*Geschäftsführer*). He now devoted himself full-time to organizing work, and his experience, energy, and willingness to try new ideas quickly paid off. By introducing a range of insurance schemes, promoting social and cultural activities, and setting up an effective system of union agents (*Vertrauensmänner*) to advise the workers, the

DMV increased its membership from 1,200 workers (ca. 30 percent of Bielefeld's metalworkers in 1901) to 8,417 (85 percent) in 1912, when Severing resigned.²⁰

Under Severing's leadership, by 1906 the DMV was the strongest union in the region. It won improved wages and working conditions largely by making good use of the local press and of limited strike actions carried out in a timely fashion. Severing tried to avoid major strikes and lockouts whenever possible and only favored the former when the union had adequate financial reserves and there was no other choice. In 1910, for example, in the face of a wildcat strike against his old nemesis Dürkopp, he used his backing among the *Vertrauensmänner*, his rhetorical skills, and personal prestige to overcome workers' heated demands for action and to end the strike. In this way, the DMV avoided an ill-timed confrontation with the local capitalist cartel, which hoped to crush the unprepared union via a massive lockout.²¹

Severing's public presence and his talents as speaker made him an excellent candidate for political office. In 1903 he ran as an SPD candidate for the *Reichstag*. Although defeated in the second round, his good showing, in a largely agricultural district where the party was weak, reflected his regional popularity. In 1905 Severing won a seat in the Bielefeld City Council, on which he played an important role representing his party's struggle to improve workers' living and working conditions in the city. Although the bourgeois majority in the council excluded the SPD members for years from all policy-making committees, Severing and his colleagues never assumed a position of absolute opposition. Instead they often tried to cooperate with their opponents in the passage of legislation. While in the pre-war era there were only occasional victories, after 1914 the SPD became an integral part of the city government.²²

Severing maintained this cooperative attitude after his election to the *Reichstag* in 1907. In that year the government waged a successful nationalist campaign against the SPD and the Catholic Center party by attacking their opposition to its colonial policy. Although the SPD saw its delegation dramatically reduced from 81 to 43 seats, Severing bucked the trend after a tough race against a "joint candidate" of the conservative and liberal parties. He won because, in the second round, a majority of the Catholic Center's voters followed the urging of local priests to support his candidacy against the wishes of the party leaders. By winning 70 percent of the vote in rural Catholic areas of his district, Severing demonstrated his broad personal appeal and his victory improved the regional profile of the SPD substantially. He arrived in Berlin proud of his accomplishment,

which he also saw as a sign that the working class could be integrated into bourgeois society.²³

This attitude marked a clear shift away from the radical views Severing had adopted in Zürich. It can be attributed to two basic developments: first, his work in the DMV and local government indicated to him that the political and social condition of the working class could be improved through gradual reforms and, second, his simultaneous discovery that Edward Bernstein's critique of Marxist theory confirmed his own experience.

In 1899, just after his return to Bielefeld, Severing had been pleased with the decision of the Hanover Party Congress to condemn Bernstein's criticisms of Marxism and his suggestion that the SPD was a reformist rather than a revolutionary party. At the regional party congress that fall he tried, but failed, to win passage of a resolution calling on his comrades "to defeat Bernstein's political praxis just as they had defeated his theory."²⁴ By the time of the Dresden Congress of 1903, however, he had changed his view. There, too, the party condemned Bernstein's "revisionism," but Severing now felt that leaders like August Bebel were attacking an "artificially constructed enemy."²⁵

For Severing, the fundamental issue boiled down to whether the SPD would use its growing electoral strength to attack bourgeois society and build an extra-parliamentary opposition to the system, or would it work to influence legislation and state administration. At Dresden he joined those who believed that the latter aim, though "tough and often exhausting," was decisive. Experience, he believed, had contradicted some of Marx's economic and political postulates, and he no longer accepted the *Communist Manifesto's* assertions that "the workers had no fatherland" and "had nothing to lose but their chains." While his dislike for "theoretical hair splitting" caused him at first to feel uncomfortable being "thrown into the same pot" with Bernstein's supporters, experience and study changed his view. In 1908, he became a regular contributor to their journal, the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*.²⁶

In the *Reichstag* Severing worked hard. Specializing in social issues, his speeches, such as one he gave in 1910 condemning working conditions in the navy yards, occasionally earned him significant public attention. More importantly, however, his post also catapulted the thirty-two-year-old into the center of Social Democratic national politics. Within the party's delegation he worked closely with top trade unionists, such as Carl Legien and Otto Hue, but he also soon felt drawn to leading reformist socialists of middle class background, such as the dynamic Ludwig Frank. Frank opposed "orthodox" Marxists, such as Karl Kautsky, who believed that the

workers would only achieve power after capitalism's collapse. He believed, instead, that the workers could overcome their social and political isolation and achieve full integration in German society if the SPD fought for social reforms and cooperated with the liberal parties. Severing clearly shared these views, which his good personal relations with some *Reichstag* delegates of the bourgeois parties reinforced.

At the Magdeburg Party Congress of 1910 Severing's factional sympathies were very clear. In opposition to the party leadership, he supported the unions' successful effort to retain control over the decision to launch a political mass strike. In pre-congress articles in the *Völkswacht* and in public statements, he also supported Frank's and the Baden delegates' less successful struggle to discard the party's tradition of voting against the budget on principle.²⁷ These positions illustrated Severing's attachment to the interests of the trade union and reform-oriented wing of the party. He did not believe that a momentous decision, such as calling a general strike, should be left in the hands of party leaders unfamiliar with the reality of trade union work. He was also convinced that a position of fundamental opposition, reflected in the SPD's budget policy, only hindered its ability to promote reform.

Severing's parliamentary career suffered a blow in 1912 when he failed in his bid for reelection. Although he ran an energetic campaign and did well in the first round, in the run off he faced a strong, well-organized National Liberal candidate also popular with Catholics and the left-liberal Progressive Party. In the face of this united anti-Socialist coalition, Severing stood little chance.²⁸

The loss disappointed Severing, but it did not diminish his commitment to the Bielefeld SPD. Viewing the *Völkswacht* as a key instrument in building the party, he resigned from his position as DMV secretary and replaced his ailing friend, Carl Hoffmann, as editor. Although not an outstanding stylist, over the next six years the self-educated Severing markedly improved the paper's layout and content and made it into a more effective voice of the party.

As Thomas Alexander has noted, Severing was typical of many "bench workers" who rose through union and party ranks in the years leading up to the First World War. This group of functionaries took over the SPD's leadership as it reached its prewar peak and many in its ranks, such as Severing and Frank, strongly believed in a reformist strategy. Yet, they had little to show for their work. Imperial Germany remained a class-bound society in which workers faced constant and often brutal political, social, and cultural oppression. But when war broke out in August of 1914, many of these leaders, including Severing, thought that their time had come.

Joining the struggle to defend the fatherland would prove that German workers, too, were patriots who should be rewarded for their efforts with democratic reforms leading to full equality.

As a member of the Party Council, an important committee of regional representatives who advised the executive, and in the pages of the *Volkswacht*, Severing was a firm supporter of the SPD leadership's decision to back the government's war effort.²⁹ Claiming the war was a defensive struggle that demanded national unity, he was impatient with party leaders who challenged this view, such as Karl Liebknecht, Hugo Haase, and even Bernstein, and by 1916 favored their expulsion. In 1917, after the expelled opponents of the war set up the Independent Social Democratic party (USPD), he worked hard in Bielefeld to limit their influence.

On the local level, some of Severing's political expectations were fulfilled during the so-called *Bürgerfrieden*, or "civil peace," that seemed to unite formerly opposed groups behind the war effort. As a member of the City Council, newspaper editor, and *de facto* leader of the DMV, Severing became a central figure in Bielefeld's political life. The bourgeois parties now invited the SPD to share in the wartime work of the council, while local unions and capitalists worked together to discuss the fulfillment of contracts. When a small group of local economic, religious, and political leaders began meeting informally to discuss solutions to pressing problems, Severing played a key role in its deliberations.

Severing called for policies that protected workers' interests. He demanded the implementation of "war socialism" (*Kriegssozialismus*), or government intervention in the market, to insure workers enough food and fuel, and he was a vocal supporter of the SPD's renewed effort to abolish Prussia's three-class electoral system.³⁰ These demands for fair distribution and equal rights helped the SPD to maintain a positive profile for many of Bielefeld's workers, even as wartime conditions worsened. In July of 1917 Severing and the local SPD also supported the national leadership's decision to join with the Catholic Center and left liberals in the call for "peace without annexations." Following the October Revolution in Russia, they vainly repeated this demand at large public demonstrations.

As living conditions declined and government oppression increased, Severing and the Bielefeld SPD were able to keep a lid on radical opposition because the party's organization, largely intact, could monitor workers' sentiment and steer it into safe waters. In January of 1918, for example, nationwide wildcat strikes also spread to the arms factories in Bielefeld, but the SPD, by remaining in the strike committees, quickly calmed the situation, blocked the formation of more radical workers' councils, and

restarted production. This action brought Severing the admiration of party leaders, such as Friedrich Ebert, but by mid-year he knew that the situation among the workers was explosive.³¹

During the late summer of 1918, as the military crisis deepened and tensions on the home front rose, the SPD leaders in Berlin prepared to enter the government for the first time. Their essential aims, supported by the Zentrum and left-liberal parties, were to end the war and to avoid civil conflict (military dictatorship, popular revolution, or both) by transforming the monarchy along parliamentary lines. After September 29, when the Supreme Command admitted defeat and urged the Kaiser to seek an armistice negotiated by a cabinet responsible to the Reichstag, the way was clear. On October 2 the SPD agreed to enter a government led by the liberal Prince Max von Baden.³²

Although the circumstances were extremely difficult, the entrance of the SPD into a government responsible to parliament represented the achievement of a major social democratic goal. This breakthrough was complemented six weeks later by the signing of an agreement in which Germany's employers recognized the unions' right to represent workers in collective bargaining, guaranteed the eight-hour day, and made a series of other concessions.³³ To Severing and most other SPD leaders, these achievements represented a new, democratic point of departure for the integration of Germany's workers via reforms. As the country's crisis intensified and the specter of radical revolution raised its head, Severing struggled to keep Germany on this gradualist path.

The collapse of Germany's imperial government in early November brought the SPD and USPD to power in a provisional coalition government. While this government was able to end hostilities on November 11, on the local level the monarchy's fall created a power vacuum often filled by newly-created councils of armed soldiers and workers. No such vacuum developed in Bielefeld, however, because Severing took the initiative to join the rebellion sweeping the country and simultaneously rein it in. As rebellious military units approached the city he called for the creation of a "Volks- und Soldatenrat" (a People's and Soldiers' Council, VSR) that would incorporate the soldiers into a new body that included representatives of the local military and city administration. When heavily armed rebel forces threatened to storm one of the city's prisons, Severing personally intervened, calmed the crowd, and saw to the peaceful liberation of political prisoners held there. On November 8 the VSR became a reality and, as a result, the city was able to maintain order, distribute food, and provide basic services.³⁴

These actions illustrate Severing's personal courage and his basic attitude toward the revolution. In contrast to the *Spartakusbund* and radical elements in the USPD, he insisted that "we don't want to create a proletarian dictatorship but, rather, we want to place all those of good will in the service of the people." In December, at the First Congress of Workers and Soldiers Councils in Berlin, he favored the socialization of industries that were "ripe" for it, but argued that a proletarian dictatorship would only lead to chaos. It would invite allied intervention, harm the economy, and fail for lack of support among the workers themselves. To the radicals he warned, "Don't believe that the tired soldiers returning from the front want to fight for your Bolshevik revolution. They will largely stand on the other side," and he concluded by calling for the achievement of power "through hard work, unity, and discipline."³⁵

For Severing, that meant winning a majority in elections to a National Assembly that would write a new constitution—a position adopted by a large majority of those present at the congress. Those elections occurred on January 19 but failed to bring a socialist majority. With the SPD and the USPD winning only 37 percent and 7 percent of the vote, respectively, it became clear that they would have to work with liberal groups in the political center to form a government and develop a new constitution.

Those elections brought the popular Severing, who simultaneously won seats in the National Assembly, the Prussian *Landtag*, and the Bielefeld City Council, enormous responsibilities. A member of the executive committee of the SPD's *Reichstag* delegation, he was instrumental in the negotiations that led to the formation of the new coalition government consisting of the SPD, the Center, and the German Democratic Party (DDP).³⁶ As the Assembly settled down in Weimar to do its work, however, general strikes and violent unrest in the Rhineland and in Westphalia interrupted his parliamentary activity. On April 7, 1919, the *Reich* and Prussian governments appointed him *Kommissar* in these areas with the power to use any means necessary, including military action, to restore order.³⁷

It was a difficult situation. Beginning in December, a series of strikes, outside of union control, swept the region as workers pressed for the socialization of the mines, massive wage increases, reduced working hours, and recognition of the *Conwells System* (*Rätesystem*). Tensions between the workers' representatives, the local soldiers' councils, the Provisional Government (from which, in late December, the USPD had withdrawn), and the *Reichswehr* had resulted in violence in mid-February and renewed waves of strikes. By early April over 300,000 Ruhr coal miners had stopped work.

Severing, like the other SPD leaders, regarded the workers' economic and political demands as either irrational, in light of Germany's food and fuel shortages (the country was still under allied blockade), or unacceptable, given the SPD's commitment to parliamentary democracy. Although he inaccurately blamed the radical demands on Communist agitators, he was also committed to ending the strike with as little violence as possible and to improving conditions for the workers. After discussions with union leaders, mine owners, and the *Reich* government, he declared a state of emergency that required all able-bodied men to return to work, withdrew military units from areas in which workers cooperated, arrested strike leaders, and granted special rations to those back on the job. In April an agreement was reached between the *Reich* and the miners' union to reduce daily working hours to seven. By early May this mixture of concessions and force succeeded in ending the strike.³⁸

Severing was gratified that many workers followed his call to return to work "on the basis of reason and economic self-reliance," but he was not pleased with the attitude of General Watter, his military counterpart, or the behavior of the *Freikorps* units under his command. Watter chafed at having to share authority with a civilian, and his troops, unsympathetic to the workers or the republic, were quick to shoot.³⁹ This was Severing's first encounter with the issue of the military's unwillingness to serve the republic. It was a problem that, as Prussian and later *Reich* Interior Minister, he would try, and ultimately fail, to solve.

The *Reich* government was so pleased with Severing's ability to end the strike in the Ruhr that it immediately sent him to Upper Silesia where he successfully helped calm a similar situation. Back in Westphalia by June, his job for the next year was to maintain order and keep production, especially of coal, going. He had mixed success. Despite strong efforts to improve food supplies and housing for the workers, and to ease some of their civil rights restrictions under martial law, he was unable to prevent strikes and outbreaks of violence over wages, working hours, and supply shortages. Acting as a mediator between labor, capital, and other conflicting interests, he opposed "radical" elements by banning KPD organizations and newspapers and promoting the dissolution of the worker's councils. He even angered some trade unionists by taking a strong stand against forcing workers to join their organizations.

Due to the interference of the *Reichswehr* and the lack of reliable recruits, Severing failed to build up local, pro-republican defense units capable of maintaining order. This failure became especially serious after March 13, 1920, when a reactionary politician, Wolfgang Kapp, backed by *Freikorps*

units, seized power in Berlin. When the *Reichswehr* refused to intervene on the side of the republic, the government and trade unions called a general strike, which forced Kapp to flee within a week.

Workers in the Ruhr greeted the strike call enthusiastically irrespective of party affiliation. They formed armed self-defense units, which soon clashed with local police, middle-class militia (*Einwohnerwehr*), and *Freikorps* troops sent in to restore order. On March 14 the workers organized a "Red Army" and the next day defeated General Watter's soldiers in open battle. For the next three weeks the Red Army controlled much of the Ruhr and it was Severing's job to restore order.

Again, he faced difficult obstacles.⁴⁰ General Watter, for example, refused to openly support the government until March 16, when it was clear that Kapp was doomed. His opportunism and the strong antirepublican tendencies of the units under his command fired the resistance of the workers to any military movements in the area. Friction between Severing and Watter made coordination of military and civilian policies problematic: Severing's main goal was to negotiate a settlement; Watter wanted to take the offensive. Severing personally wanted the Berlin government to dismiss Watter but, since this action was not forthcoming, he also needed him if discussions with the workers failed.

In negotiations held on the 24 and 31 of March, Severing attempted to reach an agreement with representatives of the Ruhr workers similar to that reached in negotiations between the trade unions and the *Reich* government a few days before. By promising the socialization of the mines, the removal of counterrevolutionaries from the army and state administration, and immunity for the insurgents from punishment, he expected the dissolution of the Red Army. Ultimately, however, these efforts failed. The most radical elements of the Red Army rejected the terms, as did the *Reichswehr*, whose officers had generally sympathized with Kapp and now feared retribution. Negotiations between Watter, workers' representatives, and the Berlin government behind Severing's back also hindered his efforts. In the end, the Red Army radicals rejected the government's ultimatums even as many of its more "moderate" soldiers, as Severing had anticipated, left the ranks and went home. With red terror rising and the frightened middle classes clamoring for action, on April 3 the *Reichswehr* began its advance. The result was a bloodbath in which the white terror proved even more violent than that of the reds. By mid-April the Ruhr was again under government control.

The human, material, and political costs of this action were great. Although Severing's efforts at negotiation split the insurgents and thus weak-

ened them, the socialist commissar's decision to send the antirepublican *Reichswehr* against the workers did little to enhance the status of the government or its representative. The left accused Severing (and the government) of betraying the workers, while the right claimed he was too soft on the rebels. Most importantly, the episode revealed the government's inability to rely on the *Reichswehr* against antirepublican forces on the right.

The army's resistance to civilian authority and its brutal behavior, which included mass arrests, the beating of prisoners, and arbitrary, sometimes large-scale, shootings, appalled Severing.⁴¹ In late March, when Otto Braun offered him the post of Interior Minister in a new SPD-led coalition in Prussia, he knew that he would have a difficult road ahead; fundamental policy changes would be necessary to establish the government's authority in the spheres of security and administration.

The SPD leadership wanted Severing to accept this post because of his proletarian background, his acceptability among the party's various factions, and his proven political skills. Although he hesitated to agree because he disliked the factional pressures that he knew he would face and because his family was concerned about his safety and his long absences from home, his sense of duty and ambition proved to be stronger impulses. Confident of his ability, he accepted the appointment that made him one of Germany's most important leaders. As Minister of the Interior in Prussia from 1920 until 1926, in the *Reich* from 1928 until 1930, and again in Prussia from 1930 until 1932 he played a central role in the Social Democratic effort to transform key government institutions along republican lines.⁴²

During the early years of his ministry, Severing moved energetically to democratize the Prussian administration and to create a reliable police force for the maintenance of internal order during major crises. He had more success with the former than with the latter. Substantial resistance within the coalition prevented Severing from altering the structure of Prussia's administration, but he succeeded in replacing many antirepublican local and regional officials by stripping the often conservative district assemblies of the right to make appointments and concentrating this power in his own hands. By 1926 he was able to replace virtually all the provincial and regional councilors with new personnel drawn from the coalition parties. Republicans also replaced over half of the far more numerous local councilors, though in eastern locales the republicans provided only about one third of local appointments. The rest were either independent or members of the conservative DNVP.⁴³

Creating a new security police (*Schutzpolizei* or Schupo) was a much more difficult task than replacing administrative personnel. Severing aimed

to replace the unreliable *Reichswehr*, which was under the control of the *Reich* rather than the Prussian government, and local militias with a new “people’s police” trained to uphold the law rather than to annihilate the enemy. To create this republican “Praetorian Guard” required the reorganization and purging of the already existing and largely pro-Kapp Security Police (Sipo) and the recruitment of officers and men prepared to adopt a new nonmilitary ethos in the fulfillment of their duties. It was here, however, that Severing signally failed. Along with his assistant, Wilhelm Abegg, Severing constructed a centralized and hierarchical Schupo organization that mirrored the structure of the army. Even more importantly, he allowed it to continue to draw its leadership from the old Sipo and the large pool of demobilized army officers who infused it with a military and politically conservative ethos. The result was the rapid creation of a force that could effectively maintain order, as it did in 1921 against left-wing rebels in central Germany, but that in the long run was a questionable instrument for defending the republic.⁴⁴

In addition to these major efforts to transform the administrative apparatus and the security police, Severing faced a range of additional challenges as Interior Minister. The rise of right-wing nationalist violence, culminating in the assassination of republican leaders such as the Jewish Foreign Minister and industrialist Walter Rathenau, led him in 1922 to issue a series of emergency decrees outlawing extremist groups, but these were rolled back the next year by the republic’s Supreme Court. In 1923, following the French occupation of the Ruhr, Severing strongly supported the *Reich* government’s campaign of “passive resistance,” but he also used the Prussian police to track down nationalist extremists, who opposed the occupation with violence, and separatists, who wanted an independent state in the Rhineland.

In general, the policies that Severing pursued in these early years contributed substantially to the political stabilization of Prussia and, thus, of the *Reich*. They were based on his conviction that the SPD, whenever possible, should join coalitions at the *Land* and *Reich* levels in order to protect the republic and promote reform. Thus, he became one of the SPD’s most outspoken supporters of *Koalitionspolitik* for which the Prussian experience provided a model. The SPD should work with the Center, the DDP, and in certain circumstances even with the DVP, to pursue its goals. Without power nothing could be accomplished. “Pure Opposition,” Severing believed, amounted to political abstinence and abandoned the field to the enemy.⁴⁵

It is not surprising that Severing adopted this viewpoint. He knew from experience that reforms take time within a parliamentary system. To

remain in the opposition might allow a party to train its critical guns on its opponents in the government and to gain votes, but it would not enable the party to use positive accomplishments to build electoral support over the long term. At a time when the SPD could not hope to win an absolute majority, that meant that the party had to strongly consider working in coalitions.

Despite the toughness of Weimar politics, Severing was willing to take on such a challenge. The “system” that he implemented to maintain order won him respect even from his sworn enemies, but it also made him an easy target. The reactionary right, for example, attacked him for banning its organizations while turning a blind eye to the Communists. It accused him of allowing foreigners to flood into the country and of purging the state administration and police of those who disagreed with him. One rightist paper, the *Bergisch-Märkische Zeitung*, even claimed he had participated in a conspiracy to murder Nazi hero Leo Schlageter in 1923. The Communists, for their part, also condemned Severing’s actions against them and were openly willing to join with “anyone” to sweep him away.⁴⁶

Some within the SPD and other republican parties also criticized Severing for “one-sided” policies against the right or the left. He responded by arguing that his job was to defend the republic against opponents of any political stripe. In April of 1923, when a writer at the *Hannoverschen Courier* claimed that his actions illustrated his belief that “the enemy stands on the right,” Severing retorted sharply that, in his experience, the enemy had also been on the left. He had acted decisively to defeat armed left-wing rebels in the Ruhr in 1919 and 1920 and in central Germany in 1921. In the current crisis, he noted, in which the enemy truly was on the right, he would move against it with exactly the same energy.⁴⁷

Despite threats to his life and a workload that undermined his health, Severing remained Prussian Interior Minister until 1926.⁴⁸ Exhausted and sick, he decided that it was a good time to leave. The overhaul of the police seemed basically complete and other ministerial reforms depended on political changes at the *Reich* level. Of greater importance, however, was the fact that he and Otto Braun were not getting along well. Braun was jealous of Severing’s popularity and thought his colleague’s travels and speechmaking kept him from his ministerial duties. He also was frustrated by Severing’s reticence in cabinet meetings and his habit of not consulting him adequately when negotiating with the *Reich* government. Finally, Severing was tired of being slandered in the press, where he was often accused of corruption, homosexuality, and pederasty. On October 7 he stepped down.⁴⁹

Within a short time, however, he was back in the political spotlight. In 1927, he argued vehemently in the party press and at the Kiel Party Congress for the SPD to enter a coalition government following the May 1928 elections.⁵⁰ This position won the day at Kiel. The following year, after a strong electoral showing, the SPD's Herman Müller agreed to head a "Great Coalition" that included the Center, the DDP, and the DVP.

Müller appointed Severing to head his Interior Ministry, where the latter aimed to democratize and restructure the *Reich* administration by appointing prorepublican personnel, eliminating duplicate or unnecessary bureaucratic hierarchies, and centralizing authority in the hands of the national government. Severing knew that these goals, like the even more difficult revision of the Versailles Treaty or the reform of the *Reichswehr*, would encounter substantial resistance from diverse quarters and would take time to implement. It was time, however, that the republic did not have.⁵¹

Political infighting within the coalition, and, most importantly, the onset of the depression and the radicalization of domestic politics, hindered the completion of most of Severing's proposed changes and ultimately brought down the government. To stave off the latter result and win time to carry out his administrative reforms, Severing repeatedly urged the SPD to make substantial concessions to the right on such issues as military spending, social expenditures, and taxes. These efforts to preserve the government consumed much energy and were complicated by the Interior Minister's need to devote more and more time to combating radical right and left wing threats.

In 1929 Severing campaigned hard to defeat a popular referendum organized by a right-wing coalition, including the Nazis, to oppose the Young Plan. The government's success in soundly defeating this referendum was not matched, however, when it came to combating KPD efforts to attack the republic. As May Day approached, for example, and the KPD announced its intention of organizing illegal demonstrations, Severing urged his successor in the Prussian Interior Ministry, Albert Grzesinski, to reduce tensions by relaxing the existing ban. Grzesinski took a hard line, however, and the bloody confrontation that resulted allowed the KPD to accuse the SPD leadership of murdering workers. The gulf between the workers' parties now became deeper than ever.

The growth of extremely violent antirepublican paramilitary formations such as the KPD's Red Soldiers League (*Roter Frontkämpferbund* or RFB), the nationalist *Stahlhelm*, and the Nazi SA posed increasingly serious difficulties for the *Reich* and *Land* governments. In May of 1929, however,

when Grzesinski wished to outlaw first the RFB and then its counterparts on the right, Severing opposed this action. He did not believe that the Communists represented a serious threat and feared that Hindenburg, himself a *Stahlhelm* member, would oppose a ban on the right wing groups.⁵² Although Grzesinski's proposal carried the day—thus forcing the RFB underground and exposing the SPD to criticisms from workers who were angry at the violence of the police—Severing did not change his viewpoint. In the fall, even as paramilitary violence escalated, he argued that instead of outlawing these organizations, the state should restrict any of their activities, including the wearing of uniforms, that promoted violence.⁵³

Despite such problems, in 1929 Severing believed that the republic stood on firm ground. In the summer, when the *Reichstag* refused to renew the Law for the Protection of the Republic, initially passed in 1922 to aid in the prosecution of assassins, Severing remained confident in the state's ability to deal with its opponents within the existing legal framework. In August he asserted that, while the extreme right could benefit from German difficulties in foreign policy and the extreme left could grow as a result of economic problems, 70 percent of the people supported the republic. He foresaw no danger of a dictatorship. If a crisis required the *Reich* President to resort to Article 48, the *Reichstag* had the authority to reverse objectionable actions.⁵⁴

Events in 1930, however, would begin to shake Severing's confidence in the republic's future. The Great Coalition, after a heated struggle over the financing of unemployment insurance, collapsed at the end of March, thus ending his tenure as *Reich* Interior Minister. In July, when Heinrich Brüning's new conservative cabinet could not muster majority support for its harsh policy of economic austerity, the Chancellor made a fateful miscalculation by calling for new elections that led to the Nazis' electoral breakthrough and substantially strengthened the Communists. With the NSDAP and the KPD controlling 107 and 77 seats, respectively, over one-third of the *Reichstag's* delegates were now members of openly antirepublican parties. Brüning still enjoyed Hindenburg's confidence, but his government had even less support than before.

It was within this context that Severing returned to the Prussian Interior Ministry. Otto Braun, remembering their personal and political differences, did not really want him, but his preferred choice, Grzesinski, was immersed in a personal scandal and was unacceptable to the Center party members of the cabinet. So Braun had no better choice than Severing. He had served the republic for more than ten years in a variety of difficult circumstances, many of which had required decisive action. He was very

popular among the SPD *Landtag* and *Reichstag* delegates, and his reputation for toughness had reached mythical proportions with the public. His reappointment sent the message that Braun had the reins of government in firm hands in difficult times.⁵⁵

And, indeed, times were very difficult. Like most other Social Democrats, Severing had long viewed the NSDAP as a small violent group that aimed to establish a brutal reactionary dictatorship via a *Putsch*. Though he still misunderstood the NSDAP's pseudo-parliamentary strategy, he now recognized that its new mass following substantially enhanced the Nazi threat. To defeat it he joined with other SPD leaders who advocated the relentless use of state power to intimidate Nazi activists, to protect and encourage republicans, and to maintain calm among the bulk of the ideologically uncommitted citizens. If the state failed to protect its active supporters, they feared that the latter would withdraw into private life. Such a development would weaken the republic's ability to respond to a Nazi *coup* attempt and would abandon the struggle to win over the mass of the indifferent to the Nazis.⁵⁶

With the SPD no longer in the *Reich* cabinet, Severing joined with a majority in the party leadership who believed that the key goal should be to keep the Nazis out of the government until the economy turned around and the political crisis abated. But to avoid new elections that might strengthen the Nazis, the SPD had to support Brüning's reactionary policies, or risk bringing him down. Severing knew that the political costs of this strategy would be difficult for the SPD to bear, but he was willing to support Brüning "irrespective of other views in the party."⁵⁷

Severing's efforts to use the instruments of state power to defeat the Nazis and the Communists ran into a variety of difficulties. As the depression deepened, political violence increased and the police proved less reliable than he had hoped. Many *Schupo* officers sympathized with the extreme right and the NSDAP, and Severing had to issue decrees forbidding their activity in Nazi organizations. To retain the support of his men, he also fought hard to maintain their salaries and to improve their living conditions, but serious discipline problems persisted. In December of 1931, in a speech to top officials, he told them bluntly that it was not in their purview to issue resolutions for or against his leadership. Their job was to take his orders and let the *Landtag* evaluate his performance. Any official who continued to misuse "parliamentary" methods, he warned, would be "ruthlessly" removed.⁵⁸

While Severing respected the *Reichsbanner* as a prorepublican institution, he had always opposed reliance on such independent organizations to

defend the state and had insisted that the latter's own organs should do the job. His discovery, however, that "discipline among *Schupo* officers was weaker than it had been when he left office in 1926" must have been a powerful shock, because he had created the *Schupo* as the state's main line of defense.⁵⁹ If the *Schupo*, like the *Reichswehr*, was unreliable and the *Reichsbanner* unprepared, then the forces available to defend the republic were thin indeed.

In a country in which the courts were decidedly sympathetic to the right and often refused to implement tough sentences against violent nationalists and Nazis, it seemed to Braun, Severing, and other SPD leaders that only sharper laws, issued on a national basis via Presidential Emergency Decree, would be effective. In December 1930 Severing sent Braun a draft of a decree that would allow government forces to crack down on any agitation aimed at disturbing the public order. Braun forwarded the decree to the *Reich* government and, after much haggling, it was issued in March.⁶⁰

Other decrees soon followed, backed by Brüning, who, though he did not share the SPD's commitment to the republic, did share its concern about civil disorder.⁶¹ These measures "temporarily" set aside a number of constitutional protections and enhanced the state's power to regulate public assemblies, conduct searches, censor the press, and ban uniforms or organizations culminating in the outlawing of the SA in April of 1932. They were, of course, hotly contested and not just by extremists. Many SPD members, for example, were concerned about the maintenance of civil rights.⁶² But the decrees were problematic in other ways as well. By relying on presidential authority, the *Länder* ceded initiative and power to the *Reich* government. This arrangement could only work to the states' advantage as long as their aims coincided with those of the *Reich*.

There were also serious problems of implementation. The Nazis and Communists often found legal loopholes or developed new methods of communication and protest that simply overwhelmed the resources of the government. The police and the courts frequently sided with the radical right, and even the *Reich* government sometimes blocked enforcement. In the Boxheim Affair of November 1931, for example, when Hessian police uncovered Nazi plans to repress republicans "in the case of a seizure of power," Brüning and his advisors worked to brush the matter under the rug. Rather than prosecute the Nazi officials involved, the Chancellor was more interested in negotiating political arrangement between the Nazi and Center parties in Hesse.⁶³

Another challenge to Severing's efforts was the joint effort by the *Stahlhelm*, the NSDAP and the KPD to bring his government down. Between

October 1930 and July 1931 these groups promoted a popular referendum to dissolve the Prussian *Landtag* immediately, rather than wait for the election scheduled in the spring of 1932. In response, the government parties had to launch their own campaign, and Severing aided in this effort by using every legal tool at his disposal including closing down newspapers that threatened public order and requiring all daily papers to publish government statements against the referendum. While the latter ultimately failed by a wide margin, the Prussian coalition's victory was a defensive one that did little to diffuse Germany's polarized political climate.⁶⁴

Severing recognized that the unrest in Germany was rooted in the economic catastrophe and that police measures could not alter that reality. He believed, however, that delivering sharp swift justice to agitators, who exploit the economic situation and promote terrorist acts against individuals and groups, could reinforce the authority of the state. Police measures, he thought, combined with a mass campaign to provide the impoverished with emergency supplies of food and clothing, could undercut the radicalization of the population. To that end, he initiated the creation of the "*Winterhilfswerk*" a large-scale consortium of welfare organizations, businesses, and unions.⁶⁵

But police measures and charity were not, of course, able to stem the tide of radicalization. Skyrocketing unemployment, massive cutbacks of government support for the poor on all levels, and widespread political violence steadily undercut the republic's legitimacy. This loss of support became particularly clear in the electoral arena, where, for a republican like Severing, the parliamentary order faced its ultimate test. Despite the efforts of the SPD, the unions, and the *Reichsbanner* to regain political momentum through the formation of a pro-republican "Iron Front," in December of 1931 the electoral fortunes of the parties in the Weimar coalition continued to decline. That the republican forces had to back the reactionary Hindenburg against Hitler in the presidential elections of March 1932 was a clear sign of their desperation. One month after the republican "victory" the Nazis swept the field in a series of state elections including those in Prussia, where they increased their support from 8 to 162 seats (37 per cent) and pushed the SPD into the second position with 94 seats (down from 137). Braun's government, now a clear minority in the *Landtag*, had to resign, but since no new coalition stood ready to assume power, the cabinet, including Severing, stayed on in a caretaker role.

The electoral debacle in Prussia was followed by Hindenburg's firing of Brüning, in whom Severing and Braun had pinned their last hopes, at the end of May. This action paved the way for Papen's appointment as

Chancellor and the events of July 20. Having just suffered a series of defeats, and disgusted at the political barbarism sweeping Germany's streets and halls of government, Braun, Severing, and their colleagues in the Prussian government had little stomach for an all-out fight. On 6 June the psychologically and physically exhausted Braun announced that he was going on sick leave "with the firm intention not to return."⁶⁶ This decision essentially left Severing in charge. As paramilitary terror escalated and Papen plotted his *Putsch*, he was effectively paralyzed. As we have seen, having decided not to resist a coup with arms and with no additional parliamentary tools available, Severing vainly worked to fend Papen off by avoiding provocations and making concessions to the political right.⁶⁷ When these efforts failed and the Prussian government fell with scarcely a whimper, it set the stage for the republic's dissolution the following year.

Carl Severing was a skilled organizer, politician, and administrator, but after more than three decades of parliamentary work, neither he nor the system he helped build was prepared for the challenge of Nazism. For thirty years Severing had staunchly believed that the working class could achieve equality in German society by working within the institutions of the state. More in the tradition of Lassalle than Marx, he had believed that both the imperial order and later the republican state provided the framework for progressive change.

Once in a position of authority himself, Severing was capable of using the instruments of the state to maintain order and he showed on many occasions that he could take decisive, violent action against enemies of the republic. Ultimately, however, his commitment to parliamentary norms proved to be a hindrance in the struggle against radical movements that ignored the rules of the game. This "weakness" became apparent on several occasions when decisive measures were called for. In December of 1931, for example, following Grzesinski's suggestion, Severing called for the deportation of the non-citizen Hitler from Germany, an action that would have had a far reaching, though unpredictable, impact on domestic politics. The proposal immediately foundered, however, due to Brüning's opposition—the Chancellor hoped to win Nazi support for Hindenburg in the upcoming presidential elections. Thus, the SPD's policy of tolerating the "lesser evil," supported by Severing, came back to haunt it as Brüning protected the republic's deadliest enemy.⁶⁸ Short of precipitating a direct confrontation with the *Reich*, which Severing wished to avoid, he had no option but to defer to it. Such deference illustrates well the paradox of political life in the Weimar system.⁶⁹

Notes

1. Carl Severing, *Mein Lebensweg, II*, (Cologne: Greven Verlag, 1950), 350.
2. For the events of July 20 see, K. D. Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik*, (Stuttgart und Düsseldorf: Droste, 1955), chapter 8; Joachim Petzold, "Der Staatsstreich vom 20. Juli 1932 in Prüeßen," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 4, 6 (1956): 1146–86; Hagen Schulze, *Otto Braun oder Preußens demokratische Sendung*, (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1977), 745–62; Erich Matthias, "Die Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands" in Erich Matthias and Rudolf Morsey, eds., *Das Ende der Parteien 1933*, 127–45; Ludwig Biewer, "Der Preußenschlag vom 20. Juli 1932," *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte* 119 (1983): 159–12; Heinrich August Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 646–64. Dietrich Orlow, *Weimar Prussia, 1925–1933. The Illusion of Strength*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 1991), chapter 8, 225–46; Donna Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 191–02.
3. For details of the meeting see Bracher, *Auflösung*, 582–86; Thomas Alexander, *Carl Severing: Ein Demokrat und Sozialist in Weimar I*, (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1996), 1029–40; Carl Severing, *Mein Lebensweg, II*, (Cologne: Greven Verlag, 1950), 348–52.
4. Severing, *Mein Lebensweg, II*, 349–50; Bracher, *Auflösung*, 586.
5. Alexander, *Demokrat and Sozialist II*, 1028.
6. Orlow, *Weimar Prussia*, 227–32.
7. Matthias, *Das Ende der Parteien*, 135; Orlow, *Weimar Prussia*, 237–44.
8. Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist II*, 1041–69; Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 671–80; Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 193–95.
9. In addition to Alexander's massive two-volume work (see footnote 2), he has also published a more succinct study entitled *Carl Severing, Sozialdemokrat aus Westfalen mit preußischen Tugenden* (Bielefeld: Westfalen Verlag, 1992). Other biographical works include, Hans Menzel, *Carl Severing*, (Berlin: Historisch-Politisch Verlag, 1932); Horst Lademacher, "Carl Severing," in Walter Först, ed., *Politik und Landschaft* (Cologne/Bonn: Grote, 1969), 135–41; Ladislaus Singer, "Carl Severing, Eine Schlüsselfigur der Weimarer Republik, idem, ed., *Marxisten im Widerstreit* (Stuttgart: Seewald, 1979), 127–50. Severing's *Mein Lebensweg II*, (Cologne: Greven, 1950) is essential for background on his early life.
10. Menzel, *Carl Severing*, 5–6. Menzel, an admirer of Severing, served as his Director of the Department of Constitutional Affairs. See Severing, *Mein Lebensweg*, II, 151.
11. Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist, I*, 113–16.
12. Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist, I*, 46–62; Severing, *Mein Lebensweg, I*, 1–18.
13. Severing, *Mein Lebensweg, I*, 26.
14. Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist, I*, 64; Severing, *Mein Lebensweg, I*, 26, 34.
15. Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist, I*, 76–78.
16. Severing, *Mein Lebensweg, I*, 46–47.
17. Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist, I*, 101–05.

18. Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist*, I, 105–11; Severing, *Mein Lebensweg*, I, 68–73; Singer also claims that he needed to return to Germany due to his impending military service. He was rejected, though, due to a bad heart. See *Carl Severing*, 132.
19. Alexander, *Sozialdemokrat aus Westfalen*, 34.
20. Alexander, *Sozialdemokrat aus Westfalen*, 37–43, 271 (note 271 for the statistics); Severing, *Mein Lebensweg*, I, 83–88.
21. Alexander, *Sozialdemokrat aus Westfalen*, 45–48; Severing, *Mein Lebensweg*, I, 94–100.
22. Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist*, I, 188–97.
23. Alexander, *Sozialdemokrat aus Westfalen*, 60–61; Severing, *Mein Lebensweg*, I, 156.
24. Severing, *Mein Lebensweg*, I, 78–79.
25. Severing, *Mein Lebensweg*, I, 152.
26. Severing, *Mein Lebensweg*, I, 148–55.
27. Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist*, I, 215–38.
28. Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist*, I, 239–47.
29. On Severing's wartime views see Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist*, I, 255–318.
30. Alexander, *Sozialdemokrat aus Westfalen*, 84.
31. Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist*, I, 317.
32. Susanne Miller, *Die Bürde der Macht, Die Sozialdemokratie 1918–1920* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1978), 26–37.
33. For the text of the agreement, see Michael Schneider, *Kleine Geschichte der Gewerkschaften*, 514–15.
34. Alexander, *Sozialdemokrat aus Westfalen*, 94–95, Severing, *Mein Lebensweg*, I, 225–26.
35. Quoted in Singer, *Carl Severing*, 134–37. See also Winkler, *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung*: 104.
36. Severing, *Mein Lebensweg*, I, 236; Alexander, *Sozialdemokrat aus Westfalen*, 107.
37. On Severing's role as commissar see his *1919/1920, im Wetter- und Wattenwinkel: Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen des Staatsministers a.D. Carl Severing, ehemaligen Reichs- und Staatskommissars im Befehlsgebiet des VII. Armeekorps* (Bielefeld: Buchhandlung Volkswacht, 1927); idem, *Wie es kam! Eine Rede des Reichs- und Staatskommissars Severing über die Unruhen in Ruhrgebiet* (Berlin: Reichszentrale für Heimatsdienst, 1919); idem, *Mein Lebensweg*, I, 239–75; Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist*, 371–478.
38. Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist*, I, 398–402; Winkler, *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung*, 159–75.
39. Severing, *1919/1920*, 28–29, 42–43.
40. For Severing's role in putting down the Ruhr insurrection see Werner Angress, "Weimar Coalition and Ruhr Insurrection, March–April 1920: A Study in Government Policy," *The Journal of Modern History* XXIX, 1 (March, 1957): 1–20; Susanne Miller, *Die Bürde der Macht*, 403–05; Winkler, *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung*, 324–42.

41. Severing, *1919/1920*, 207–17.
42. Before accepting the post at the end of March, he asked Braun for two concessions: first, he wanted to stay on as commissar in the Ruhr until the crisis was over; second, he urged Braun not to replace all the SPD ministers from the earlier cabinet but to retain at least half. Braun agreed and Severing took office on 11 April. See Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist*, I, 487–92; Severing, *Mein Lebensweg*, I, 275–77.
43. Winkler, *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung*, 340.
44. Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist*, I, 534–60; Christian Knatz, “Ein Sieg über Aufrihrer und Reformen: Der Mitteldeutsche Aufstand von 1921 als verpaßte Chance der preußischen Schutzpolizei,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 46, 1(1998): 28–39.
45. See, for example, *SPD-Parteitag: Görlitz, 1921*, 195–96; Carl Severing, “Das Gebot der Stunde,” *SM* 29, 60 (1923): 1–3; idem., “Und Wieder für die große Koalition,” *SM* 31, 62 (1925): 729–31; *SPD-Parteitag Kiel, 1927*, 201; idem., “Die politische Bedeutung der Magdeburger Parteitages,” *SM* 35, 68 (1929, I): 471–74.
46. For the outlook of the right see “Das System Severing,” *Deutsche Schnelldienst für Politik und Wirtschaft* 236, 5 (7 October 1924), Evening edition; Emil Kloth, “Von dem neuen Majestäten,” *Das Freie Wort* 39 (24 September 1922); and “Minister Severing und die Ermordung Schlageters,” Nachlaß Severing, Mappe 101 AsD. For an example of the KPD’s viewpoint see Julius Leber, *Ein Mann geht seinen Weg* (Frankfurt am Main: Mosaik-Verlag, 1952), 116.
47. Felix Stössinger to Severing, 28.6.1922; Severing to Felix Stössinger, 30.6.1922, Nachlaß Severing, Mappe 90, AsD; Severing to Josef Buchhorn, 13.4.1923, Nachlaß Severing, Mappe 105, AsD.
48. On threats to Severing’s life see his letter to Karl Schreck, 3.3.1923, Nachlaß Severing, Mappe 104, AsD.
49. Compare Alexander, *Sozialdemokrat aus Westfalen*, 150–54; Schulz, *Otto Braun*, 510–11.
50. Severing, “Die beste Kritik,” *SM* 33, 65 (1927, II): 697–701; *SPD-Parteitag, Kiel, 1927*, 200–04.
51. On Severing as Reich Interior Minister see Alexander, *Sozialdemokrat aus Westfalen*, 161–80.
52. Alexander, *Sozialdemokrat aus Westfalen*, 173–74
53. Wolfram Pyta, *Gegen Hitler und für die Republik, Die Auseinandersetzung der deutschen Sozialdemokratie mit der NSDAP in der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1989), 267–68.
54. Interview with W. Duesberg, 11.8.1929, Nachlaß Severing, Doc. 15, Mappe 154, AsD and Severing’s draft of an essay for the tenth anniversary of the republic, Nachlaß Severing, Doc. 16, Mappe 154, AsD.
55. Schulze, *Otto Braun*, 642–43; Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist*, II, 944–46.
56. Pyta, *Gegen Hitler*, 270–72.
57. Brüning, *Memoiren, 1918–1934* (Stuttgart, 1970), 276.

58. Severing, “Rede an Polizeipräsidenten und Kommandeure,” 18. Dezember 1931, Nachlaß Severing, Doc. 159, Mappe 186, AsD; Pyta, *Gegen Hitler*, 310–11.
59. Severing, *Mein Lebensweg, II*, 275.
60. Pyta, *Gegen Hitler*, 329–34. For Severing’s letter to Braun explaining his intentions and the text of his draft see *Staat und NSDAP, 1930–1932, Quellen zur Ära Brüning*, Eingeleitet von Gerhard Schulz. Bearbeitet von Ilse Mauer und Udo Wengst. (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1977), 175–78.
61. Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 365–66.
62. Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 130.
63. Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 149; Winker, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 447–48.
64. Alexander, *Demokrat und Sozialist*, 963–79; Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 129–30.
65. See Severing to Hilferding, 4. Dezember 1931, Nachlaß Severing, Document 74, Mappe 186, AsD; Severing, *Mein Lebensweg II*, 262–65.
66. Braun, *von Weimar zu Hitler*, 396.
67. See for example his decrees of 5 and 29 of July reversing former rules banning Prussian officials from membership in the NSDAP. *Staat und NSDAP*, 333–34.
68. Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 477.
69. Severing remained active in Social Democratic politics until Hitler abolished the party in June 1933. He did not go abroad thereafter but remained in Germany throughout the Third Reich. Though briefly arrested early on for “corruption” and then subject to constant harassment he managed to live quietly on a pension until 1945. He had virtually no contact with underground groups. After liberation he again became politically active in Bielefeld and was elected to a seat in the *Landtag* of North Rhine–Westphalia. He died in 1952.

**Friedrich Stampfer (1874–1957):
Reaching Out to the Communists**

10



Friedrich Stampfer (1874–1957) Courtesy of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

“The majority did not grasp the value of free public institutions or have the will to defend them. . . . Most people had no idea about what was happening to them.”

—FRIEDRICH STAMPFER, 1953¹

ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1933, as thousands of Social Democratic Party supporters jammed the Berlin *Sportspalast* to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Karl Marx’s death, they knew that they were doing more than simply gathering to honor one of their movement’s founders. Hitler’s government had been in power for less than one month and, with parliamentary elections scarcely a week away, the Nazis’ unofficial, yet no less violent, offensive against their Social Democratic and Communist opponents was in full swing. While the Communists bore the brunt of the storm troopers’ assaults and police repression, the Social Democrats also found themselves under intensified attack. In this atmosphere of political tension and state-supported brutality, the Socialist rally at the *Sportspalast* was a clear act of defiance against the new regime and a statement of the party’s intent to keep Berlin “red.”

The keynote speaker that night was Friedrich Stampfer, a member of the SPD’s executive committee, a *Reichstag* delegate, and long-time editor of the party’s flagship newspaper *Vorwärts*. When the Nazis banned SPD cochair Arthur Crispian from speaking, Stampfer had agreed to take his place, and he felt the tension in the air as he rose to address the assembled throng. Just as he began speaking, however, a police officer stepped up and declared the assembly dissolved. In anger the crowd drove the official from the hall and flowed into the street where thousands marched shouting slogans such as “Down with Hitler” and “Beat that dog to death!” Stampfer hurried to the *Vorwärts* offices to prepare a story about the evening’s events for the morning edition.

Unfortunately for him and his fellow Social Democrats, that edition would never appear. Soon after arriving at his office, Stampfer and his colleagues learned that the *Reichstag* was burning and they rushed to the scene. Unable to get through the cordon of Nazi storm troopers surrounding the building, they returned to *Vorwärts* just in time to hear that Hitler’s government was blaming the fire on a socialist and communist conspiracy. It was no surprise, then, when police vans arrived to shut the paper down. As Stampfer later bitterly noted, “only four weeks previously [this government] had sworn an oath to defend the constitution.” Now, in one blow, it had eliminated the Social Democratic press. Within a few months it would destroy the party and drive Stampfer into exile.²

This story reveals a bitter truth about the demise of the Weimar Republic. Even in late February 1933 Stampfer and many other SPD leaders were ready and willing to mobilize thousands of like-minded comrades in the effort to preserve Germany's democracy. Fervently opposed to Nazism, they were willing to expose themselves to danger and even arrest for their cause. Yet, although they knew that the Nazis were unscrupulous and intent on destroying the republican order, they could not grasp the depth of Nazi ruthlessness and brutality. Unable and unwilling to match the barbarity of their opponents, in the end the Social Democrats stood by helplessly as the Nazis swept them aside.

Short of resorting to violence, however, Friedrich Stampfer was prepared to take desperate steps to find a way out of SPD's political dilemma in the last years of the republic.³ A perceptive, principled, but also flexible leader, Stampfer was willing to challenge the views of his closest political allies to form a united front with the Communists as a means of strengthening Germany's antifascist forces. Although this effort clearly misjudged the realities of the situation, it shows that he was anything but a model of the pedantic, self-satisfied, philistine party leader whom some historians claim dominated the late Weimar SPD.⁴

At the republic's founding in 1919, Friedrich Stampfer was forty-five years old and had been a socialist activist for over twenty-five years. Born in Brünn, Austria, to well-educated, secularized, and strongly republican Jewish parents, his father's law practice provided the family with a comfortable living standard that allowed Friedrich to pursue an academic path, to read widely, and to observe his surroundings closely. The struggles of the early working-class movement in Brünn impressed him, but the ethnic nationalist conflicts in the city struck him as even more important. Initially attracted to socialism via Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, his friends at school and the works of Karl Kautsky soon led him to Marx's *Capital*.⁵

By the time Stampfer enrolled in the Law School at the University of Vienna he was a committed socialist who was more interested in journalism than in pursuing legal studies. Like many of Austrian socialism's leading intellectuals, he became involved in the socialist student movement, but he also took advantage of the opportunity to study with leading non-Marxist economists such as Karl and Anton Menger and Eugen von Philipovich. He developed contacts with liberal groups and participated in the work of the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* (Social Policy Association), which was an organization concerned with the study and resolution of social problems. Stampfer's wide range of political experience in Vienna convinced him that it should be possible for the working class movement to draw

support from middle-class liberals when they had clear interests in common. This outlook shaped his politics for the rest of his life.

Stampfer had begun writing articles for the socialist press while still a high school student in Brünn and he quickly established a solid reputation even among liberal editors. In 1894 he accepted the post of Austrian correspondent to the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (*Leipzig's People's Paper*, LVZ) one of German Social Democracy's leading newspapers. For the twenty-year old Stampfer this move was "the decisive moment" of his life for it marked his personal "*Anschluß*" (annexation) to Germany and to its socialist movement. In 1900 Stampfer became an editor at the LVZ under the leadership of Bruno Schönlink. He quickly became engaged in German Social Democracy's complex factional struggles in which he tended to side with those challenging the "orthodox" viewpoints of party leaders such as Karl Kautsky and August Bebel. Following Schönlink's death, Stampfer worked for a time with the LVZ's new chief editor, Franz Mehring, but when the latter suggested appointing the fiery radical Rosa Luxemburg as coeditor, Stampfer expressed his reservations. He soon had to find another job. In 1902 he moved to Berlin where he became a regular contributor to *Vorwärts* and came into closer proximity with the party's top political leadership.⁶

Stampfer detested the factional conflicts between the so-called "orthodox" Marxists and the "revisionists," which shaped Social Democratic politics in the pre-1914 era. Although he regarded himself as a "Marxist," he did not identify readily with any particular group. Stampfer saw clearly the importance of class struggle in the fight for social and political justice, but he also believed that nationalism, religion, and other factors played a decisive role in mobilizing people for action. As he gained experience he became impatient with the "orthodox" Marxists, who argued that capitalism was moving inexorably toward its future collapse and that the SPD should be careful not to precipitate radical actions before revolutionary conditions had matured. To Stampfer, such a view pushed the fight for major reforms, such as universal suffrage, freedom of the press, separation of church and state, and equal rights for women into the distant future and undermined the SPD's effort to achieve the practical aims of the *Erfurt Program*.⁷

Stampfer also was not very interested in Bernstein's critique of Marx's economic theory. It was not his understanding of theory that moved him toward socialism but, rather, his commitment to social justice. In response to a query from a political adversary, G. R. Treviranus, about why he fought so passionately for his beliefs, Stampfer once replied that "as a schoolboy [he had become] a socialist because he saw the poverty of the

Moravian weavers.” It was his “sense of people’s humanity” (*menschliche Gesinnung*), he later noted, and not “class interest” that motivated him to become a socialist.⁸ This human sentiment would allow people eventually to overcome conflicts of class and party. For Stampfer, theory was not as important as action. The point of his journalistic work for *Vorwärts* and, between 1904 and 1914, his nationally syndicated *Berliner Briefe* (*Berlin Letters*) was to *influence* the making of policy for the achievement of immediate concrete reforms. To that end, he was ready to ally himself with those forces in the movement that were willing to cooperate with progressive liberals when it served socialist interests.⁹

Stampfer did not believe that socialism could be achieved through a violent revolution that rejected all aspects of bourgeois society. In his view, socialists had to build on that society’s achievements and use them to promote their aims. Universal manhood suffrage could serve to democratize such imperial institutions as the class-bound Prussian *Landtag* and these could then become instruments of more far-reaching social and political change. With such aims in mind, Stampfer supported a range of actions, from the political mass strike to the formation of liberal-socialist voting blocks, to bring about democratic reforms within the imperial system. This placed him at odds with the party’s centrist and left wing factions who argued for “pure opposition” or believed that radical actions, like the mass strike, should be used to promote the complete overthrow of the system.¹⁰

With the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914 Stampfer stood with the pro-government majority in the SPD leadership. In an article published on August 3 he wrote, “At the hour when the fateful bell tolls, the workers will make good on the promise given by their representatives. The men without a fatherland will fulfill their duty in a way not to be outdone by any patriots.” The party had no other choice, he argued, it had to help defend the country against Tsarism. Whether Germany was defeated or victorious, the SPD’s withholding of support for war credits would invite recrimination and political isolation.¹¹

Stampfer insisted that a socialist could be both a German and an internationalist. He saw the party’s support for a defensive war and a peace of understanding as a means toward rebuilding the international workers’ movement. No less importantly, for Stampfer, workers sacrificing for the nation “spoke the language of full freedom and equality more clearly than all the parliamentary speeches, booklets, and newspaper articles up to now.”¹² Freedom and equality, he believed, would allow the workers’ movement to intervene decisively to transform the shattered capitalist economy, reconstruct the country, and achieve social justice. The antiwar

minority had the right to criticize the majority's position, but he exhorted his comrades to avoid a split and a "civil war" within the movement.

Stampfer's hopes for a peace of understanding and socialist unity were dashed. True to his patriotic principles, he joined the Austro-Hungarian army in 1915 despite the fact that, due to his age and political connections, he could easily have remained in Berlin. While serving on the Italian Front, Stampfer became ill and returned home in the fall of 1916. He arrived in Berlin just as the SPD executive committee began to purge *Vorwärts* of its antiwar editorial staff. Ebert named Stampfer the paper's chief editor and he remained at this post, with one brief interruption, until 1933. Stampfer's new job also brought him to the top of the party hierarchy with membership in the party executive and the right to attend the meetings of the *Reichstag* delegation.¹³

In the years following his appointment, Stampfer and his party faced unprecedented challenges. The formation of the USPD, the collapse of the imperial state, the founding of the republic, the loss of the war, and civil unrest forced the SPD to move rapidly from what Stampfer called the "child's world of happy opposition" to that of sober responsibility. Called upon to govern, Stampfer saw the SPD's long-term goals as unchanged. What had changed, he asserted, was "the way [one] had to observe things and . . . the demands that one places in a party program."¹⁴

For Stampfer, the Versailles Treaty was a "diktat" that unfairly placed sole responsibility for the war upon Germany, represented a terrible economic burden for the German people, and sowed the seeds of the next war. When the SPD decided it had no other choice but to sign the treaty, he quit his job at *Vorwärts* in protest. He returned a few months later, however, at the behest of the executive committee.¹⁵ Certainly Stampfer was pleased to be back at the center of the political action. As the new republic emerged from the chaos of post-war Germany, he saw it as an enormous step forward for the worker's movement. The Weimar Constitution of 1919 achieved virtually all of the pre-war SPD's political demands including women's suffrage, proportional representation, and the use of the referendum. It represented the beginning, not the end, of a process of change; socialism, he believed, could be achieved within the framework of the new parliamentary order.¹⁶

Thus, Stampfer rejected the demands of left-wing socialists and the newly founded KPD for the creation of a *Räterepublik* (a republic of councils) and the immediate socialization of industry. For Germany to avoid following the Bolshevik road to a new form of despotism, he argued that the movement supporting workers' councils would need to be contained within the framework of the parliamentary order.¹⁷

Stampfer admitted that the socialist parties in the National Assembly had not been able to make radical inroads against private property because they lacked an absolute majority. But he believed that a majority in the *Reichstag* and time for preparation would allow workers to carry out the socialization of industry constitutionally and in an orderly and constructive manner. To proceed otherwise was to invite civil war and economic ruin as the Bolsheviks had done.¹⁸

Although he was not an unremitting supporter of SPD participation in government, Stampfer believed that Socialist coalitions with the moderate bourgeois parties could protect and enhance the political and social gains of the revolution. As he later noted, the SPD was “the real party of the republic because it had created it and it could not be indifferent to its fate.”¹⁹ Thus it was essential for the SPD to accept governmental responsibility at critical moments. In the summer of 1923, for example, with the French occupying the Ruhr, inflation accelerating out of control, and the government in disarray, he argued that any attempt by a divided workers’ movement to seize control and rule alone would invite violent conflict. As long as the workers remained divided by the “uncritical,” “unconscionable,” “unthinking subversion” of the KPD, a socialist government would not be able to gain majority support in the *Reichstag*. Joining a bourgeois coalition was, thus, the only reasonable alternative to remaining in the opposition.²⁰

Increased support from groups outside the industrial proletariat was also critical to achieving an electoral majority. In 1921 Stampfer helped draft the SPD’s new *Görlitz Program*, which he believed addressed the goals of Social Democracy in a new historical epoch. While the *Erfurt Program* of 1891 had provided theoretical and practical guidance at a time when basic democratic and social rights, not socialism, were on the party’s agenda, the founding of the republic meant that Germany was now experiencing the transition to socialism. The struggle against capitalism was certainly not over, but as support for the movement grew, socialism would develop on the basis of the republican form of government. It was the SPD’s task to win majority support for the fundamental changes that would characterize this transformation. By reaching out not only to factory workers, but also to white collar workers, peasants, housewives, artisans, and other groups the SPD could truly become a party of “working people in the city and country.”²¹

Class struggle, Stampfer argued, would continue as long as capitalism existed. Without it there could be no progress for workers, but under the republic, violent conflict was unnecessary. Communist efforts to “militarize” class struggle were “blind . . . senseless and suicidal.” They were derived

from the World War and represented a throwback to the pre-socialist era. Instead, he asserted, the SPD should work to humanize class conflict by promoting enlightenment and positive change. The future task of Social Democracy, he concluded, “is to ‘arm’ the proletariat with all the intellectual and ethical weapons it needed for victory.”²²

It was this outlook that shaped Stampfer’s activity at the center of Social Democratic politics. As a member of the party executive committee and a delegate to the *Reichstag*, Stampfer would have been an important figure in the party under any circumstances. His day-to-day work as editor of *Vorwärts*, however, enhanced his position. With the paper and the executive housed in the same building, Stampfer and the other leaders were in constant communication concerning the presentation of party policy, and he also helped Otto Wels, the party cochair, develop his speeches.²³ Thus, Stampfer was particularly well placed not only to shape the party’s outlook, but also to influence the way it educated the proletariat “for positive work as active full citizens.”²⁴

For Stampfer, the main task of *Vorwärts* was to represent the political point of view of the whole party (*Gesamtpartei*) to the public. This meant promoting the outlook of the SPD executive, a practice that frustrated minority factions within the party, especially on the left. But Stampfer insisted that, while one should not close off political debate within the paper, it was necessary to limit its extent. Otherwise it would be difficult to maintain party unity in the midst of the country’s myriad crises, especially after the SPD’s reunification with the more left-leaning USPD in 1922. Stampfer rejected the arguments of those who accused the leadership of resorting to “ruthless,” “Bolshevik,” methods of suppressing dissent, and noted that the executive actually funded the Social Democratic papers that opposed its views. He remained firm, however, in his belief that, if the SPD’s “central organ” should open its pages to unlimited debate, the party would become a “pile of rubble” (*Trümmerhaufen*).²⁵

With his academic background Stampfer differed from most of his colleagues in the executive, many of whom had been artisans, factory workers or white-collar employees. Largely self-educated, many had worked their way up through the party’s various organizations. By outlook and experience they tended to be people who were committed to the movement’s ideals but were infused with a strong streak of pragmatism. It was this latter quality of the executive leadership that made it easy for Stampfer, who, like many other academically trained socialists, had risen to the top through the press, to work well within that body.²⁶

To be a member of the Social Democratic executive meant to sacrifice much of one’s personal life to the needs of the cause. As his memoirs and

the documentary record suggest, Stampfer, too, engaged in a truly impressive range of activities. In addition to his editorial and policy-making responsibilities, he also participated in the work of the party commission established to draft a new program following reunification with the USPD.²⁷ More importantly, he was a member of the SPDs' *Reichstag* delegation where he worked in the foreign policy committee.

When looking back on his life, Stampfer claimed not to have had much interest in pursuing parliamentary fame. For this long-time journalist, election to parliament essentially meant simply moving from the gallery, where he had long been present, to the floor of the assembly. He rarely took part in the often long-winded and cantankerous plenary debates, which he thought were quite unproductive, and instead focused his attention on committee work. Characteristically, Stampfer was pleased with the more pragmatic and generally civil atmosphere in that arena.

A dearth of primary documents makes it difficult to say much about Stampfer's character and private life, but his observations of his political opponents in the *Reichstag* and elsewhere indicate that he could be a fair-minded and humane man. For example, he clearly recognized the professional and political talents of nationalist leader Karl Helfferich, even though the latter was notorious for his sharp and often personal attacks on various opponents, including Social Democrats.²⁸

Even more telling was Stampfer's outrage in 1929 when the SPD-led coalition government refused to grant Leon Trotsky asylum in Germany. In a letter to Chancellor Hermann Müller, Stampfer argued that he could not understand why the German government would deny Trotsky the same right of asylum it had granted to "countless ultra-reactionary Russians." In his view the republic should grant asylum to all those fleeing from dictatorship. It was simply a matter of principle. In taking this position in regard to Trotsky, who, along with other Bolshevik leaders, held the Social Democrats in great contempt, Stampfer showed how his empathy for Trotsky's predicament counted for more than their sharp political differences.²⁹

Stampfer later described the year 1928 as the year in which the SPD had again reached the height of its power. Party membership was close to its prewar high of one million, its auxiliary organizations were flourishing, and its trade union allies boasted a membership almost five times as large. In the elections of that year the SPD emerged as the strongest party with almost 30 percent of the vote and Hermann Müller became head of a new "Great Coalition" government that included the Catholic, Democratic, and German People's (DVP) Parties. For many, the new government offered the hope of substantial social, economic, and political reforms that

would improve the condition of Germany's workers and increase their power. Looking back, Stampfer opined that the worst effects of the war seemed to be over and bloody civil conflict was a thing of the past. The "victory of human sentiment" appeared to have placed the republic on firm foundations that would lead to positive change.³⁰

At the time, however, he was not so optimistic. In May 1928 he wrote to Kautsky that he did not think that the SPD would be able to achieve its goals within the coalition. Domestically, the nation's financial obligations under the Dawes Plan, the exhaustion of its financial reserves, and the resistance of the DVP to social reforms sharply limited the party's room for maneuver. In the realm of foreign policy things were not much better as the French showed no signs of ending their occupation of the Rhineland. Stampfer knew that, having campaigned under the slogan, "Away with the rightist government!" there was no way for the SPD to avoid joining the coalition, but he was clearly aware that the party would be operating under severe economic and political constraints.³¹

Stampfer's fears, as events quickly showed, were well founded. The onset of the Great Depression of 1929 and the Nazi electoral breakthrough that followed threw the republic and its chief defenders permanently onto the defensive. Stampfer did not at first grasp the full political impact of the economic crisis. In August of 1929 he argued that the SPD-led coalition had to defend the unemployment insurance system at all costs because it was the "crowning achievement" of the social insurance system.³² When the coalition collapsed over this issue in March of 1930, it opened the way to the semi-authoritarian presidential regimes of the next three years, during which the SPD found itself forced to tolerate ever more reactionary minority governments to prevent Hitler from coming to power.

To Stampfer and his colleagues in the SPD leadership, it eventually became clear that the most effective way to defend the republic against its enemies was to reunite the working class in a struggle against the extreme right. Deep-seated antagonisms, however, made such a project extremely difficult. Following the collapse of the monarchy, the SPD's suppression of Communist revolutionary actions had created a wide gulf between the two parties. In the late twenties, the KPD, following the instructions of the Bolshevik-controlled Communist International, had labeled the Socialists as "social fascists" who were the main enemy "paving the way for fascist dictatorship" in Germany. The KPD aimed to win over the SPD's mass base by educating the workers and unmasking the Social Democrats as agents of fascism.³³

By late 1931 Social Democratic leaders of all persuasions recognized that the party's inability to find a way out of the economic and political

crisis was undermining its support.³⁴ Stampfer backed the effort to bolster Social Democracy's sagging fortunes by bringing together republican forces in the "Iron Front" and by promoting more radical economic policies to salvage the economy. The latter position represented a reversal of his long-held gradualist views. Now, in the midst of the crisis, Stampfer joined those calling for the rapid creation of public works for the unemployed, increased state planning and regulation, reforms of the banking and credit system, and nationalization of major industries. He called these changes "an expression of the will to socialism" at the moment when "the great reconstruction of the economy had arrived." Social Democrats had to make clear to the workers that it was they, not the fascists, who had a response to the crisis and could point the way forward.³⁵

Stampfer's outlook developed in the midst of a heated debate among SPD and trade union leaders over how to finance public works programs to combat unemployment.³⁶ He saw that it was a political necessity for the SPD to support state action, for without it workers would turn away from the republic and the party in seeking a way out of their desperate straits. Although it might be argued that the steps Stampfer supported, many of which were ultimately adopted as the party's official policy, were not "socialist," they were very substantial measures that would have represented an unprecedented intervention in the workings of German capitalism.

Stampfer's willingness to call for radical reforms was new, but he remained committed to achieving them only within the parliamentary framework. To succeed in that arena, however, majorities were necessary and that required the dim prospect of the political unity of the left. Not only were the trade unions and the SPD divided over how to construct a joint response to the crisis, by mid-1932 Socialist rivalry with the Communists was increasingly intense. To fight the Nazi-friendly government of Franz von Papen, Stampfer was among those trade union and SPD leaders willing to suggest that the Socialists and Communists call a "truce" as a step toward a united front.³⁷

Stampfer was very clear about his goals. The only feasible way to bring about unity was to form a "loose combination" (*lose Kombination*) in which the Communists ceased attacking the Social Democrats and cooperating with the Nazis. Both parties fighting against fascism, not empty rhetoric, would lead to a proletarian united front. By framing the discussion in this way, Stampfer laid out the only option that had a chance of success. It set aside mutual recriminations, avoided complicated negotiations, and placed the focus on the fight against the right. Unfortunately, its success hinged on the Communists' willingness to cooperate.³⁸

The KPD leaders were not willing. Holding fast to the Comintern's "general line," they repeatedly rebuffed Social Democratic calls for cooperation and stepped up their attacks, but Stampfer did not lose hope. In fact, during the summer and fall of 1932, as the SPD's electoral fortunes declined, he began cultivating contacts with the Soviet embassy in Berlin. He pursued this strategy despite knowing that, following the KPD's electoral gains in November, the overwhelming majority of the SPD's leaders vehemently opposed making further approaches to the Communists.³⁹

In his memoirs, Stampfer later claimed that his discussions with Ambassador Chintschuk aimed to "normalize" relations between his party and the Soviet government. His real goal, however, was to convince the Soviets to reorient the KPD's attitude toward the SPD. These discussions occurred sporadically for almost two months and ultimately came to naught.⁴⁰ Even then, however, Stampfer still argued repeatedly, in the executive and in *Vorwärts*, that the parties should at least tacitly, if not formally, cease attacking one another. Without informing his colleagues, he met again with an official of the Soviet embassy on February 22, 1933. At that meeting he suggested that, since all other strategies were unacceptable to either the SPD or the KPD leaders, the Soviet government should pressure Hitler's regime to relax its persecution of the left. When the Soviets rejected this proposal he was disappointed and angry, but he did not lose all hope. Shortly thereafter, he was willing to set up a meeting with representatives of the KPD leadership on February 28, 1933. The *Reichstag* fire and the persecution of the KPD that followed made this arrangement moot.⁴¹

Why did Stampfer pursue this strategy? Certainly, as Henryk Skrzypczak has noted, he was aware that large numbers of Communist and Socialist workers wanted unified action and he no doubt believed that, ultimately, the Soviets would come to their senses and urge the KPD to reverse course.⁴² For the purposes of our discussion it is of secondary importance that Stampfer misjudged the Communists' attitude. More important is to recognize how this staunch anti-Communist and life-long Social Democrat was willing to reverse course, ignore the criticism of his closest colleagues, and breach party discipline if it meant increasing the chances of saving the republic. Stampfer had always been skeptical of ideological rigidity in the pursuit of practical political aims. As Germany's crisis intensified he remained flexible and sharply changed his views on the radical transformation of the economy. In his approach to the Communists we have an even more stunning example of his readiness to set aside his ideological (and personal) differences in order to salvage the democratic order.

But such flexibility did not mean that Stampfer was ready to resort to violent action. Like his colleagues in the executive, Stampfer could not muster the will to urge the party and trade unions to undertake a general strike or resort to arms against their antirepublican opponents. Grasping at straws, he supported the majority when it rejected resistance and opted, in vain, to mobilize for coming elections and to use the courts to reverse von Papen's illegal ouster of Prussia's SPD-led government in July 1932.⁴³ Six months later, at the moment of Hitler's appointment, he supported the majority once again when it decided to stick to the letter of the constitution rather than calling for a general strike or mobilizing its own paramilitary *Reichsbanner* units for action.⁴⁴ The fear of bloody defeat at the hands of superior forces drove this effort to avoid provoking the enemy. What the Social Democrats did not understand was that the Nazis needed no provocation; they were ready to manufacture their own opportunities.

Looking back on the July debacle twenty-five years later, Stampfer recalled a conversation with a friend who summed up the failure by saying, "You are bad generals [who] could not send others to die." Stampfer agreed wholeheartedly. As he noted in his history of the republic, "for decades [the SPD] had been a party of gradual development, of reasoned decision making, of peaceful understanding. Had it given the signal to fight, then it would have been attempting to be something that it was not." His appraisal was on the mark. Even when the party had reliable knowledge that its opponents aimed to undermine the republic's institutions, such as it did in Prussia early in the summer of 1932, it was unwilling to make preparations for serious resistance. Parliamentarians, not revolutionaries, led the SPD and their imperative was to avoid civil war.⁴⁵

Friedrich Stampfer certainly fit the mold of the Social Democratic parliamentarian, but it would be an oversimplification to see him as just one more of that "plentiful crop of mediocrities" who some, with good reason, argue dominated Weimar's parliamentary parties.⁴⁶ On the contrary, he was a tenacious supporter of that system who was willing to go to great lengths to protect it. That he, along with his colleagues in the SPD leadership, was unwilling to unleash a bloody civil war was not surprising given their long history of parliamentary practice and the fact that few could clearly foresee how the Nazis would proceed in 1933.⁴⁷

Notes

1. Friedrich Stampfer, *Die Vierzehn Jahre der ersten deutschen Republik* (Hamburg: Verlag Auerdruck, 1953), 670.

2. On the meeting at the Sportpalast and the subsequent events see Friedrich Stampfer, *Sie haben nicht kapituliert!* (Berlin: Verlag für Gewerkschaftspolitik und Sozialwissenschaft, 1953), 16–18; and idem., *Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse, Aufzeichnungen aus meinem Leben*, (Cologne: Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, 1957), 261–62.

3. Like that of many other Weimar Social Democrats, the limited post-1945 historiography on Stampfer was shaped by the lack of private documents and the Cold War. For the standard East German view, which dismissed Stampfer as a traitor to the proletarian revolution, see Paul Merker, *Sozialdemokratismus: Stampfer, Schumacher und andere Gestrige*, (East Berlin: Dietz, 1952), and Dieter Fricke, “Friedrich Stampfer und der ‘demokratische Sozialismus,’” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 6, 4 (1958): 749–74. Western historians working on the Weimar period often relied on Stampfer’s journalistic and historical works, but, in a period when the SPD was trying to overcome the stigma of defeat and to jettison the party’s Marxism, he has not been the subject of a full-scale biography and was not included in the two most important post-war collections of biographical essays dealing with Weimar Social Democrats. See Werner Blumenberg, *Kämpfer für die Freiheit*, (Berlin and Hannover: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1959) and Peter Lösche, Michael Scholing, and Franz Walter, eds., *Vor dem Vergessen bewahren*. There are also entries on his life in some of the biographical dictionaries of the Weimar period. See Wolfgang Benz and Hermann Graml, eds., *Biographisches Lexikon zur Weimarer Republik*, (Munich, 1988); Werner Röder and Herbert A. Strauss, eds., *Biographisches Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration nach 1933*, Bd. 1, (Munich: Saur, 1980–1983), 720.

4. For a classic description of the executive as a body of dutiful if uninspired “organization men,” see Richard Hunt, *German Social Democracy*, (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1964), 63–75. Compare with Peter Lösche, et al., *Vor dem Vergessen bewahren*, 7–14.

5. Stampfer, *Erfahrungen*, 7–23.

6. In his role as *LVZ* correspondent Stampfer particularly aggravated SPÖ leader Victor Adler when he challenged his view of the national question in an article describing the debate at the Brünn party congress of 1899. Later, when editor, he raised Karl Kautsky’s ire by challenging the SPD’s support for free trade. For general background and specifics on the various issues compare Stampfer, *Erfahrungen*, 52–68, and Victor Adler, *Briefwechsel mit August Bebel und Karl Kautsky*, edited by Friedrich Adler, (Vienna: Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1954), 325–27, 380.

7. Stampfer, *Erfahrungen*, 15, 32, 109–10; In the pre-1914 era Stampfer outlined his ideas for fundamental political and economic reforms in two important works: See *Ziele Und Wege. Erläuterungen der sozialdemokratischen Gegenwartsforderungen*, edited by Adolf Braun, unter Mitarbeit von Adolf Braun, Hugo Lindemann, Max Süßheim Friedrich Stampfer, Klara Zetkin, (Berlin: Buchhandlung Vorwärts, 1908) and Stampfer, *Grundbegriffe der Politik* (Berlin: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 2nd edition, 1931).

8. G. R. Treviranus, “Friedrich Stampfer,” *Deutsche Rundschau* 84, 3 (1958): 256; Stampfer, *Erfahrungen*, 110.

9. Stampfer, *Erfahrungen*, 93–94, 128–30.
10. Stampfer, *Erfahrungen*, 146–47.
11. As quoted in Wilhelm Keil, *Erlebnisse eines Sozialdemokraten*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1947), 299. See also Stampfer, *Sozialdemokratie und Kriegskredite*, (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1915).
12. Stampfer, *Sozialdemokratie und Kriegskredite*, 15.
13. Stampfer, *Erfahrungen*, 175–214; Susanne Miller, “ein Pyrrhussieg der Mehrheit, 1914–1919,” *Vorwärts*, Sondernummer, (Oct. 7, 1976): 26–28.
14. Stampfer quoted by Kurt Koszyk, “Abschied vom Kinderland der Opposition, 1919–1933,” in *Vorwärts*, Sondernummer (Oct. 7, 1976): 30.
15. Stampfer, *Erfahrungen*, 241–42.
16. Stampfer, *Verfassung, Arbeiterklasse und Sozialismus. Eine kritische Untersuchung der Reichsverfassung vom 11. August, 1919* (Berlin: Singer, 1919).
17. Stampfer, *Verfassung*, 20–22 and idem., *Der 9. November. Gedenkblätter an seiner Wiederkehr*, (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1919), 34–35.
18. Stampfer, *Verfassung*, 21–24.
19. Friedrich Stampfer, *Die vierzehn Jahre*, 342.
20. Stampfer, “Die Arbeiterregierung,” and “Antwort,” in *Vorwärts*, Nr. 358, 31 July 1923, and Nr. 360, 3 August 1923, respectively; Heinrich August Winkler, *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung*, 587–88.
21. For Stampfer’s remarks at Görlitz see *SPD-Parteitag: Görlitz, 1921*, 303–07. For his more extensive analysis of the program see Stampfer, *Das Görlitzer Programm*, (Berlin: Buchhandlung Vorwärts, 1922).
22. Stampfer, *Das Görlitzer Programm*, 13–14.
23. I agree with Adolph that Stampfer was not a “gray eminence” or “strong man” pulling strings behind the throne. Wels called his own shots. See Hans J. L. Adolph, *Otto Wels und die Politik der deutschen Sozialdemokratie, 1894–1939*, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), 114.
24. Kosyck, “Abschied,” 32.
25. *Sozialdemokratische Parteitag: Kiel, 1927*, 86–88.
26. On the social background of the Weimar SPD leadership see Heinrich August Winkler, *Der Schein Der Normalität*, 646–50.
27. He withdrew from the committee when he realized its intention to revise the program more in keeping with the theoretical tradition of Erfurt than with the pragmatic emphasis of Görlitz. In his view this tendency would make it difficult for the party to win majority support. See Stampfer, “Der Programmwurf,” *Vorwärts*, Nr. 410, 31. August, 1925; Sender, *Autobiography*, 248–49.
28. It is interesting to note that in his memoirs Stampfer never goes into detail about his private affairs. One learns virtually nothing about his wives or life in his household. On his views of his colleagues in the *Reichstag*, see *Erfahrungen*, 247–49.
29. Stampfer to Hermann Müller, 2 February 1929, Nachlaß Herman Müller, Kasette I, Nr. 105, Archiv der Sozialen Demokratie (AsD), Bonn.

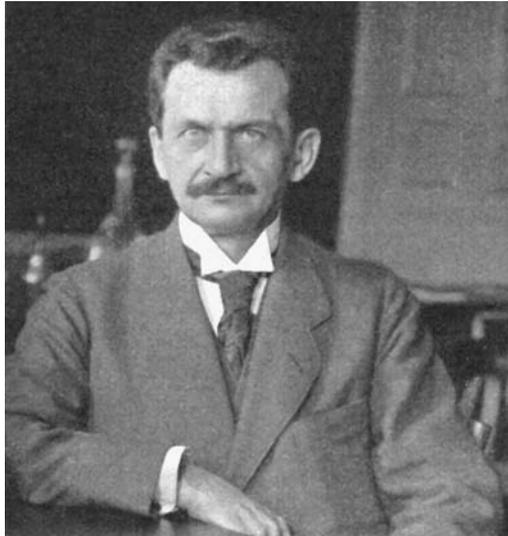
30. Stampfer, *Die vierzehn Jahre*, 513–20.
31. Stampfer to Karl Kautsky, 25 May 1928, KDXXI 303, International Institute for Social History (ISH); Breitman, *German Socialism and Weimar Social Democracy*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 145.
32. Stampfer, “Arbeitslose und Partei. Ein Beitrag zur Diskussion,” *Vorwärts*, Nr. 399, 8. August 1929; idem., *Die vierzehn Jahre*, 549–50.
33. Conan Fischer, *The German Communists and the Rise of Nazism*, (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1991), 102; Ben Fowkes, *Communism in Germany under the Weimar Republic*, (London: St. Martin’s Press, 1984): 154–55, 164.
34. Donna Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 169–73.
35. Stampfer, “Offensive,” *Vorwärts*, Nr. 81, 18. February, 1932.
36. Michael Schneider, “Arbeitsbeschaffung. Die Vorstellungen von Freien Gewerkschaften und SPD zur Bekämpfung der Wirtschaftskrise,” in Wolfgang Luthardt, ed., *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterbewegung und Weimarer Republik. Materialien zur gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung 1927–1933* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), 220–32; Heinrich August Winker, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 494–506.
37. Henryk Skrzypczak, “Kanzlerwechsel und Einheitsfront. Abwehrreaktionen der Arbeiterbewegung auf die Machtübergabe an Franz von Papen,” *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* (IWK) (April, 1982): 482–99; Stampfer “Einheitsfront! Ein Ziel—aber wo ist der Weg?” *Vorwärts*, Nr. 285, 19. 6. 1932.
38. Stampfer, “Einheitsfront!”; Heinrich August Winker, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 624–26.
39. On the leadership’s opposition to approaching the Communists see especially the meeting of the Parteiauschuß, 10. November, 1932 in Schulze, *Anpassung oder Widerstand?*, especially 29, 41, 44–45, 53–54, 66. On Stampfer’s approach to the Soviets see, *Erfahrungen*, 264 and Henry Skrzypczak, “‘Nichtangriffspakt.’ Zu Friedrich Stampfers Einheitsfront-Interventionen im Spannungsfeld von Papen zu Hitler,” in *Soziale Demokratie und sozialistische Theorie. Festschrift für Hans-Josef Steinberg*, edited by Inge Marbolek and Till, Schelz-Brandenburg, (Bremen: Ed. Temmen, 1995), 226–44.
40. Stampfer, *Erfahrungen*, 264.
41. Stampfer, “Einheitsfront. Offener Brief an die kommunistischen Arbeiter,” *Vorwärts*, Nr. 71, 11. February 1933; Skrzypczak, “‘Nichtangriffspakt,’” 235; and idem, “Anspiel. Vorabdruck aus: Mission ohne Mandat. Der Fall Friedrich Stampfer,” *IWK* (Jan. 1996): 53–57.
42. Skrzypczak, “‘Nichtangriffspakt,’” 236–37.
43. Stampfer, *Die vierzehn Jahre*, 633–35.
44. Anpassung, 131–36; Stampfer, *Erfahrungen*, 260; Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 867–69; Erich Matthias, *Das Ende der Parteien*, 158–62.
45. Stampfer, *Erfahrung*, 256; idem, *Die vierzehn Jahre*, 632; Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 675–80.

46. The phrase is from Klaus Epstein, “The End of the German Parties in 1933,” *Journal of Central European Affairs*, 23 (1963): 76; See also Klaus P. Fischer, *Nazi Germany*, 267.

47. Stampfer managed to elude capture after 1933 and he remained an important figure among the SPD leadership in exile. From 1933 to 1940, first in Prague and, after 1938, in Paris, he edited the party’s leading newspaper *Neuer Vorwärts*. The Nazi invasion ultimately drove him to New York, where he raised money for the party and contributed to the *Neue Volkszeitung*. He returned to Germany in 1948 and taught at the Academy of Labor in Frankfurt am Main. He died in 1957. See Erich Matthias, ed., *Mit dem Gesicht nach Deutschland: Eine Dokumentation über die sozialdemokratische Emigration, aus dem Nachlaß Friedrich Stampfer, ergänzt durch andere Überlieferungen* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1968), and Stampfer, *Erfahrungen*, 272–91.

**Otto Wels (1873–1939):
Defending Socialism's Honor**

11



Otto Wels (1873–1930) Courtesy of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

“What makes us certain of victory . . . is, above all, our unshakable belief in the forward march of the idea of socialism.”

—OTTO WELS, 1928¹

IN HIS MEMOIRS, FORMER CHANCELLOR HEINRICH BRÜNING, a man of pronounced authoritarian sentiments, once referred to his erstwhile opponent, SPD cochairman Otto Wels, as Germany’s “bravest man in the fight against Hitler.”² It is, of course, neither possible nor fruitful to determine who was the “bravest,” but this compliment is remarkable coming as it did from a man who had actually helped Hitler to power. It reflects the retrospective thinking of someone who, although he knew better, still could not muster the courage to stand against Nazism at the very moment when it “officially” seized complete control of the country. Brüning’s recollections do not mention Wels’s speech of March 23, 1933, the day the *Reichstag* voted to grant Hitler total power, but it was certainly in the forefront of his memory. For unlike the former Chancellor who, despite supposed misgivings, on that day swam with the tide, Wels literally risked his life to state publicly the SPD’s rejection of Hitler’s plans. As Germany’s party leaders, acting out of a mixture of conviction, opportunism, and fear, engaged in what amounted to collective political suicide, Wels’s act of civil courage saved his party’s honor, if little else.³

It was fitting that it was Otto Wels who rose to speak on that fateful day. Having grown up in the bosom of the party, over the course of more than four decades he had risen through its ranks to become its most important national leader.⁴ Born in Berlin in 1873, Wels joined the workers’ movement just as it began its period of rapid expansion paralleling the growth of German industry. His father, Johann, and his mother Johanne, ran a restaurant in north Berlin that allowed the family a comfortable existence. It also served, however, as a clandestine meeting place for the SPD, which Bismarck had outlawed from 1878 until 1890. In the back room of his parents’ establishment Wels met many of the socialist movement’s most famous early leaders including August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht. Growing up in this exciting and dangerous atmosphere decisively shaped the young Otto’s ideals. By fourteen he regarded himself as a socialist.⁵

After finishing elementary school, Wels became a skilled upholsterer (*Tapezierer*). Passing his journeyman’s exams in 1891, he traveled widely around the country practicing his craft until he returned to Berlin in 1893. Shortly thereafter he married Bertha Antonie (Toni) Reske, a seamstress. The couple had two sons, Walter and Hugo, born in 1895 and 1900, re-

spectively. As was true in most socialist families, it was the wife—in this case, Toni—who ran the Wels household, with Otto spending most of his time either at work or engaged in politics. His sons remembered him as a dutiful father. Like his role model, Bebel, he was a traditionalist when it came to family matters and was suspicious of comrades whose moral compass pointed in a direction different from his own.

Wels officially joined the SPD when he was an apprentice and the party was still illegal. In the early nineties he represented wage earners in the Berlin Craftsmen's Chamber and, in 1894, fresh from his travels as a journeyman, he threw himself into socialist politics in Berlin's fifth electoral district. Within a year his comrades elected him first chairman of the SPD's organization there, but compulsory military service interrupted this early political activity. Based in the town of Thorn from 1895 until 1897, the young artillerist faced constant petty political harassment. His superiors refused, for example, to grant him a single leave for his entire term of service. Such treatment did not, however, dampen Wels's spirit. Once back in Berlin, he quickly immersed himself in trade union and party work.⁶

Wels's personality traits equipped him well for a political career in the socialist movement. Although not an erudite speaker, he knew how to talk to workers and could use the rostrum effectively whether on the political stump or in parliament. With a lively sense of humor and a choleric temper, many regarded him as a rough character whose comments in public debate were sometimes crude, but whose integrity and honesty also won him the respect of most colleagues and many opponents. Aware of his limited education, Wels worked hard to educate himself by enrolling at the Workers' Educational Society in Berlin and through reading. While he lived modestly, he was no ascetic. He enjoyed going out after work for good meals and beer drinking with his substantial circle of friends both among party leaders and the rank-and-file.⁷

He did not succumb easily to defeat. In 1899 Wels ran for reelection to the post of first chairman in District Five, but his effort failed due to his radical political views. Like most other Social Democrats, he was highly critical of Edward Bernstein's efforts in the late 1890s to get the SPD to admit the reformist nature of its mission and to give up its pretensions as a "revolutionary" party. But, unlike the majority, including Bebel, Wels also opposed any electoral strategy that called for cooperation with the liberal middle-class parties. This "purist" perspective placed him at odds with too many respected members of the party leadership and ultimately cost him much support.⁸

He was undeterred. In 1901 he won election as one of District Five's two representatives on the new nine-member party press commission. This

body, together with the SPD executive, oversaw the operations of *Vorwärts*, which served as the party's official organ and as the local Socialist paper in Berlin. Wels soon became the commission's most prominent figure in the struggles to determine the paper's political and ideological direction. Between 1901 and 1909 he was in the party's "radical" camp. He supported the executive's decision to fire *Vorwärts*'s revisionist editorial board in 1905, and he reproved SPD delegates to the south German state assemblies, who, contrary to party policy, voted to pass their government budgets. He criticized the Party's *Reichstag* delegation for voting in favor of money to put down the Herero rebellion in German Southwest Africa, and he argued that the SPD, not the unions, should be responsible for calling the political mass strike as a weapon to defend workers' rights. These positions had the general backing of party members in Berlin and in the surrounding province of Brandenburg. In July of 1907 members of the latter elected him party secretary, a paid position that now allowed him to work full-time for the labor movement.

A skilled organizer, Wels was particularly suited for this post. Over the course of the next five years he placed the SPD in Brandenburg on a firm financial footing, eased tensions between the provincial and Berlin party organizations, and created an effective apparatus for political agitation and electioneering. These accomplishments impressed the party executive.

This body was also pleased with his outlook on the internal squabbles that rent the SPD after 1909. It was within the context of these debates, as an emerging party left wing challenged the executive, that his political perspective within the SPD began to shift. Led by figures of national prominence, such as Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, as well as Wels's local Berlin rival, Arthur Stadthagen, the left sharply attacked the executive's moderate responses to the South Germans' continued breeches of party discipline and to German imperialist adventures in Morocco. Wels defended the executive against these criticisms, which he believed went much too far and threatened to divide the party irreparably. He was most upset, however, about the decisions of the "revisionist" and "radical" factions to hold separate strategy meetings prior to the Jena party congress of 1911. Such meetings, he feared, presaged a split and he opposed participating in them.⁹

Wels's call for "unity on the basis of the party's *Erfurt Program*" placed him squarely in the SPD's "Marxist Center" faction, which dominated the executive committee and sought to continue the Party's reformist practice without calling its revolutionary ideology into question. His energetic defense of the executive's policies impressed that body even if it angered

many comrades in the Berlin district of Brandenburg province. As a result, in March of 1912 the Berlin party organization separated itself from the Brandenburg party district.

This action undercut Wels's authority in Berlin, but his political support in Brandenburg remained intact. He was still well positioned to influence SPD politics on the national level and continued to staunchly defend the executive. Against sharp criticism from the left, he backed the party's electoral alliance with the Progressives in 1912, supported the *Reichstag* delegation's unprecedented decision to vote for the military budget (as a means of introducing direct taxation), and insisted that the mass strike should only be used as a defensive political weapon. At the party congress of 1913, Bavarian and "right-wing" Saxon delegates nominated him for election to the executive committee. He defeated a left-wing candidate by a close vote of 245 to 232.¹⁰

As an "associate" member (*Beisitzer*) of the SPD executive, Wels had full voting rights but was not on that body's paid staff. He continued as party secretary in Brandenburg and, as his office was at the same location as the national leadership's, the *Vorwärts* building on the Lindenstraße, he was at the center of the SPD's day-to-day operations. From this vantage point he came to work closely with the new generation of top party leaders such as Friedrich Ebert, Hermann Müller, Philipp Scheidemann, and Otto Braun, all of whom became key figures in the Weimar Republic.

In addition to his posts within the party organization, in 1912 Wels won a seat in the *Reichstag*, where he remained until 1933. Although he spoke infrequently and did not develop a special area of legislative expertise, his influence in the SPD's delegation grew as his stature within the leadership rose. However one might assess the astuteness of Wels's politics, it is clear that, by the eve of the Great War, the forty-year-old former upholsterer had much to be proud of. He had used his considerable talents and energy with skill to ascend the Social Democratic political ladder and was now also a member of parliament. The responsibilities that came with these accomplishments would have been challenging for most people even if orderly routine had characterized the German political and social climate. The disastrous events of August 1914, however, raised the stakes for Germany, for the SPD, and for Wels. The war, and the political collapse that followed it, transformed him into a politician of national prominence.

By 1914 Wels, like most of his colleagues in the SPD leadership, was convinced that Social Democracy's political road to power should be a parliamentary rather than a revolutionary one. Indeed, he had *always* been a supporter of this view, but in his early career he had been more inclined

toward ideological purism. His fear that revisionism would undercut the SPD's radical vision and transform it into just another reformist party was widely shared among Social Democrats at the time. This outlook changed, however, as he moved higher in the SPD leadership. Wels's early career spanned the period of Social Democracy's most rapid organizational growth and, as it did for many other SPD leaders, the party's expansion fueled his sense of pride and confidence in the future. At the same time, however, his worries concerning party unity made him increasingly impatient with infighting over theoretical matters, while fear of renewed government repression caused him to oppose risky actions, such as the mass strike to abolish Prussia's three-class electoral system. Protecting the party organization became his most important goal and it was this priority that dominated his actions during the First World War and thereafter.

In August of 1914 Wels was convinced that the SPD leadership made the right choice in voting to support the German war effort. He never wavered from the view that the war was a defensive struggle, and he vehemently criticized cochairman Hugo Haase and the minority of party leaders, who had opposed granting the government war credits and attempted to reverse the SPD's policy beginning in the fall of 1914. Like his friend Eduard David, who led the right wing of the SPD's *Reichstag* delegation, Wels cherished the illusion that, by doing its duty, the SPD would be able to promote the democratization of the monarchy during the war.¹¹

As the conflict dragged on, many of the SPD's top leaders found themselves focusing most of their time on parliamentary matters. With fewer hands available to manage the party organization, Wels and his colleague, Hermann Müller, took up the slack. At a time when membership and revenue were collapsing due to the draft and economic crisis, and with the party's internal conflict over the war intensifying, their task was a difficult one. Soon Wels was essentially operating as a full-time party secretary rather than as an associate member of the executive. He became an increasingly indispensable figure.

It did not take him long to conclude that the antiwar faction was steering the party toward a split. By December 1915, when twenty SPD delegates in the *Reichstag* voted against additional war credits, Wels became convinced that it was inevitable. Claiming to understand the minority's good intentions, he insisted, however, that their position was wrong-headed. National defense was legitimate, and it was imperative for the SPD to work actively for victory at the nation's moment of need. Wels believed that, if Germany won the war, a wave of triumphant militarism would sweep the country but would be transitory in nature. If Germany lost,

however, militarism could get out of control. By serving the nation and winning the support of the broad masses in the postwar period, he thought that the SPD would be able to use its strength in the *Reichstag* to keep those forces in check. Choosing the path of the minority, however, would drive the masses away from the party.¹²

In January of 1916 Wels became editor of the Brandenburg party organization's newspaper, *Die Fackel* (*The Torch*), and used its pages to rebut the views of the opposition. He did not dispute its contention that the war was "imperialist" and served ruling class interests. He argued, however, that it was not in the interest of the German working class to lose the war. Defeat would allow British and French imperialism to dominate the world economy at the expense of German workers, and it would expose the country to the political whims of Tsarism. With a world socialist revolution not likely anytime soon, Wels insisted that the workers' movement would have to continue operating within the framework of the capitalist nation state. And for the German proletariat this meant that its interests were linked to the successful defense of the fatherland. To agitate against the war weakened that effort and amounted to treason against the state and against comrades fighting in the field.¹³

These views make very clear the strength of Wels's patriotism and his commitment to parliamentary politics. At a time when Germany's working class, despite its losses at the front and its misery at home, still did not enjoy full German citizenship, Wels placed more weight on the need to defend the nation rather than to pursue class struggle. He did not, of course, deny the latter's importance. In the context of the war, however, he believed it should be subordinated to the national interest, while in the postwar period he looked to steer it along a parliamentary path.

The SPD's division into two parties in 1917 hit its Berlin organization especially hard. While the majority leadership had strong support in Brandenburg, most comrades in Berlin joined the USPD. Wels immediately began to reconstruct the SPD's Berlin party organization and urged the national leadership to go over to the offensive against its new rival. The party attempted to do so by forming a coalition in the *Reichstag* with the Progressive and the Center parties to assert demands for peace without annexations and for the democratization of the Prussian and *Reich* governments. Fearful of losing support to the USPD and, after November 1917, of the possibility of a Bolshevik-style revolution in Germany, the SPD leaders vainly strove to achieve the reforms they had hoped for in 1914.

Only with the pending collapse of the German armies in the fall of 1918 did the imperial political and military caste decide to avoid taking

responsibility for the defeat by agreeing to the creation of a truly parliamentary government that would effect the surrender. Hence, in October of 1918 the SPD found itself facing a terrible paradox. If it joined a coalition government headed by the liberal Prince Max von Baden, it would realize a key political goal widely shared among Social Democrats. At the same time, though, the leaders recognized that this cabinet would have to conclude an armistice and possibly oversee the end of the imperial system altogether. The “burden of power” would be a heavy one.¹⁴

In the debates of the *Reichstag* delegation over the party’s entry into the cabinet, Wels was among the substantial minority that opposed this step because he feared that the SPD would be “dragged down with the collapsing empire.” At one point he turned to Ebert, the leading proponent of joining the coalition, and said, “Has God abandoned you? Let those people who were responsible for the war and now demand an armistice go to the devil and negotiate the peace.” But Ebert, the dominant figure in the leadership, carried the day—the party had to accept governmental responsibility for the good of the country.¹⁵

With Scheidemann representing the SPD in the cabinet, the Social Democrats immediately found themselves in a critical situation. During the month of October, Germany’s internal crisis worsened as the cabinet failed to negotiate an end to hostilities, democratic reforms stalled, the navy resisted government control, and unrest in the country grew. Concerned about losing the support of its own constituency to the radical left, on October 29 the SPD called for the abdication of the Kaiser and the Crown Prince (though not for an end to the monarchy). A week later it reissued this demand in an ultimatum to Prince Max and also insisted on freedom of assembly in Berlin, tighter control over the police and army, the formation of a parliamentary government in Prussia, and a greater role for the SPD in the *Reich* cabinet. These efforts met with no response by the time the ultimatum expired on November 8.¹⁶

By then events were almost out of control. Ebert and the SPD leaders had hoped that the transition to parliamentary democracy could be carried out smoothly through institutional channels rather than through popular rebellion. During the first week of November, however, the sailors’ revolt in Kiel spread throughout the country and by November 8 the situation among Berlin workers was explosive. Through their network of activists in the factories (*Vertrauensmänner*), Wels, Ebert, and the party leadership were aware of the situation. Rather than risk being swept aside by trying to prevent the workers from joining a pending general strike and participating in mass demonstrations, the party leaders decided to place the SPD at the

head of the movement. While Ebert negotiated the formation of a new government with the rival USPD and sought contacts with the leaders of emerging revolutionary workers' and soldiers councils, Wels sent the SPD's "troops" into action. At 8 o'clock on the morning of November 9 he told a large gathering of activists, "The die is cast! No more talking! Out of the factories and into the streets! From this day forward there is no division in the working class. Today we fight in the decisive struggle under our old banner. Today, perhaps, we will mix our blood with that of our brother workers in our joint struggle. Come what may, now we must go forward through struggle to victory!"¹⁷

Shortly after this meeting, representatives of a battalion of riflemen appeared at the *Vorwärts* building. Sent by the army to crush the rebellion in Berlin, the soldiers demanded that the executive send one of its members to explain the political situation to their unit. Wels immediately drove to their barracks, stood on the back of a truck, and delivered a blunt speech describing the disastrous military situation and the need to remove the Kaiser before the allies would negotiate. Every day that the Kaiser delayed his abdication, Wels asserted, cost thousands of lives and hindered the coming of peace. Now workers were rising up all over Germany to found a republic. Rather than firing on them, he urged the soldiers to stand behind the SPD's effort to secure the self-determination of the German people. Wels's shouts of "Long live peace!" and "Long live the free German people's state!" met with an enthusiastic response from the troops, who answered in kind and tossed their caps, while their dispirited officers silently stood by.¹⁸

After dispatching a contingent of soldiers to protect the *Vorwärts* building—where their presence turned back a group of armed Spartacists sent to take it—Wels went to the *Reichstag* to report to the SPD delegation. At that mid-morning meeting, the SPD leadership made the decision to take control of the government that day. A few hours later, following his announcement of the Kaiser's abdication, Prince Max agreed to hand over power to Ebert. At two o'clock in the afternoon, Scheidemann proclaimed the republic to a crowd in front of the *Reichstag* building.¹⁹

Despite this clear success, much remained to be done if Ebert's government was to survive. Karl Liebknecht's proclamation of a "free socialist republic and world revolution," just two hours after Scheidemann's, symbolized the fact that the USPD left wing, the Spartacus League and the Revolutionary Shop Stewards, had a different agenda than that of the SPD. On the evening of the ninth, when Wels learned that these groups planned, the following day, to use the election of workers' and soldiers' councils as a means

of setting up a rival provisional government, he reacted swiftly. That night he drafted a flyer designed to win over the Berlin garrison. Distributed on the morning of the tenth, it called on soldiers who supported the politics of *Vorwärts* to elect delegates for a meeting at the newspaper's building early that afternoon. The flyer was an overwhelming success. 58,000 troops chose 148 delegates who, after a speech by Wels, expressed their agreement with the SPD's intention to form a coalition government with the USPD and to hold elections to a constituent assembly.

These delegates then played a key role at an assembly of 3,000 workers' and soldiers' deputies held at the *Zirkus Busch* later that day. The vast majority enthusiastically greeted Ebert's announcement that the SPD and USPD had agreed to form a joint government and rejected efforts by Liebknecht to discredit it. Led by the soldiers' delegates, the assembly also turned aside an attempt to exclude the SPD from a newly proposed "Action Council" (*Völlzugsrat*). Instead, it elected a body, which, like the new government, consisted of an equal number of representatives from both socialist parties. On the evening of November 10, the *Völlzugsrat* confirmed the authority of Ebert's government.²⁰

Thus, Otto Wels's actions on November 9 and 10 were decisive in the SPD's effort to retain control of the political situation in Berlin. Using a well-developed network of activists to gather and communicate information, he enabled the party to make swift political decisions and acted decisively to bring local military units over to its side. As a result, fighting in the city, at least in the initial days following the transfer of power, was minimal, and there were only a few dozen casualties. Wels knew what the stakes were and exhibited great personal courage amidst dangerous circumstances. As Herman Müller noted, his bold appearance before the riflemen had, "in one blow," made him popular with the troops.²¹ It was not surprising when Ebert quickly named him Commandant of Berlin.

His first priority was the restoration of public order. Wels found the military administration of the city in chaos. Soldiers arbitrarily searched houses, harassed citizens, and allowed the plunder of private property. With the local garrison's support for the new government rather tenuous and the police well known for their loyalty to the old regime, Wels knew that he needed to create a new force to maintain security and protect the new administration. He was not successful in this effort. By early December he had recruited over 10,000 men for the new "Republican Guard" (*Republikanische Soldatenwehr*), but these units were poorly organized and politically divided. As tensions between the SPD and USPD grew, it became clear that they would be unreliable for use against the radical left.

Other government efforts to create or find stable and reliable military units at best created confusion and at worst brought together soldiers who challenged the government.²²

Immediately after assuming the post of Commandant, Wels faced Spartacist charges that he was a counterrevolutionary. These accusations escalated as political conflict between radical and moderate socialists intensified, and conservative army officers again began to assert their political weight. When poorly organized security forces sometimes responded to demonstrations with massive force, it exposed Wels to political attack, and the Spartacist daily, *Rote Fahne* (*Red Flag*), accused “bloodhound Wels” of unleashing the police against Spartacus members on trumped-up charges. On December 6, as a group of army officers tried, but failed, to push Ebert to seize complete power and arrest the *Vollzugsrat*, units under Wels’s command fired on armed Spartacists demonstrating in response to rumors of the coup. The *Rote Fahne* then blamed Wels for the bloodbath and accused him of organizing the coup and carrying out premeditated murder!

In the context of the confused political situation, such incidents, along with the government’s growing reliance on the old army to combat the left, had serious political costs for Wels and the SPD. To make matters worse, in the search for reliable troops, Wels found himself at odds with Emil Eichhorn, Berlin’s new police president and left-wing USPD leader, who worked to bring as many radical supporters as possible into the Republican Guard. Matters came to a head when the radical People’s Marine Division (VMD) got into a dispute with the government over back pay and rejected orders to reduce itself in size and to withdraw from its positions in the Hohenzollern Palace and *Marstall*. Wels attempted to negotiate with the sailors but, ultimately, they took him prisoner, beat him, and threatened his life. When army units under government orders attacked the VMD positions, the latter, reinforced by troops sent by Eichhorn, repelled the attack. Government troops were able to rescue Wels, however, from his imprisonment in the *Marstall*.²³

Ebert’s use of the army against the sailors antagonized the USPD leaders, with whom he had not consulted, and led the latter to quit the coalition. The failure of the attack also forced the government to negotiate with the VMD. Among their demands was the removal of Wels from his post as Commandant. Accordingly, on December 27 he resigned having failed to bring order to Berlin or to create a reliable military force there. The experience had shaken him. Although he did not withdraw from public life, Wels never again accepted a government post. Instead, he focused all his efforts on the party, his true professional and political home.

In June 1919, after Ebert and Scheidemann had assumed the posts of *Reich* President and *Reich* Chancellor, respectively, the Weimar Party Congress elected Wels and Müller to replace them as the party's cochairmen. Much had happened in the six months since Wels's departure from the commandant's office. SPD-led governments, backed by the reactionary army officer corps, had crushed a Communist-led uprising in Berlin, carried out elections to the National Constituent Assembly, smashed left-wing rebellions in the Ruhr and Bavaria, and stood poised to sign the "unacceptable" Versailles Treaty. At Weimar, Wels attempted to explain the SPD's recent history and take stock of the party's new situation. He defended the leadership's actions during the war and the revolution, outlined the conditions necessary to reunify the workers' movement, and stressed the need for the SPD to adopt a practical view of politics within the new democratic order.

For Wels, the SPD had nothing to apologize for in regard to its wartime policy. On the contrary, he believed that, as the terms of the proposed Versailles Treaty showed, Germany was a victim of imperialist aggression and had fought a defensive war. The SPD had consistently opposed any expansionist plans and, he pointed out, as a precondition to entering Prince Max's government in October 1918, it had insisted upon the revision of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Thus the SPD's wartime policy had promoted peace and made the party a beacon of hope for the German people. That was why so many (37 percent) had supported it in the elections to the National Assembly in January 1919.²⁴

The SPD, Wels noted, had agreed to enter Prince Max's government to deal with the national emergency. At that difficult moment, as it assumed political responsibility for the first time, the party had to come to grips with its fundamentally new situation. Wielding power was no longer merely a theoretical matter, as it had been under the empire. In a parliamentary framework, the SPD had to be ready to effect practical change and should not promise more than it could deliver. In the new National Assembly, where it lacked an absolute majority, that meant working with others and striking compromises. Thus the SPD's aims, democracy and socialism, remained the same, but the party had to adapt its practical political work to the fact that "not everything can be achieved all at once."²⁵

Wels conceded that many comrades were right to criticize a number of the SPD-led coalition's policies, such as its failure to purge the bureaucracy of monarchists and its use of antirepublican *Freikorps* units to put down worker unrest. But he reminded his listeners that the SPD and the government were two separate entities. The SPD ministers certainly were answerable to the party but, in a coalition cabinet, they could not be expected

to win support for all of its positions. The party had to stand behind its ministers at the national and state levels, but it also had to be critical of them when they made mistakes.

In addition to providing such basic instruction on the party's function within a parliamentary state, Wels tried to dampen the widespread hope that the SPD and USPD would soon reunite. While he expressed the wish for unity, he also raised many issues that spoke against such a development. Wels made no secret of his deep-seated anger toward the USPD's leaders, whom he believed were responsible for splitting the party over the war issue. A more important obstacle to unity, however, was the Independents' call for a "dictatorship of the proletariat" even if it only had minority support (as in Russia). Like virtually all his colleagues, Wels believed that minority rule was simply unacceptable. Without majority support, a minority dictatorship would rest on a foundation of sand and could not work. If, on the other hand, the SPD "won the support of a majority of the people through [a process] of enlightenment," it could then "build on a granite foundation."²⁶

Wels criticized the USPD's behavior during the revolution and dismissed its claims to leadership, which, he said, deceived the people. The SPD, he argued, had played a much more constructive role in shaping events. While he did not assert that his party had "made" the revolution, in Wels's view the SPD's actions had provided the working class with direction and goals, while its respect for will of the majority had earned it a popular mandate. The government had the right to defend itself with force against Communists or Independents who took up arms against it. He acknowledged that, in Bavaria and elsewhere, some army units had behaved barbarously in crushing the opposition, but it had been necessary to use them. Military reforms would come, even if delayed by pressure from the *Entente* or fear of a *coup*, but setting up an independent "red army," as the USPD demanded, was no solution. It would only advance the interests of the Communists and fuel civil war.²⁷

What the country needed was peace and economic recovery. The latter could only succeed within a framework of planning introduced gradually as part of a "transition" to the socialization of industry. The success of this project rested upon the achievement of a just peace. The proposed Treaty of Versailles, however, would be a disaster. Noting the Independents' insistence that the government sign the treaty, Wels accused them of interfering with negotiations to improve its terms.

In his closing remarks to the congress, Wels reasserted his commitment to internationalism and his hopes for a reconstructed International. At the

same time, however, he argued that one had to combine this devotion with love of country. Although he recognized that, in the wake of the war, the SPD faced the anger of many foreign socialist parties, ultimately he thought the International would help the party protect its national interests in the postwar world.

Wels did not believe in a “coming world revolution” that would reverse Germany’s critical situation. On the contrary, he thought that a revolution—consisting of the life and death struggle of imperialism—was already underway. He knew neither how this struggle would play out nor whether the contemporary social order was advanced enough to achieve socialism. He was sure, however, that any steps toward the latter in Germany would be limited because the country was surrounded by mighty imperialist powers. Having taken on grave responsibilities under severe constraints, and with hopes for a just peace dim, the SPD had no “magical solutions” to resolve the country’s problems. Wels hoped that the party would try to deal with this situation by taking a “realistic” and “responsible” attitude.²⁸

The views Wels expressed at Weimar reflected the strongly held convictions that he had developed in the course of his career. Focusing on practical politics within a parliamentary system meant building a party, winning elections, and implementing incremental reforms. While cherishing the ideals of socialism, Wels was equally committed to the democratic republic as the framework for their gradual achievement and he rejected any alternative that challenged this basic political principle.

Hermann Müller and Wels divided up their tasks as cochairmen into two basic areas: Müller took over the leadership of the *Reichstag* delegation, while Wels managed the organization. Wels used his authority to build up a strong base of support among SPD functionaries, and within a few years his institutional power, combined with the strength of his personality, made his dominance in the party leadership virtually unassailable. As Richard Hunt notes, the rough-hewn Berliner became “the perfect stereotype of the party boss.”²⁹

He was also quite effective. From a wartime low of 243,000 in 1917, party membership leaped to well over one million by March 1919 and growth continued, though at a much slower rate, after reunification with the USPD in 1922.³⁰ This massive increase, especially following the loss of many of the party’s best leaders during the war, strained the personnel and financial resources of the organization enormously, but the SPD managed extraordinarily well. By the mid-twenties, after surviving the storm of inflation and chaotic civil strife of the immediate postwar years, the party emerged as the core organization of a broader social democratic “commu-

nity of solidarity” that included social, cultural, and political organizations of all kinds and embraced millions of workers. Tens of thousands of dedicated volunteers and paid party officials kept this alternative community together and infused it with energy. As the dominant figure in the executive, Wels stood at the apex of this massive network.³¹

Under Wels the SPD—especially when it worked with the free trade unions—was a powerful political instrument capable of mobilizing its mass base for elections as well as non-parliamentary political action. How the leaders used the party depended on the political imperatives of the moment and their own inclinations. On March 13, 1920, for example, after Wolfgang Kapp and General Lüttwitz seized power in Berlin, Wels and the SPD leadership immediately called a general strike that won mass support and defeated the rebels within days. This impressive action was, however, like the SPD’s role in the revolution, wholly *defensive* in nature. Neither Wels nor his colleagues in the executive were interested in operating outside the bounds of parliamentary politics except in an emergency. He cherished no romantic notions of leading a revolutionary charge for power and he had no governmental aspirations. In the aftermath of Kapp, Wels successfully pressured Ebert to fire the failed *Reichswehr* Minister, Gustav Noske, but firmly rejected the *Reichstag* delegation’s unanimous recommendation that he assume this post. His focus remained on the party.³²

During the 1920s Wels worked to guide the SPD through the shoals of parliamentary politics. Strategically, it faced many challenges. At home the party had to develop policies to cope with the economic consequences of the war and the burdens of Versailles while simultaneously enhancing the economic and political condition of German workers. In the sphere of foreign policy it hoped to revise the worst elements of the peace settlement, overcome Germany’s postwar isolation, and gain reentry into the international socialist community. The SPD often was divided about the way forward, it had few allies, and it faced the powerful opposition of the Communists and the radical right. Wels hoped to keep his party on a practical path in the fight for social, economic, and cultural equality and justice. He viewed socialism as a distant goal, but believed his generation could contribute substantially toward its achievement.³³

A key issue for the Weimar SPD was whether it should enter into governing coalitions with the moderate bourgeois parties or remain in the opposition. With the country repeatedly beset by economic crises and widespread civil unrest, governing was difficult and often entailed high political costs. To keep the party’s options open, Wels worked to maintain a political course that was radical enough to prevent workers from turning to

the USPD or the KPD but also moderate enough not to frighten off potential coalition partners from the center of the political spectrum. This was the approach it used in the *Reichstag* elections of June 1920, the first since the passage of the Constitution. It would be repeated frequently in the coming years.³⁴

For Wels the decision to enter the government essentially rested on the extent of the national emergency and whether or not the party stood to gain. Following the June elections, for example, when SPD support slipped from 37.9 percent in 1919 to 21.6 percent, he decided twenty months in government had been enough. It was time now to move into the opposition, clarify the party's message, and fight to win back workers lost to the USPD, which had increased its share of the vote from 7 percent to over 19 percent. A majority in the leadership agreed with him.³⁵

Two years later, the internal debate over the party's *Koalitionspolitik* became more complicated after the rump USPD rejoined the SPD and a stronger party left wing emerged. This group was very critical of the bourgeois republic and skeptical of what could be accomplished within any government in which the Socialists did not command an absolute majority. Concerned about the party's tenuous unity, Wels approached the issue cautiously. In November 1922, he rejected the SPD's entrance into a "great coalition" that included the right-wing DVP because he feared a renewed split.³⁶ Eight months later, however, with the inflationary crisis spiraling out of control and civil war in the offing, he reversed his position despite substantial resistance within the party. Now he conceded that the SPD had to enter the Stresemann government because it was "the last cabinet possible on a constitutional basis." With the republic's survival at stake, the party had to risk the responsibility of government.³⁷

When discussing strategy and tactics, Wels did not shy away from using the language of class struggle. In 1920, for example, at the Kassel Congress, he charged that "there can be no worse indictment of bourgeois society than the extent of the poverty, the mountains of corpses, and the misery of the women and children caused by the war." Such a society was condemned to death and "it was foolishness to believe that socialism and capitalism could be reconciled."³⁸ Two years later, as preparations went forward for reunification with the USPD, he insisted, "We can never deny class struggle. . . . We see class struggle in the fight to defend workers' interests against those of other social classes. We make the working class conscious of the fact that its struggle is a class struggle."³⁹

For Wels, there was no contradiction between using such language and the strategy of reform. The latter, he thought, could ultimately result in the

peaceful but “revolutionary” transformation of society, especially after the SPD had won majority support.⁴⁰ Toward that end, Wels backed a host of social and economic reforms to improve the condition of the working class. He supported the passage, in 1921, of the new *Görlitz Program*, which attempted to reach out to non-proletarian strata and committed the party to the “irrevocable” democratic republic. He was unenthusiastic when the newly reunited party distanced itself from these views by passing yet another program at the Heidelberg Congress of 1925.⁴¹

Following its departure from the Stresemann cabinet in the fall of 1923, the SPD remained in the opposition for the next five years. During that time, Germany experienced a period of relative economic and political calm and the republic seemed stable. By the time of the Kiel Congress, in May 1927, Wels and most other party leaders thought the SPD was ready to enter a new coalition government if it scored well in elections expected the following year. At Kiel the executive aimed to unite the party behind this idea. It was up to Hilferding to make the case for entering the government; Wels took on the job of beating down the resistance of the party left wing.

He did so essentially by accusing it of disloyalty. The left had used its publications, he claimed, to organize an internal opposition whose views went beyond disagreement with certain aspects of the SPD’s activities. By adopting the language of “us” and “them,” it questioned the party’s whole political approach, weakened its message, and, ultimately, divided it. Wels said that he opposed restricting freedom of opinion in the SPD press, but the latter could not be allowed to promote “special organizations” within the party. The leadership had to combat such developments and thereby shut down Communist hopes of infiltration.⁴²

Leftists, such as Kurt Rosenfeld and Franz Künstler, energetically rejected charges of disloyalty and retorted that the leadership had excluded the opposition from the party press and thus forced it to publish its own journals, but they were unable to effectively challenge the new course. When they attempted to pass a resolution against the coalition policy, it failed by a vote of 255 to 83. The executive had easily carried the day.⁴³

Wels’s ruthless assault on the left illustrates well his determination and ability to keep a firm grasp on the SPD’s political direction. A tough political infighter, he was able to beat back all challenges to his authority within the party. He had less success, however, in steering the SPD’s policies in government. The new SPD-led “Great Coalition” that formed in the summer of 1928 failed to achieve any of the social and economic reforms that the SPD had hoped for. Consisting of parties often with contradictory

aims, it lacked a clear legislative program and, as the economy deteriorated, the SPD struggled to protect gains it had achieved earlier, such as binding arbitration in labor disputes and unemployment insurance for workers.

The first major issue facing the government, the proposed construction of a new pocket battleship, *Panzerkreuzer-A*, immediately caused a crisis. Since the SPD had campaigned vehemently against the project that spring, it came as a shock when, on August 10, 1928, Chancellor Hermann Müller and the Socialist ministers in the cabinet agreed to *Reichswehr* Minister Groener's request to move ahead with it. They did so because they knew that, if they refused, the DVP would quit the coalition. The ministers voted "yes" to preserve the government, but their action infuriated all sections of the SPD. There were loud demands for them to reverse course or to resign, and some called for their expulsion from the party. Seeking to take advantage of the Socialists' dilemma, the KPD began gathering signatures for a referendum to halt construction and use the freed-up funds to feed children.⁴⁴

Although the KPD effort failed, the conflict over the battleship represented both a parliamentary as well as an internal crisis for the SPD. For Wels and Müller the latter was most important. In late October, the SPD placed what was essentially the KPD's referendum proposal before the *Reichstag*. On November 15, Wels delivered a fiery speech in support of the legislation and so harshly criticized the government that to some observers it appeared the Socialists were in the opposition! The SPD's coalition partners were displeased, but the failure of the resolution, backed only by SPD and KPD, saved the government. The SPD ministers, pressed to adhere to party discipline, voted against their own policy and embarrassed themselves, but they could not reverse the cabinet's August decision. Thus, the coalition remained tenuously intact.⁴⁵

Over the course of the following year tensions grew as the economy sank into depression and the coalition parties struggled to protect their own narrow interests. Among the most controversial issues was how to finance the unemployment insurance system, which was overwhelmed by skyrocketing joblessness. Capital, best represented in the cabinet by the DVP, attempted to use the crisis to attack the trade unions, reduce wages, lower business taxes, and reduce the services of the fledgling welfare state. Keenly aware of this pressure, Wels, along with most other SPD and trade union leaders, was determined to protect the unemployment insurance program, which he viewed as the core of the social state and one of the SPD's greatest achievements.⁴⁶ The controversy came to a head in March 1930 when Wels and the SPD leadership voted against

a proposal that they believed unfairly burdened workers. As a result Müller's government collapsed.

Once again Wels had put the unity of social democracy (i.e., of the party and unions) ahead of parliamentary stability. He did this knowing full well that the political situation could become very dangerous. As early as February 1929 Müller had warned him that, should his government fall, it was unclear what would replace it. The republican parties, in disarray, would be unable to form a majority government and a minority cabinet had little chance of survival. If Hindenburg appointed a "cabinet of officials" it might result in the formation of an unaccountable governing "directory." This danger was all the more pronounced as the middle classes increasingly lost faith in the democratic order. With dictatorship on the march in Italy, Poland, and elsewhere, Müller sensed that many in Germany also longed for authoritarian solutions to the country's problems.⁴⁷

Wels agreed with Müller, but also was convinced that the party could not retreat on the unemployment issue if it was to avoid alienating the unions.⁴⁸ This outlook showed where his political priorities lay. On the one hand, Wels supported a strategy of coalition government, both to achieve reforms and to protect the republic, but he also put Social-Democratic unity ahead of parliamentary stability. He clearly underestimated the scale of the political crisis to come.

He was not alone in this error. Few observers expected an upheaval of the scale and ferocity of the Nazi political breakthrough of 1930, and fewer still knew how to respond to it. By any standard Wels was one of the most experienced and successful politicians in the country. During the revolution he had acted decisively and courageously to ensure the success of his party. Afterward, he had overseen the reconstruction of his party and transformed it into an effective electoral instrument. But Wels was unprepared for the coming challenge posed by fascism and communism. Unwilling to leave the defensive terrain of parliamentary politics, he and his party left the initiative in the hands of their increasingly popular enemies. The latter then combined their use of parliamentary instruments with ruthless force to destroy the democratic order.

For Wels, there were no essential differences between communism and fascism. At virtually all SPD congresses he devoted substantial time to a withering critique of the KPD's rejection of parliamentary democracy, distortion of socialist ideology, efforts to split the labor movement, willingness to use violence, and slavish adherence to the Soviet controlled Comintern.⁴⁹ For most of the twenties, he paid less attention to the relatively small Nazi movement. Referring to the Beer Hall Putsch as a "Bavarian

mad house comedy,” at first he considered the NSDAP to be a small band of criminal “volkist fools” who aimed to plunge Germany back into war. Once the Nazis had become a mass movement he continued to view them as “charlatans,” but conceded that they skillfully distorted the socialist ideal. Wels believed that the Nazis served the interests of German heavy industry, the banks, and the *Junkers* and he had no illusions about Hitler’s promise to adhere to constitutional legality. On the contrary, speaking with the Hungarian and Italian experiences in mind, he argued that the Nazis intended to restore the monarchy and destroy the democracy.⁵⁰

In sum, the communists and fascists were actually “brothers” whose existence “rests on violence and dictatorship, irrespective of their socialist or radical gestures.”⁵¹ One could not make alliances with them; one had to defeat them. The question was how.

Wels’s answer was shot through with contradictions. On the one hand, he sought to rally support for Social Democracy by using radical rhetoric. The party, he proclaimed, would use *all means* to protect the republic against its antidemocratic enemies. While Social Democrats wished to avoid violence, they were ready to defend their democratic freedoms. In an emergency, he asserted, the SPD and the unions, as the representatives of the great mass of the people” even had the right to establish a temporary dictatorship as “a guarantor of the return to democracy.”⁵²

In practice, however, Wels placed the SPD on a staid, parliamentary course that failed to match the dynamic, innovative political strategies and propaganda techniques of its extremist rivals. From 1930 until 1932 he backed the SPD’s policy of tolerating Brüning because he saw no other means of keeping the Nazis out of the government. Wels recognized the dangers that this decision entailed because many workers could then hold his party responsible for Brüning’s reactionary policies. But he saw no other option. When, on occasion, Wels challenged Brüning’s legislation and threatened to withdraw SPD support, he soon found himself forced to back down.⁵³

As Germany’s economic and social crisis deepened and the party helplessly tied its fortunes to Brüning, internal criticism of this policy and of Social Democracy’s failure to develop its own economic response to the depression intensified. In the early fall, after the left opposition refused to cease publishing a newly-founded critical weekly, *Die Fackel*, the executive expelled its leadership. In October this group founded the Socialist Workers Party (SAPD), which, although it remained small, attracted many of the SPD’s most active youth.⁵⁴ These developments, along with widespread Nazi triumphs in the fall local elections, led to serious morale

problems among the SPD rank-and-file. Wels knew that something had to be done to reenergize the movement. In December he joined leaders of the ADGB and the *Reichsbanner* in announcing the formation of the “Iron Front” as a means of defending democracy against fascism and its “social reactionary” allies.⁵⁵

Wels clearly sensed what kind of language appealed to his constituents. Stressing working-class unity and solidarity, his call for heightened vigilance, disciplined militancy, and readiness for action met with widespread enthusiasm. In the party press and in rallies held around the country, participants were infused with a new spirit of resistance and hope. Through the founding of the IF, Social Democracy seemed to recover some of its lost confidence.

But, as we have noted, appearances were deceptive; the Iron Front soon revealed itself to be a paper tiger. It failed to build support outside the ranks of Social Democracy itself and most of its leaders were not serious about using the IF to defend the state by force. On the contrary, Wels and the majority of his colleagues viewed the IF primarily as a means of diverting attention away from the toleration policy and of reenergizing the socialist movement for electoral work.⁵⁶

This rigid approach to parliamentary politics also characterized Wels’s response to innovative new economic and political strategies. Under the strong influence of Hilferding’s orthodox anti-inflationary thinking, he rejected trade union plans to stimulate the economy by using credit to create over one million public sector jobs.⁵⁷ And, as we have seen, when young party leaders, such as Carlo Mierendorff and Sergei Chakhotin, presented him with ideas to revamp the SPD’s stodgy propaganda, he was incredulous. Along with most of the executive, Wels hesitated to move away from a strategy of sober enlightenment to attract popular support, and he did not wish to adopt “Nazi” propaganda methods. When shown plans for new SPD symbols to counter the swastika (such as three parallel arrows standing for unity, activity, and discipline) and upbeat, dynamic poster campaigns, he responded that “we shall make ourselves look ridiculous with all this nonsense.”⁵⁸

Despite the desire to stick with “tried and true” methods of parliamentary politics, the SPD was not in control of events and soon faced extremely difficult choices. In July 1932, when Chancellor von Papen illegally deposed the SPD-led caretaker government in Prussia, Social Democracy had to decide whether to yield or fight. The leaders’ decision not to resist and to instead focus on the upcoming parliamentary elections and on an appeal to Germany’s Supreme Court, shocked many IF members

who had hoped to take decisive action against the republic's enemies. Social Democracy never recovered from the blow.

Wels and his colleagues surely sensed that the rule of law was rapidly weakening by that summer. He knew, partly from personal experience, that the government was not interested in quelling the paramilitary violence sweeping the country. On April 22 drunken Nazis led by *Reichstag* member and later Labor Front chief, Robert Ley, assaulted Wels in a Cologne Hotel. Suffering from severe throat injuries, he took his assailants to court, while the SPD condemned the terror in the *Reichstag*. Neither action accomplished anything, however. A few months later, when Wels protested to Hindenburg against Papen's lifting of the ban on the SA, his appeal also fell on deaf ears.⁵⁹

Rumors of a *coup* in Prussia were already in circulation in early June. Fearing that the *Reich* government might ban the SPD, Wels engaged in discussions with party leaders in Leipzig, Hannover, Hamburg, Magdeburg, and Berlin to prepare for illegal political work. These activities went forward half-heartedly, however, with most of the energy coming from the local level, not the SPD leadership. After the events of July 20 matters did not improve.⁶⁰

Given his experience and well-grounded fears, why did Wels decide against resistance to Papen's *coup*? The answer, in a nutshell, was loss of confidence and the conviction that republican forces were too weak to defeat their opponents. On July 16 the party leaders, anticipating events, decided against using the Prussian police in a lopsided battle against the *Reichswehr*, should the latter take part in an illegal *coup*. Determined "not to leave the legal basis of the constitution" the Social Democrats cast about for allies. On the eighteenth, Wels suggested to Severing that Prussia solicit the support of other state governments against the intervention of the Reich. But it was already too late.

On July 20 Wels received news of Papen's declaration of martial law during a mid-day meeting with the ADGB executive committee. He then asked his colleagues what means of resistance were available. Thinking out loud, he reminded them of the Kapp Putsch and rhetorically inquired, "Today do we have the mass of the people solidly behind us as we did in 1920? I have to say no. Communists and National Socialists stand against us. [So does] the state, the army, government officialdom, and wide sectors of the bourgeoisie." These were formidable opponents and Wels feared that calling a general strike would give the government a pretext to smash the workers and destroy the democratic order. Instead of a strike, he urged avoiding radical action as a means of "securing the *Reichstag* elections of July 31."⁶¹

None of the trade union or party leaders in the room objected to this strategy, which in effect amounted to capitulation. Thus the SPD lost control over Germany's largest state government and it became painfully obvious to the rank-and-file that a yawning gap existed between its leadership's radical rhetoric and its willingness to act. Wels was right that, with the IF massively outgunned by the forces of the right, and with the unions, weakened by the depression, probably unable to sustain a general strike, chances of success were small. By taking no action, the SPD leaders thus avoided a civil war that they—and most party members—wanted to avoid at all costs. At the same time, however, the failure to act clearly illustrated the party's helplessness. For the core of the IF that was ready to fight, the leadership's decision was a bitter pill. And for Nazi leaders such as Josef Goebbels, it showed that "One just had to bare one's teeth to the reds and they cower."⁶²

The SPD emerged from the *Reichstag* elections of July 31 more politically isolated than ever. Although it still controlled 133 seats (ten fewer than in 1928), the Nazis and Communists now had a clear majority with 230 and 89 seats respectively. Out of power at both the Prussian and *Reich* levels, the party tried to develop a more radical profile and brought a series of proposals into the *Reichstag* calling for the nationalization of key industries and the banks. These proposals went nowhere and did little to broaden the party's public appeal. From the opposition Wels fired sharp broadsides at the "cabinet of the barons" under Papen and Schleicher, but the party had little influence over political events.⁶³

Wels suffered from chronic and dangerously high blood pressure. In January 1933 he was hospitalized in Berlin and then traveled to Ascona to rest. On January 30, however, after hearing the news of Hitler's appointment as Chancellor, he immediately returned to the capital. Once again there was much talk among the party leaders of preparations for action, but most believed that the SPD should focus on the new elections set for March 5. Wels thought that many workers would strike to defend the republic, but agreed with a majority in the executive that the SPD should not take radical action unless the Nazis violated the constitution.⁶⁴

At this critical moment Wels clearly had misjudged the Nazis' ruthless determination to quickly concentrate total power in their own hands. His hope that the unions would also be willing to fight was also misplaced. By mid-February, as Hitler's government increased its repression of the left, the unions were already steering toward a break with the SPD and an arrangement with the new regime. As February unfolded, Social Democracy found it increasingly difficult to campaign due to the government's harassment of its press and Nazi attacks on party meetings, offices, and officials. By

February 20, Wels was no longer able to stay at his home. He sent his wife to Dresden and moved constantly to avoid Nazi storm troopers.⁶⁵

Wels was justly proud of the SPD's ability to hold its own in the March elections, but he recognized the extent of the Nazi victory. On March 14, at a meeting of the executive, he expressed no regrets for having supported the SPD's failed parliamentary strategy. On the contrary, he felt that the Nazis' electoral strength confirmed that a strategy of violent resistance would certainly have ended in disaster. Only "development and intellectual struggle" could change this situation in Social Democracy's favor. There was no alternative but to "start again from the beginning" and rebuild the organization to reflect changed circumstances.⁶⁶

Wels acknowledged that the SPD should expect severe repression, but he thought it still could survive in a Nazi-dominated Germany. Thinking back to the epoch of the anti-socialist laws, he noted that the party was logistically and organizationally much stronger than it had been under Bismarck. He believed that the Nazis would introduce a wide range of laws designed to drive their opponents out of public life and that they would attempt fundamental amendments to the constitution, but he was not sure how far they would go. He expected that terror, in the style of Italian fascism, would play a major role in the new *Reichstag* and he urged his comrades to be ready to defend themselves. Socialism, he reminded them, would outlive Nazism in the long run.⁶⁷

Nine days later Wels found himself on the podium of the *Reichstag*, the only speaker to oppose Hitler's demand for an Enabling Law that would give him total power. He had been right, the Nazis did try to terrorize the delegates into voting for the legislation. The delegates of the banned KPD were either under arrest or in hiding as were thirty of the still-legal SPD's 120 representatives. Despite being surrounded and harassed by cohorts of SA men in the parliamentary chamber, the socialists were determined to vote "no," and Wels insisted, despite ill health and the fears of some comrades for his safety, on delivering the party's statement.

In his speech, he acknowledged the Nazis' power to take away Socialists' freedom and even their lives, but he asserted, "they cannot take our honor." He rebutted Hitler's lies about Social Democracy's history and particularly its role in founding the republic. He defended the Constitution, attacked the contradictions of National Socialist ideology, and condemned the Nazi intention of shutting down the *reichstag* to promote their "national" revolution. The SPD, he noted proudly, had borne heavy burdens and accomplished much. It had rebuilt the state and economy after the war, established legal equality, and established the right to work. It had helped

to create a Germany in which not only aristocrats ruled, but also men of the working class. Over the long run the Nazis would not be able “to roll back the wheel of history,” he predicted, because the people’s consciousness of their rights would assert itself politically.⁶⁸

In closing Wels observed that,

The Weimar Constitution is not a socialist one. But we hold to the principles of legal equality and of social rights that are embedded within it. At this historical moment, we German Social Democrats are happy to express our commitment to the principles of humanity and justice and to freedom and socialism. No Enabling Law gives you the power to annihilate ideas that are eternal and indestructible. From new persecution Social Democracy can draw new strength. . . . We send greetings to the persecuted and the oppressed. We greet our friends in the *Reich*. Their steadfastness and loyalty are admirable. Their bravery and unbroken confidence guarantee a bright future.”⁶⁹

Wels’s speech inspired his comrades and infuriated Hitler, but it could not change the outcome of the vote, as 441 delegates said “yes” to the Enabling Law and only the 94 members of the SPD delegation voted “no.”

Wels had thought that the SPD might be able to carry on in at least a semi-legal condition in Hitler’s Germany until social and political conflicts within the Nazi system created a new political opening for the left, but these hopes proved illusory. In March and April he struggled to hold the disintegrating SPD organization together. In an attempt to convince the government to end its ban on the party press, he and other SPD leaders even traveled abroad to convince other socialist parties to temper the “sensationalism” of their reporting of Nazi crimes in Germany. Wels and most (though not all) of his colleagues in the leadership soon recognized, however, that such efforts were doomed to fail. On May 4, two days after the Nazis had banned the trade unions and rounded up their leaders, the executive sent Wels, along with several colleagues, abroad to avoid arrest and carry on the party’s work. They expected this move to be temporary, but Wels never returned to Germany. After six years directing the SPD from exile, first in Saarbrücken and then in Prague and Paris, he died on September 16, 1939.⁷⁰

Otto Wels was a central figure in the struggle to defend the Weimar Republic. A talented organizer and a person of considerable courage, he had played a major role in the German revolution of 1918 and in its aftermath had helped rebuild his party into a powerful political institution. Wels was a tough political infighter and talented leader who, under most normal

circumstances, would probably have concluded a long career amidst considerable accolades (at least from his own party!). But conditions in Weimar Germany were anything but “normal” and in that volatile context Wels, like most of his colleagues, found himself outmatched by the ruthlessness of his enemies. During the republic’s formative years, Wels had shown himself capable of decisive action in response to threats to the new order. Over the next decade, however, as the parliamentary system ground to a halt, he remained wedded to a political strategy that failed to respond adequately to challengers who undermined the system from within. He was aware that Social Democracy had a choice: it could seize the initiative and, if necessary, even take control of the state to preserve the democracy or it could wait until its opponents acted. By going the latter route, Wels and the Social Democratic leadership placed their movement permanently on the defensive and sealed its fate.

Notes

1. Otto Wels, *Verhandlungen des Reichstages, III. Wahlperiode 1924, Bd. 395, 413. Sitzung, 29 März, 1928*, 13882.
2. Heinrich Brüning, *Memoiren*, 32.
3. For Brüning’s unconvincing effort to justify his vote, see Brüning, *Memoiren*, 657–59. A brief, but illuminating, analysis of his political role under Weimar is provided by Wolfgang Ruge, *Wer war Heinrich Brüning?*, (Bonn: Pahl-Rugenstein, 2003). For the text of and incisive commentary on Wels’s speech see *Rede zur Begründung der Ablehnung des ‘Ermächtigungsgesetzes’ durch die Sozialdemokratische Fraktion in der Reichstagsitzung vom 23. März 1933 in der Berliner Krolloper. Mit einem Essay von Iring Fetscher* (Hamburg: Europäische Verlags-Anstalt, 1993).
4. Hans J. L. Adolph’s *Otto Wels and die Politik der deutschen Sozialdemokratie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971) is the only substantial political biography of Wels. For very short sketches see Werner Blumenberg, *Kämpfer für die Freiheit*, 134–40; Susanne Müller *Persönlichkeit und Arbeit von Otto Wels* (Potsdam: Otto-Wels-Bildungswerk, Historische Schriftenreihe, 1992); *Biographisches Handbuch der deutschen Emigration nach 1933, vol. 1*, 811–12.
5. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 1.
6. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 2–3, 10, esp. footnote 68.
7. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 4–7.
8. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 11–16.
9. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 35–41.
10. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 45–49.
11. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 56–57.
12. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 58–59.
13. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 59–61.

14. Breitman, *German Socialism*, 14–19.
15. Müller, *Die Bürde der Macht*, 34–35. For Wels's comment see footnote Nr. 46.
16. Breitman, *German Socialism*, 23–24.
17. As quoted by Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 77. See also Müller, *Bürde*, 80–81.
18. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 78; Hermann Müller, *Die November Revolution* (Berlin, 1931), 47–48.
19. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 79; Müller, *Bürde*, 83–84.
20. Müller, *Die November Revolution*, 69–73; Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 80–83; Winkler, *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung*, 55–56.
21. Müller, *Die November Revolution*, 63.
22. Müller, *Die November Revolution*, 173; Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 84–85.
23. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 88–103; Winkler, *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung*, 109–11.
24. *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, abgehalten in Weimar vom 10. bis 15. Juni 1919. Bericht über die 7. Frauenkonferenz, abgehalten in Weimar am 15. und 16. Juni 1919* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1973), 140–42.
25. *SPD-Parteitag: Weimar, 1919*, 144.
26. *SPD-Parteitag: Weimar, 1919*, 150–52.
27. *SPD-Parteitag: Weimar, 1919*, 154–56.
28. *SPD-Parteitag: Weimar, 1919*, 159–61.
29. Hunt, *German Social Democracy*, 73.
30. *SPD-Parteitag Weimar, 1919*, 54; *Protokoll der Sozialdemokratischen Parteitage in Augsburg, Gera, und Nürnberg 1922*, (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1973): 11.
31. Peter Lösche and Franz Walter, "Zur Organisationskultur der sozialdemokratischen Partei in der Weimarer Republik," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 15(1989): 511–36.
32. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 155–57.
33. *VR*, Bd.395, 13882.
34. Winkler, *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung*, 343–44.
35. Winkler, *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung*, 362.
36. Winkler, *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung*, 500.
37. Breitman, *German Socialism*, 99.
38. *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitags der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, abgehalten in Kassel vom 10. bis 16. Oktober 1920* (Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, reprint 1973), 27.
39. *SPD-Parteitage: Augsburg, Gera und Nürnberg, 1922*, 63.
40. *SPD-Parteitage: Augsburg, Gera und Nürnberg*, 68.
41. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 219–20.
42. *SPD-Parteitag: Kiel, 1927*, 32–33, 106–07.
43. *SPD-Parteitag: Kiel, 1927*, 61–63, 65–67, 225.
44. Winkler, *Der Schein der Normalität*, 544.

45. Winkler, *Der Schein der Normalität*, 542–55; Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 161–70; *VR, IV. Wahlperiode, Bd. 423, 11. Sitzung, 15. Nov., 1928*, 326–32.
46. *SPD-Parteitag: Magdeburg, 1929*, 12.
47. Hermann Müller to Wels, 12 February 1929, Nachlaß Müller, Kasette IV, Dokument 558, AsD.
48. *SPD-Parteitag, Magdeburg, 1929*, 11–14; Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 171–72, esp. footnote 242.
49. For a good summary of his critique of communism see his remarks at *SPD-Parteitag: Berlin, 1924*, 71–73.
50. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 228–31; *SPD-Parteitag: Leipzig, 1931*, 13–14.
51. *SPD-Parteitag, Leipzig, 1931*, 19.
52. *SPD-Parteitag: Leipzig, 1931*, 13–14; *SPD-Parteitag Magdeburg, 1929*, 14.
53. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 232–38.
54. Donna Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 146–47.
55. Otto Wels, “Die Fronten sind Formiert,” idem., Peter Graßmann, Karl Höllermann, and Fritz Wildung, *Iron Front* (Berlin: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1932), 1–4.
56. Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 69–173.
57. Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 498; Smaldone, *Rudolf Hilferding*, 120–22.
58. Harsch, *German Social Democracy*, 178–79.
59. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 232 (esp. footnote 495), 239.
60. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 240: Eric Matthias, “Die Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands,” 124–27.
61. Schulze, *Anpassung oder Widerstand?*, 4–12; Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 660–61.
62. Quoted in Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 679. On the likelihood of successful Social Democratic resistance see 674–80; Matthias, “Social Democracy,” 136–45.
63. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 248–49.
64. Schulze, *Anpassung*, 161–65.
65. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 255.
66. Schulze, *Anpassung*, 168–69.
67. Schulze, *Anpassung*, 175.
68. Wels, “Rede,” 7–12.
69. Wels, Rede, 13–14.
70. Adolph, *Otto Wels*, 266–73.

Conclusion: Reconsidering the German Catastrophe of 1933

12

THE FOREGOING CHAPTERS HAVE examined Social Democracy's collapse in 1933 from the standpoint of individual party leaders in the thick of the struggle to preserve the republic. These were people who, in the course of their careers, had exhibited a range of exceptional talents. Whatever its failings under Weimar, there is no question that Social Democracy was one of Germany's, if not Europe's, most successful mass movements up to that time and the men and women whom we have examined contributed substantially to that success. If they had been in power in a historically less volatile time and place, there are few who would argue that workers like Otto Wels or Marie Juchacz had not come far in life as skilled organizers and courageous leaders. Whether they had started at society's bottom or, like Siegfried Aufhäuser and Toni Sender, had come from more privileged circumstances, they worked their way up in the movement often in the face of considerable adversity. They had experienced discrimination, war, revolution, and repeated political and economic crises and yet, through it all, had remained devoted to socialism and its basic principles of democracy and social justice. Who better to lead the fight against those who wished to destroy the republic and its promise?

And yet they failed in this struggle—utterly. Before drawing any hard and fast conclusions about the degree to which their failure was a matter of poor leadership, I think it is useful to shift our focus away from the individual and away from the national or European contexts of the Weimar period to a broader framework that explores how the German Social Democratic experience in 1933 relates to the global experience of democratic socialism in the twentieth century. Social Democracy's defeat in 1933 was

a disaster of world historical dimensions, but it was also part of a much larger story. Viewing it in the context of the latter can help us to better understand the extent of the challenge the German leaders faced and the reasons why their responses fell short.

To that end, after reviewing the key factors behind German Social Democracy's failure, the discussion that follows examines three other major moments in the global history of twentieth century democratic socialism: the defeat of Chilean socialism in 1973, the reversal of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua in 1990, and the aftermath of the African National Congress's electoral victory in 1994. I have selected these cases, in part, because they provide clear examples of the widely-varying circumstances under which strong democratic socialist movements have struggled to achieve their aims, but also because, in each setting, they were operating amidst civil war or extreme social tensions.¹ Such conditions set them apart from cases in which democratic socialist forces operated under relatively peaceful conditions, such as in Scandinavia between the wars or in Western Europe in the post-1945 era.

For me, the term "democratic socialist" denotes those forces that aim to establish a social and political order in which, via solidarity, democratic practices, and the use of resources to meet the needs of people rather than profits, all people share equal freedoms in all spheres of life. In my view, these goals must be embodied in the specific details of any particular movement's program and practice. While not rejecting violence as a weapon in the struggle against tyranny, democratic socialists adhere to Engels's dictum that "the working class can only come to power under the form of the democratic republic."² Hence, they eschew dictatorial methods once the latter is established.

The experiences of these democratic socialist forces, which in each case attempted to implement fundamental changes in the face of crisis and furious opposition *without* sacrificing democratic principles, provide excellent examples of what Peter Gay has called the "dilemma of democratic socialism."³ They also link the histories of the states under discussion. An examination of the socialists' fate in each one, in which ultimately they were either destroyed (Germany and Chile), or driven from power (Nicaragua), or forced to relinquish key programmatic aims (South Africa), sheds light on the complex interrelationship between the movement's leadership and the structures of power (social economic, political, and ideological) in each society. Because these structures are deeply rooted in the latter's history, I believe they are decisive in determining the limits of radical change. Mass action and effective leaders are certainly prerequi-

sites for revolution anywhere, but, as Marx noted, even though men make history, they do not make it “just as they please.”⁴ Especially on the national level, even the most talented leaders backed by popular support cannot escape the weight of the past.

German Social Democracy’s defeat opened the road to the Nazi conquest of Europe, to the latter’s division during the Cold War, and to the simultaneous acceleration of the emergence of the United States as the world’s hegemonic capitalist power. The centrality of the SPD’s experience thus makes it a logical starting point for understanding the fate of other democratic socialist movements in non-European contexts during the second half of the twentieth century.

As noted in the introduction, Social Democracy’s goals under Weimar were relatively modest when compared to those of the more radical left-wing parties, but they still faced a variety of serious obstacles. In the first place, the context of military defeat in the World War, the collapse of the imperial government, and the deepening economic crisis made the development of a broad popular consensus on Germany’s future extremely difficult. Immediate controversies over such issues as the signing of the Versailles Treaty, the demobilization of the army, the loss of territory, and the content of the new Constitution exacerbated long-standing social and political rifts in the country.

Secondly, repeated economic disasters buffeted German society. The hyperinflation of 1923 ruined broad sectors of the population and alienated them from the Republic, as did the onset of the depression after 1929. Both events fueled the rise of Communist forces on the left and Nazi and other antirepublican forces on the right.

Thirdly, antirepublican parties used the fundamental institution of the democratic order, the parliament, to sabotage and delegitimize the entire system. By 1932, the Nazi and Communist parties controlled a majority of the seats and paralyzed the legislative process. This paralysis allowed a series of antirepublican chancellors to rule via Presidential decree, a method that effectively brought parliamentary rule to an end well before Hitler’s appointment in 1933.

A fourth factor was Social Democracy’s failure to win majority support by overcoming the ideological obstacles that divided the labor movement and alienated it from the middle classes, peasants, and women. It was the Nazi party that effectively won cross-class support by appealing to widespread nationalistic, anti-Marxist, antidemocratic, anti-Semitic, and socially conservative sentiments while promising to replace the weak republic with a vibrant “people’s community” (*Volksgemeinschaft*).

Fifthly, Social Democracy's fear of civil war prevented it from purging the military of antirepublican officers and expropriating reactionary industrial and agricultural elites. This fear, and its overestimation of the "neutrality" of the state apparatus, resulted in the socialists' weak response to the rise of extremist violence in the country and left their opponents in control of key levers of power that they ultimately used to block reforms and undermine the republic.

Finally, Germany's economic weakness gave it little room for maneuver. Between 1924 and 1929 an influx of foreign and especially U.S. capital stabilized the economy and helped ease political tensions. In the parliamentary elections of May 1928 the SPD made its best electoral showing since 1919 and emerged at the head of a new "Great Coalition" government. The party had campaigned on a platform of opposition to rearmament, support for expanded social security, administrative reforms, and support for increased trade union power, but these hopes quickly dissolved once it took office. Political conflicts within the coalition, fiscal crisis, rising unemployment, and a capitalist offensive against labor undercut its efforts, and the onset of the Great Depression in 1929 threw the SPD permanently on the defensive and pushed the republic into its terminal crisis.⁵

The German economy was slipping into recession even before Black Friday, but the international crisis hit the country particularly hard. By 1928, as U.S. capital moved increasingly into the booming domestic stock market, capital exports to Germany had already begun to dry up, and foreign suspicions of the German government's fiscal ineptitude, coupled with the onset of a U.S. banking crisis, brought them to a complete halt by the end of 1930. Even worse, the Nazis' first nationwide electoral breakthrough in the fall of that year precipitated a crisis of confidence in German political stability and stimulated the massive recall of short-term loans by U.S. and other foreign creditors.⁶ The shortage of foreign capital combined with the German government's deflationary, supply-side fiscal policies deepened the crisis that paved the way for the growth of Nazi electoral support to 37 percent by July of 1932. It also helped the KPD expand its share of the vote, largely among the unemployed but also at the SPD's expense, to 17 percent in November of that year. As a result, these antirepublican parties gained enough mass support to win a majority of the seats in the parliament. They were then in a position to paralyze the heart of the political system.

Thus, one might reasonably argue that the Weimar Republic's collapse was the result of complex, interrelated causes. Although not inevitable, it

became more likely as a combination of domestic and external factors undercut the political underpinnings of the fragile republican order. Germany's Social Democrats could have strengthened the republic had they acted on a broader vision during its early years. Such a vision did not have to entail the immediate elimination of capitalism, but certainly could have included expropriating the reactionary economic elite and purging monarchists from the state bureaucracy, the courts, and, above all, the officer corps. These steps would have weakened antirepublican groups, which, in 1933 were unable to overthrow the republic themselves, but were willing to ally with the Nazis to do so.⁷

One could also assert that the Social Democrats could have responded more effectively to the depression by backing trade union proposals for the government to stimulate the economy through pump priming or by mobilizing a more dynamic extraparliamentary opposition to the presidential regime. It is doubtful, however, if such actions could have saved the republic. The imperial order bequeathed to Social Democracy a country with a much weakened and increasingly dependent economy, one that was politically isolated internationally, and whose elites fumed over their military defeat, the extension of democracy, and the threat of social revolution. In the context of intense civil conflict, catastrophic inflation, and massive depression, Social Democracy's reformist policies failed to build a broad base of support for the republican order. Radicals of the right and left were then able to take advantage of the economic crises and use parliamentary institutions to sabotage the state and bring it to the brink of civil war. The Social Democratic creators of the Weimar system were ill equipped to meet this challenge. Although skilled organizers and effective parliamentarians, they simply were unprepared to fight an enemy ready to abrogate democratic norms and utilize ruthless terror. The result was their total defeat.

Unlike Germany in 1933, Chile in 1970 was not an advanced capitalist country operating in the center of the world system. With a population of about ten million, it was rather a small, semi-developed society containing elements of modern industry and a substantial middle class juxtaposed against grinding rural and urban poverty and substantial remnants of the pre-industrial economic and social order (e.g., the hacienda system). Within this context, however, Chile also had a long history of parliamentary government, which, although subject to the interference of the United States, was stable enough in 1970 to allow Salvador Allende to win a three-way electoral race for the presidency with 36 percent of the vote. At the head of a "Popular Unity" (UP) coalition consisting of the Radical,

Socialist, and Communist Parties, Allende was proud that Chileans had “made the political road [to justice and equality] prevail over the violent one.”⁸ In a country mired in social inequality, class conflict, and economic dependency on foreign capital, he believed that Chile’s long history of parliamentary governance made it possible to solve social conflict by means of persuasion and political action.

Allende’s election took place in the midst of rising discontent and economic crisis.⁹ During the electoral campaign, UP demanded fundamental political, social, and economic change. It called for the abolition of the elitist Senate, the establishment of a unicameral legislature, an enlarged, centralized, state-run educational system, improved health and day-care services, as well as low-cost housing. Most importantly, UP announced the goal of “beginning the construction of socialism in Chile,” which most of its adherents believed would be a slow process of economic restructuring to overcome Chile’s dependent role in the global capitalist system.¹⁰

To begin the transition, the government adopted a strategy of mixed economy. It planned to move rapidly with land reform, to raise wages for workers, and, most importantly, to divide the economy into three legally-defined sectors. The first and most controversial was the “socialized sector” that would establish state ownership over monopolistic enterprises such as mining (in which a few foreign companies had major holdings), banks, and industries considered key to development such as utilities, transport, communications, and petrochemicals. The second or “mixed” sector would consist of firms owned by the state and private investors, while the third, and largest, sector would include small and medium-sized private enterprises. The UP platform also vaguely promised workers a larger role in the management of socialized enterprises.

Such a strategy would not, by itself, have created socialism in Chile. It was, however, a radical undertaking that was particularly challenging because UP aimed to work within a parliamentary system in which it did not command a majority. While the UP program made clear that it was prepared to respect the opposition’s rights, it also warned that such respect depended on the latter’s willingness to adhere to the constitutional order.¹¹ Allende believed strongly that “since the National Congress is based on the people’s vote, there is nothing in its nature that prevents it from changing itself . . . into a parliament of the people,” a view of the “neutrality” of parliament very similar to that of the German Social Democrats.¹² It quickly became very clear, however, that this process of transformation would be extremely difficult and that he had underestimated the resistance of state institutions to UP goals.

Due to its lack of a majority, many government initiatives stalled in Parliament. Although there were hopes that UP could build majority support with left-wing elements of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), whose candidate, Radomiro Tomic, had won 27 percent in the 1970 elections, electoral rivalry and the PDC's longstanding anticommunism hindered cooperation. Many middle-class PDC supporters, especially artisans and other small business owners, distrusted the left's economic agenda and were frightened by its radical rhetoric. By the end of 1971, the PDC was moving toward an alliance with the reactionary National Party, which defended the interests of Chile's rural and urban elite.¹³

Allende also encountered stiff opposition from the leadership of the Judiciary, the Controller-General's office (which oversaw the constitutionality of government actions), and the police services, whose leaders had been appointed by previous governments and were unsympathetic to the UP. Most important was the attitude of the military. While Allende believed that its officers would defend the Constitution, plots uncovered even before his swearing in revealed widespread dissatisfaction within the officer corps. As in Weimar, Allende's underestimation of his opponents in the military and his failure to democratize that institution would prove decisive in his fall.

Finally, Allende had to contend with the United States. The U.S. had long meddled in Chile's internal affairs. In the 1960s it had provided massive sums to ensure PDC candidate Eduardo Frei's election against Allende. American business provided two-thirds of Chile's 1.6 billion dollars in foreign investments, Kennecott and Anaconda controlled 80 percent of the copper industry, the Frei government had run up over one billion dollars in debt to U.S. banks, and American commercial credit was essential for Chilean purchases of machinery and parts for key industries, as well as its transport sector. From the moment of Allende's election, the Nixon administration worked to overthrow him using CIA-backed assassinations, sabotage, and other forms of support (e.g., millions in cash) for the opposition press and political groups. It implemented a crippling economic blockade and, ultimately, supported the military coup that destroyed democracy and restored the old order.¹⁴

Initially, however, Allende's government got off to a hopeful start. It made substantial progress raising workers' real wages, nationalizing the copper industry, and reorganizing the banking sector. While Frei had redistributed 3 million acres of land in five years, Allende distributed 2.2 million acres in his first eight months in office. Economic growth was brisk with inflation at a tolerable 20 percent. By early 1972, however, problems arose

as inflation rocketed to an annual rate of 163 percent, agricultural production slipped, investment in industry dried up, and capital flight accelerated. With imports rising and copper prices plummeting, the government fell back on its hard-currency reserves to pay its debts.¹⁵

By the fall the country had slipped into a severe crisis. As Parliament deadlocked over UP efforts to expand the public sector and implement other elements of its agenda, social tensions exploded in the streets. Massive antigovernment strikes by middle-class truckers and small business owners paralyzed the country, while pro-government workers seized factories, set up self-defense organizations, and prepared to confront rightist, paramilitary forces. In November Allende attempted to calm the situation by bringing the military into his cabinet, but tensions remained.

As the UP ran into roadblocks, it divided internally. The radicals, led by the SP's large left wing and backed by a variety of splinter groups, wanted to broaden and deepen the reforms at a faster clip. They encouraged spontaneous worker and peasant actions to seize factories and farms and began establishing armed militias. The moderates, consisting of the SP's right wing, led by Allende, the CP, and several smaller groups wanted to adhere to the gradualist, parliamentary road. The intense and public nature of the factional struggle widely discredited the government and slowed the policy-making process. The radicals' rhetoric and actions also frightened moderates who might otherwise have worked with UP.

Despite all of its problems, in March 1973 the UP stunned the opposition by winning 43 percent of the vote in the parliamentary elections. The 7 percent increase since 1970 indicated growing support for the government's program. It also confirmed the parliamentary deadlock, ended the opposition's hope of impeaching Allende, and fueled its fear that in the next election UP could win an absolute majority. Many in the PDC, the NP, and military now decided to back a *coup*. Using parliamentary resolutions accusing the government of illegality, demonstrations to defend private schools, massive employer lockouts, strikes, and paramilitary violence the right worked to intensify the crisis and discredit the government. By late August as the army began rounding up leftist militants and seizing arms in working-class districts, it was clear that the government had lost control of the country.

UP was unable to respond effectively to the crisis even after an aborted military coup in June.¹⁶ Allende rejected the admonitions of the radicals to prepare to fight and even in early September supported negotiations with the PDC. The SP leadership, fearing surrender, made clear that it would withdraw from the coalition if Allende went down that road. The result

was a paralysis that only ended when the military murdered Allende on September 11, closed down the parliament, and initiated a reign of terror.

Chile's experiment in democratic socialism collapsed for a variety of internal and external reasons. As in Germany, the left was divided, though in Chile the conflict between the SP and CP took place within a coalition, and the Communists represented a moderate, rather than a revolutionary, force. Disagreements within UP and between it and the broader left, the attitude of the PDC, and the intransigence of the extreme right reflected sharp social and economic divisions within the country that made a politics of radical reform very difficult. Like their German counterparts, Chile's right-wing forces were prepared to destroy the democratic order to defeat the left. But unlike the German right, most of Chile's antirepublican groups had not traditionally opposed the system. They arrived at that position after concluding that parliamentary government threatened their interests. From that point on they used the institutions of the parliamentary state in order to speed its destruction.¹⁷

Economic crises played a major role in undermining both the Weimar and Chilean Republics, though their causes were very different. Even in its weakened postwar condition, Germany was a major economic power. Its problems were rooted in its wartime financial policies, the imposition of the Versailles Treaty, and the onset of the Great Depression that devastated much of the world. The American economic role in Germany was substantial and the destabilizing result of the recall of U.S. capital clearly demonstrated the growing importance of American capital in the international economy. But Germany was not a dependency of the U.S. and American creditors did not call in their debts as part of a U.S. government policy to undermine the German political order.

Chile, however, was a relatively poor, dependent state operating within an international economy dominated by the United States. Fearful of the spread of "communism" and determined to protect its economic interests, the American government eagerly helped the Chilean opposition to bring UP down. It exacerbated Chile's crisis by intervening directly, taking advantage of its economic weaknesses, and magnifying errors made by its policy makers. Latin America had long been part of the U.S. "backyard" and American meddling, direct and indirect, was nothing new by 1970. While the main impetus for Allende's overthrow came from forces within Chile, the Chilean case provides an outstanding example of the extent of U.S. power in the hemisphere and the readiness of U.S. policymakers to join the most ruthless barbarians in smothering democracy to secure its regional political hegemony and protect the interests of American corporations.

Short of dropping the parliamentary strategy and arming the workers for an early confrontation with the political forces of the right and the army, UP still could have done more to strengthen its position: greater discipline within the coalition, less radical rhetoric, a clearer strategy to protect small business and win middle-class support, a different educational reform strategy, and more attention to the staffing of the state bureaucracy and military would have allowed UP to govern more effectively and helped stave off U.S. interference. Winning a majority would not necessarily have reduced the likelihood of armed conflict, however. The right, along with the U.S., was certainly ready to use force to protect its interests, but these steps, along with greater preparedness to fight, would have made its effort more difficult.¹⁸

While the ruling classes in Germany and Chile remained cohesive enough to blunt the socialists' initial advance and eventually destroy them, the situation in Nicaragua in 1979 was very different. Ruling class unity in that impoverished country collapsed in the face of a broad-based armed revolution led by the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN) against the murderous, American-backed dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza. Established in 1961, the Sandinista Party was a vanguard party that spent eighteen years "in the wilderness" learning how to fight and to weave together a broad coalition of workers, peasants, and disaffected members of the middle and upper classes against the tiny clique around Somoza and his National Guard. When popular rebellion exploded in 1978, the Sandinistas were well poised to lead the movement to victory.

The FSLN was a hierarchical cadre party that drew its ideological inspiration from Augusto Cesar Sandino, the guerrilla leader who fought U.S. occupation forces in Nicaragua forty years earlier, from Marxism, and from the ideas of the "Liberation theology" movement derived from Catholic social and economic thought.¹⁹ Acutely aware of the deeply rooted, internal and external obstacles to the radical transformation of Nicaragua, the Sandinistas hoped to avoid Cuba's political isolation in the hemisphere and its economic dependence on the Soviet Union by building ties with the 101-member Non-aligned Movement and with western European countries.²⁰ While Sandinista leaders often called for the creation of a new socialist society, their practical policies made clear that they viewed this transformation as a slow, gradual process. They did not seek to emulate the Cuban model of socialism and their program stressed "independence, sovereignty, justice, and true democracy" to be achieved via the creation of a mixed economy, a pluralistic and participatory political system, and the extension of a wide range of social benefits.²¹

The FSLN worked diligently to implement its popular vision. By 1984 it had: created a sizable state sector by expropriating the property of the Somoza family and its allies (including about 20 percent of the country's arable land); carried out far-reaching agrarian reforms; encouraged the expansion of workers' unions and grass roots mass organizations of women, youth, peasants, and other groups that included hundreds of thousands of members (in a population of 3.2 million); greatly expanded literacy and access to health care and education, adopted a nonaligned foreign policy, and armed the masses to defend the revolution.²²

The FSLN rejected establishing a "dictatorship" based on class. The party aimed, instead, to establish a "pluralist" political order combining a parliamentary electoral system with participatory democracy as practiced in the mass organizations.²³ By 1984 the legal framework for the new electoral system was in place and in that year the FSLN won the first free and fair elections in the country's history with 67 percent of the vote.²⁴ Three years later, the National Assembly passed a new constitution that stressed both individual and social rights.²⁵

The Sandinistas were unable, however, to hold their entire coalition together after 1979. The transformation of the country alienated sections of the elite who lost power and, in some cases, wealth. They also lost ground with some peasants, who felt that the government should have distributed more land more quickly to individual farmers instead of stressing the creation of large state farms and cooperatives. Heavy-handed policy decisions also angered ethnic minorities on the Atlantic coast, who feared that the regime did not support their economic and cultural interests. And, lastly, a contradiction arose between the democratic, grass-roots nature of the mass organizations and the centrally organized FSLN. Dissatisfaction grew as many mass-organization activists came to feel that the party simply expected their organizations to implement its policy rather than to represent their constituents.²⁶

The Sandinistas responded flexibly to many of the disaffected groups. For example, they distributed land to 120,000 peasant families and granted autonomy to the ethnic minorities on the Atlantic coast. With the domestic opposition divided and weak, the FSLN was in a strong position to retain majority support.²⁷ Its most dangerous enemy, however, was not domestic: it was the United States.

As in Chile, U.S. leaders viewed the socialist victory in Nicaragua as a threat to American interests in the region. Following the election of Ronald Reagan in 1981, the U.S. embarked on a multifaceted effort to overthrow the FSLN.²⁸ Claiming that Nicaragua was under Communist

control and harbored aggressive intentions toward its neighbors, it organized former Somoza supporters, disaffected Sandinistas, disgruntled peasants, and other groups into counterrevolutionary armies based in Honduras and Costa Rica. These “Contras” harassed the Sandinistas for the next eight years by killing thousands of people, damaging the economy, and forcing the FSLN to quadruple the size of the army to 96,000. To deal with the crisis, the Sandinistas had to introduce the draft and curtail social and economic investments.

The U.S. combined this military assault with an attack on Nicaragua’s economy. As an impoverished semicolonial country dependent on agricultural exports to the U.S., Nicaragua was in bad shape even before the insurrection against Somoza. Now it was especially vulnerable to U.S. efforts to “make the economy scream.” The U.S. government successfully cut off commercial and international credit to Nicaragua and it implemented a devastating embargo on the country. Although the Sandinistas diversified Nicaragua’s trading partners and secured substantial aid from Western and Eastern Europe, this was not enough to replace the losses. By the late 1980s, Nicaragua was mired in a crisis characterized by falling production and hyperinflation.²⁹

The FSLN responded with a policy of austerity designed to rein in inflation. This decision, however, drastically reduced social spending, especially on basic commodity subsidies, which helped the poor, a core FLSN constituency. The Sandinistas also demanded more and more personal sacrifices from their activists, whose material standard of living declined rapidly as they put the interests of the revolution before their own needs or those of their families. In the context of war and escalating privation, as many of the early gains of the revolution evaporated before people’s eyes, it became increasingly difficult for many to identify their personal interests with those of the revolution. Thus, the Sandinistas faced an extremely difficult election in February 1990.

It was a challenge they could not meet. Although the FSLN remained by far Nicaragua’s largest party with 41 percent of the votes, a conservative-led coalition of fourteen small parties defeated them. This coalition (known as UNO) had massive U.S. backing and won the support of many Nicaraguans who were exhausted by the war. They knew that a vote for the FSLN was a vote for the continuation of the war, the draft, and continued material sacrifice and uncertainty. A vote for UNO meant surrender, but it also meant peace. That is what a majority of Nicaraguans wanted.³⁰

There are, of course, enormous differences between the Nicaraguan situation and those of Weimar Germany and Chile. Nicaragua was by far

the poorest, most backward, and most economically dependent of the three states. The FSLN initially achieved power via military rather than parliamentary means, its support base was substantially different, and, significantly, it was a cadre, not a social-democratic, party. Yet there are fundamental elements that link the Sandinista revolution to our other examples. The FSLN's political program, and its policies when in power, aimed to democratize Nicaragua's state, society, and economy and were fully in keeping with the theory and practice of German and Chilean socialism. The Sandinistas, too, were fully committed to political pluralism. By constructing a parliamentary order they were willing to create political space even for their most hostile opponents. Like their German and Chilean counterparts they paid a heavy price for this commitment.

Certainly the FSLN might have done some things differently to maintain the breadth and depth of the coalition that swept it to power in 1979. But, ultimately, its failure was not one of leadership. It was, rather, rooted in the fact that the Nicaraguan revolution challenged deep-seated relations of imperialism and thus threatened U.S. power and the power of Nicaragua's elites. Determined to crush the Sandinistas, the U.S. could use its economic and political leverage to take advantage of Nicaragua's historically-rooted economic weakness, block its efforts to find an independent, egalitarian road to development, and unseat the revolutionary government. By mobilizing armed force, economic pressure, and parliamentary means (the latter, ironically, created by the "totalitarian" Sandinistas) the U.S. restored "order" and returned Nicaragua to its previous condition of impoverished dependence.

South Africa at the end of the twentieth century was a "middle income country." In 1999, with a population of 40 million and 4 percent of the African landmass, it had by far the largest GNP of any African state (larger than Egypt, Kenya, and Nigeria combined) with substantial industries exporting a variety of primary and finished products around the world.³¹ Long under Dutch and English colonial control, South Africa's development was marked by enormous disparities in wealth and power as a white colonial minority dispossessed African populations and, after achieving independence in 1910, consolidated a system of political and social domination based on racial segregation (Apartheid). By the 1980s, this system began to unravel in the face of rising indigenous resistance and external political and economic pressure.

In 1994, the leading force of black resistance, the African National Congress (ANC), assumed power as a result of a negotiated settlement with the racist National Party regime (NP). Unlike the UP or FSLN, the

ANC did not attempt to implement major reforms aimed at altering South Africa's basic economic order. Adopting an outlook similar to that of the Weimar SPD, it made the establishment of political equality within a parliamentary system its highest priority. But the ANC also proved much more decisive than its German counterpart in dropping any intention of carrying out fundamental economic change. In exchange for the creation of a "nonracial" political system, it accepted the basic economic status quo. Integration, especially at the elite level, rather than transformation, became a central goal.

During the 1980s, the ANC, working closely with the South African Communist Party (SACP), the main trade union federation (COSATU), and a broad coalition of grass roots organizations (the United Democratic Front or UDF), built a powerful movement to challenge white minority rule.³² Guided by the ANC's Freedom Charter, the movement focused on abolishing apartheid, but it also demanded economic reforms to ensure that all citizens would share the country's wealth. These included public ownership of the banks, monopoly industries and the mines, as well as the redistribution of land to "those who work it."³³

By the end of the decade, the ANC and the NP government were locked in a conflict neither could win. Using armed struggle, international trade boycotts, and mass action, the ANC had tried to win power by making South Africa ungovernable, but the NP, backed by powerful security forces, had responded with brutal repression and a variety of political moves designed to split the opposition. While the NP's efforts to defeat the ANC failed, the latter was not strong enough, militarily or otherwise, to unseat the regime. The brutal conflict caused much loss of life, deepened South Africa's long-developing economic and social crises, and left it internationally isolated. As a result, elements in the ruling elite began looking for a way out. Some were ready to support the creation of a new, "nonracial" political system as a means of ending the crisis and protecting the social and economic status quo.³⁴

In February 1990, a new NP leader, F. W. De Klerk, legalized the ANC and other banned organizations, agreed to talks, and released a number of political prisoners, including the ANC's most well-known figure, Nelson Mandela. The ANC welcomed this opportunity. Having been fought to a standstill and with its main source of logistical support, the Soviet Union, withdrawing from the world stage, it had few other options. The boldness of De Klerk's actions also took the organization by surprise and gave the regime considerable momentum. The NP coupled its offer of negotiations with secret support for "third force" attacks on ANC members to pressure

the latter to make concessions on issues such as power sharing and economic policy. This tactic proved effective as the militarily inferior ANC, fearful of losing control of its furious grassroots supporters, decided to press ahead with talks.³⁵

During the bloody “interregnum” between the legalization of the ANC and the elections that brought it to power in 1994, the ANC succeeded in creating a “nonracial” political system in South Africa. It failed, however, to construct an alternative path to social and economic equality. As early as 1990, leaders like Mandela were retreating from the economic principles of the Freedom Charter to placate capital and speed the political transition.³⁶ In 1994, the ANC-led government was still promoting a Keynesian style policy of redistribution as a means of stimulating reconstruction and development. After 1996, however, when the party ruled alone, it abandoned even this moderate scheme in favor of the neoliberal strategies favored by capital and previously adopted by the NP.³⁷ The result has been the consolidation of an economic order in which whites inhabit the first world and most blacks live in the third.

Most authors agree that domestic factors were decisive in bringing about this abandonment of principle. While one might quibble about whether the ANC leaders’ outlook reflected “petit-bourgeois” attitudes, it is very clear that their first priority always was achieving the political power necessary to abolish Apartheid.³⁸ Following that achievement, they wasted no time in “pacting” with South Africa’s governmental and corporate elite, as many leading ANC cadres took positions in the state, military, and corporate hierarchies. A substantial purge of public and private institutions did not accompany the end of Apartheid. Instead, leading elements of the former opposition joined the already-established elite. Policy continued to follow the latter’s interests.³⁹

There had never been unanimity within the diverse ANC about future economic policy. The idea of nationalizing industry resonated with broad sections of the public, but more for its symbolic promise of redistribution than for its literal meaning. In any case, the collapse of the Soviet Bloc cast a long shadow over that option and the long-standing lack of internal debate on economic policy hindered socialists within the ANC from responding effectively to neoliberal hegemony in the 1990s.⁴⁰

ANC and NP leaders were willing to break with the interests of a substantial portion of their constituencies in order to achieve their goals in the transition. To end Apartheid, the ANC leadership was ready to appease South Africa’s powerful conglomerates, U.S.-dominated institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, and the NP and move toward a free trade

and privatization model even if this policy met with criticism from COSATU and other elements of its coalition. The NP, for its part, was also ready to abandon its white working-class constituency to protect the power of the Afrikaner elite. By the mid-1980s it became clear to many of the latter that Apartheid's days were numbered as international economic sanctions against South Africa spread to include even the United States, South Africa's most important trading partner, foreign investor, and political ally. In 1986 the U.S. Congress imposed a ban on new investment, loans, and the export of key products (e.g., oil and computers) to South Africa and 184 American firms left the country between 1984 and 1989.⁴¹ Recognizing that political change was coming, in 1987 South Africa's ruling circles broke with their traditional policies. Free trade and privatization replaced protectionism and substantial state control of industry as the NP worked to ensure that the ANC would have access to as few economic resources as possible.⁴²

The ANC eventually accepted this *fait accompli*. Initially, its Keynesian approach and altered budget priorities resulted in substantial improvements in basic services for millions of impoverished citizens. After 1996, however, the ANC promoted growth through free trade, reduced corporate taxes, fiscal restraint, deregulation of the labor market, and the privatization of state assets. This policy failed, however, to meet the needs of most South Africans. Sluggish growth and the loss of 500,000 jobs by 2000 left 61 percent of blacks unemployed (compared to 1 percent of whites) and black income at 20 percent of that of whites. Thus, South Africa remained economically polarized with the white elite and a small number of blacks controlling most of the wealth.⁴³

Among the ANC's left-wing allies, neither COSATU nor the SACP vigorously opposed the neoliberal turn. Both groups hesitated to upset the alliance that brought the ANC to power and gave it the potential to carry out substantial change. The SACP—closely bound to the ANC for decades—had long viewed revolution in the country as a two-stage process in which the victory of the “national democratic struggle” had to precede the building of socialism. After 1994 the party declared the need to “build socialism now,” but its critique of the ANC's economic policies was timid. Many COSATU and SACP activists worked in the new administration in the hope of shaping policy, but internal political divisions and an unwillingness to lose access to the halls of power (along with concomitant benefits to their members) weakened their opposition.⁴⁴

As was true when examining Chile and Nicaragua, contextual differences between South Africa and Germany make comparisons of the dem-

ocratic socialist experience in these countries rather difficult, but not impossible. First and foremost among these differences was the role of race in South African society. Class divisions were important there, but the racial component of social conflict was of an entirely different dimension than “racial” tensions in Germany (until 1933). South Africa’s colonial past and its place in the world economy, rivalries between English and Boer elite groups, and American support for the racist South African government during the Cold War also set it decisively apart from the interwar German context. Yet it is important to bear in mind that, during their rise to power German Social Democracy and the ANC had similar goals. Each movement placed a priority on the achievement of political freedom and equality for all. In Germany the emphasis was on political equality for workers, in South Africa the focus was on the black majority and other oppressed racial and ethnic groups. The SPD and the ANC promised economic transformation, but both movements were willing to defer such change until a new political order had been achieved.

The SPD-led provisional government’s fear of civil war and allied invasion led it to put off radical economic reforms until the passage of a new constitution created a framework for a parliamentary system. By waiting, the Social Democrats missed their chance to carry through fundamental reforms of the state and economy unhindered by legal obstacles and the need to secure majority electoral support. The party did not renounce its programmatic aims, but its inability to win a majority prevented their achievement and left the republic insecure. In South Africa, on the other hand, the ANC essentially gave up its key economic demands in return for access to political power. The white elite, having concluded that political reform was the key to its survival, was willing to make this concession. It proved to be a shrewd bargain, for when the ANC at last took the helm it implemented an economic policy much to the liking of the elite.

Thus, the elimination of apartheid was a great achievement but was marred by the ANC’s unwillingness to struggle for and inability to win economic concessions from the ruling class. This failure derived from the concrete balance of forces in the country, but it was also a result of the ideological outlook of the ANC leadership. The latter was committed to ending apartheid, but was also ready to back off from more fundamental change due to fear of continued conflict that it could not control, the lack of well-developed alternatives, and, importantly, the attractions of power.

The world historical defeat of German Social Democracy in 1933 opened the road to Nazi expansionism, Europe’s division in the Cold War, and the emergence of the United States as the dominant capitalist power.

The centrality of the SPD's experience also makes it a starting point for understanding the fate of other democratic socialist movements in non-European contexts during the second half of the twentieth century. For German Social Democracy's project and failure were not unique. The German Socialists were among the first to attempt to move toward socialism via the gradualist, electoral road, but many others followed. The foregoing analysis has examined three other cases in which powerful democratic socialist forces, operating under very different circumstances, aimed to use parliamentary government to implement radical reforms only to fail in the face of barbaric resistance from the radical right. In my view the evidence from these cases indicates that it was not a lack of leadership that was decisive in these struggles, but rather a range of structural factors that made the socialists' aims much more difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

First and foremost among these factors was a context of war, civil war and/or escalating social tensions. In Germany, the SPD assumed power in the wake of the outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution, defeat in the First World War, and the collapse of the monarchy. These events, in the context of postwar economic crises, fueled intense class and ideological conflicts that undercut all efforts to consolidate the new republican order. In Nicaragua, Sandinista forces seized control after a destructive civil war against a dictatorship that had effectively looted the country and left a legacy of severe impoverishment. In Chile, the UP won the presidency in the context of rising expectations among the masses and sharply increased social tensions. The ANC negotiated its way to power after many years of violent struggle in a society with a deteriorating economy and sharply polarized class and racial divisions. These conditions played a crucial, if not decisive, role in shaping the outcome in each of these struggles. The gradualist road to socialism implies a minimum degree of social consensus about the way in which politics unfolds. That minimum did not exist. On the contrary, social conflict was so intense, that in Germany, Chile, and Nicaragua the opposition would only settle for the total defeat of the left. In South Africa it was willing to make political, but not economic, concessions.

The importance of context stands out all the more clearly if one considers the experience of European Social Democracy in the Scandinavian countries and Western Europe after 1945. These movements achieved substantial success in taming capitalism, but they operated under much more stable economic and political conditions and none of these movements substantially challenged the basic capitalist order dominated by the United States.

Both ideologically and pragmatically, Swedish Social Democrats responded more flexibly and creatively (e.g., with Keynesian-like economic

policies) to the interwar crises than did their German comrades, but Sweden had not experienced war or civil war and social conditions were much less polarized.⁴⁵ In the postwar era, western European Social Democratic parties also succeeded in advancing substantial reform agendas, but this process occurred within the framework of the U.S.-led, anti-Soviet alliance during a period of capitalist expansion. None of them, therefore, faced large-scale violent domestic or foreign opposition.

Our discussion of the German, Chilean, and Nicaraguan examples also illustrates how, in societies lacking minimal consensus, parliamentary democracy can function as a key structural obstacle to the democratic socialist project. The firm ideological commitment of the socialist forces to representative democracy allowed their opponents to use parliament not only as a platform for their views, but also as a powerful instrument to sabotage the legislative process and undermine the government's legitimacy in the eyes of the public. In each case the opponents of democracy masked their true intentions behind the façade of parliamentary participation. While paralyzing that body, they simultaneously mobilized reactionary military and paramilitary forces, other branches of government (e.g., the courts and police), and social support in the streets to attack the state.

Many socialists, of course, recognized these realities, but they failed to react to them with adequate countermeasures. In the German case, fear of renewed civil war led to the failure to democratize the state apparatus and, thus, left the justice system and military largely in the hands of reactionaries. Allende's government, too, did not adequately purge the bureaucracy or the officer corps of its most vociferous opponents and placed too much trust in their loyalty to the parliamentary order. The Sandinistas, on the other hand, did fundamentally reconstruct the state apparatus and armed the people, but they refrained from outlawing their enemies in parliament (in part due to their commitment to principles but also due to U.S. pressure).

The ANC's relationship to parliamentary democracy was altogether different. Denied the right to participate in the white-dominated electoral system, it came to see gaining equal access as the preeminent goal. With the balance of forces stalemated, the NP regime was then in a position to "trade" equal political rights and the possibility of elite "integration" for the maintenance of the economic order. Hence, for the ANC the creation of a parliamentary order was a major victory, but it was one that came at very substantial cost for the long-term reconstruction of South African society.

External factors, especially the role of the United States, were very important in each case. Weimar Germany's dependence on foreign capital left it dangerously exposed to the vicissitudes of the world market. When the

flow of foreign credit, especially from the U.S., slowed, the country's economic difficulties deepened. When U.S. investors pulled out, it sped up the economic and political descent into the abyss. In the case of Weimar, the U.S. intervention was not "political" though it had political reverberations. The example illustrates the rise of the U.S. as the world's leading creditor nation, but the American government did not flex its economic muscle intentionally to undermine the republic.

A half century later and a half a world away, however, that is exactly what it did. Enmeshed in the ideological, political, and economic struggles of the Cold War, the United States intervened around the world to destroy challenges to its dominance, especially when the challengers sought a democratic and noncapitalist road to development. Suffering from a long legacy of colonial and neocolonial dependency, socialist governments were hard pressed to respond effectively to American power. The U.S. was in a strong position to use its economic might and alliances with reactionary forces within each country to press for total capitulation.

In South Africa, though, matters developed differently. There the United States, along with Britain, was a major ally of the regime, which it regarded as a bastion against Soviet expansionism in the region. The worldwide condemnation of apartheid, however, grew so strong that even the Americans and the British had to distance themselves from the NP government. Pushed by large-scale, domestic grass roots campaigns, the U.S. pressured the racist state to undertake reforms. The slippage of U.S. political support and the withdrawal of U.S. capital had a major impact on the outlook of ruling circles in South Africa and paved the way for negotiations with the ANC.

As the example of South Africa shows, American power has not always been consistently applied and it is subject to limits. Even the most powerful imperialist states and the elites who rule them are not omnipotent, and their actions always unfold in the face of various types of resistance. Some of the latter may be spontaneous and ephemeral, such as food riots or graffiti, while others may take a range of organized forms including guerrilla armies, nongovernmental organizations, political parties, and even governments. Notwithstanding the claims that history has "ended" with the triumph of liberalism and its political exponents, in recent years the hegemony of neoliberal ideology has started to slip, a fact reflected by left-wing electoral success in places like Venezuela, Bolivia, and Chile, the Latin American heart of the U.S. imperial domain. Despite the potency of American political and military power and the expansion of transnational capitalism, history continues and class and other struggles go on. It remains

to be seen, however, whether and how the left can develop and implement a national or supranational alternative to capitalism that can survive the onslaughts of the dominant order.

All of the movements examined here believed that the legitimacy of their ability to gain and hold power rested on the winning of electoral majorities. In Germany and Chile, the socialists temporarily headed governments on the basis of electoral pluralities, while in Nicaragua the Sandinistas controlled the state for a time backed by an absolute majority. In each of these cases, most historians agree that alternative policies may have helped the parties strengthen their base of support by reaching out more effectively to groups outside of their core constituencies. But there is also widespread agreement that success depended on overcoming deeply held ideological prejudices among themselves, as well as among potential new supporters. For example, German socialists failed to win over women voters as much due to their own disinterest in committing themselves to female equality as women's traditional adherence to the conservative parties. In Chile, the UP found itself unable to develop a successful strategy to attract broader sectors of the strongly anti-communist petit-bourgeoisie, while the Sandinistas, too, found it difficult to hold onto small peasant support or to gain the allegiance of important minority ethnic groups. In many of these instances, the parties recognized the necessity of achieving these aims but, even if they'd discovered successful approaches, substantial time would have been required to realize them. In the context of crisis, however, time was in very short supply.

It was not my intention here to deny the importance of leadership or contingency in the struggle for radical change. The Weimar socialist leaders and their counterparts in Chile, Nicaragua, and South Africa certainly made important decisions that contributed to their eventual defeat (or partial derailment as in the case of the ANC), which in no case was "inevitable." I think it is important, however, to balance the specificity of their experiences with an analysis of their broader contexts both in terms of time and space. Most comparative historical analyses of democratic socialism in the twentieth century limit themselves to the national or regional level. This is, of course, a reasonable and logical approach, but the socialist movement has always been an international one and, as such, has a global history. To grasp the full implications of German Social Democracy's failure in 1933, therefore, requires reexamining that singular experience in the context of the movement's global history.

Notes

1. Of course, one could augment the list of countries that could be examined here. I think, however, that four cases represent the maximum that can be examined with reasonable thoroughness in a discussion of this length.

2. Friedrich Engels, "A Critique of the Draft Social Democratic Program of 1891," in Marx-Engels, *Collected Works, Vol. 27* (Moscow & London, 1975–2005), 225.

3. Peter Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), ix. In his recently published study of the history of the European left, Geoff Eley revisited this theme. For him, the decisive political and philosophical question is, "how far can attacks on the legitimacy of private interests stay compatible with the democratic principle, without requiring the use of force and the damaging of basic rights, while the new collectivist system is being installed?" See Eley, *Forging Democracy. The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 22. Eric D. Weitz also dwells on this issue in his *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 365–67.

4. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), 15

5. Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*. Translated by Elborg Forster and Larry Eugene Jones. (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 247–68; Detlef Lehnert, *Sozialdemokratie zwischen Protestbewegung und Regierungspartei, 1848–1983* (Frankfurt am Main: Leske und Budrich, 1983), 142.

6. Karl Hardach, *The Political Economy of Germany in the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 38–48; Harold James, *The German Slump: Politics and Economics, 1924–1936* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), chapter 8; Theo Balderston, *Economics and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), chapter 5.

7. Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe*, 952. As Eberhard Kolb and Henry Ashby Turner have noted, it was the conservative elites around Hindenburg who shaped the decisive political choices made in January of 1933. Hindenburg's decision to name Hitler Chancellor was one of several possible authoritarian solutions to Germany's crisis. Under pressure from his conservative entourage, he elected not to pursue them. See Kolb, *Was Hitler's Seizure of Power on January 30, 1933 Inevitable?* (Washington DC: German Historical Institute, 1997).

8. Dale L. Johnson, ed., *The Chilean Road to Socialism* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1973), 153.

9. Renato Sandri, "Chile: An Analysis of an Experiment and a Defeat," *Science and Society* 40, 1 (1976): 197–98; Brian Loveman, *The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 237–40.

10. Lois Hecht Oppenheim, *Politics in Chile: Democracy, Authoritarianism, and the Search for Development* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 40–42; David J. Morris, *We Must make Haste—Slowly. The Process of Revolution in Chile* (New York: Random House, 1973), 122–23; Loveman, *Legacy*, 246.

11. Oppenheim, *Politics in Chile*, 42.
12. James D. Cockcroft, ed., *Salvador Allende Reader: Chile's Voice of Democracy*. Introduced by James D. Cockcroft. Assisted by Jane Carolina Canning. (Melbourne and New York: Ocean Press, 2000), 92.
13. Robert L. Ayres, "Electoral Constraints and the 'Chilean Way' to Socialism," *Studies in Comparative International Development* VIII, (Summer, 1973): 128–61.
14. Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A declassified dossier on atrocity and accountability* (New York: New Press, 2003), chapters 1 and 2.
15. Sandri, "Chile," 199–200.
16. Kyle Steensland, "The Coup in Chile," *Latin American Perspectives* 1, 2 (Summer, 1974): 9–15; Oppenheim, *Politics in Chile*, 73–83.
17. Oppenheim, *Politics in Chile*, 87–106; Loveman, *Legacy*, 248–60.
18. Miles D. Wolpin, "Systemic Constraints and Chilean Socialism in Comparative Perspective," *Politics and Society* 3, 3 (1973): 347–75.
19. E. Bradford Burns, *At War in Nicaragua: The Reagan Doctrine and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Harper Collins, 1987), 4.
20. Burns, *At War in Nicaragua*, 93–101; Gary Prevost and Harry E. Vanden, *Democracy and Socialism in Sandinista Nicaragua* (Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993).
21. E. Bradford Burns, ed., *Latin America: Conflict and Creation. A Critical Reader* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 255–62; Sergio Ramirez, "What the Sandinistas want," *Caribbean Review* 8, 3 (1979): 25–27, 49–52; Tomas Borge, "This Revolution was made to Create a New Society," in *Nicaragua: The Sandinista People's Revolution. Speeches by Sandinista Leaders* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1985), 22–38.
22. Richard Harris, "The Revolutionary Transformation of Nicaragua," *Latin American Perspectives* 52, 14 (Winter, 1987): 4–5.
23. Bruce E. Wright, *The Theory and Practice of the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1995), 81–107.
24. Latin American Studies Association, *The Electoral Process in Nicaragua: Domestic and International Influences. Report of the Latin American Studies Association Delegation to Observe the Nicaraguan General Election of November 4, 1984* (Austin: LASA, 1984).
25. Gary Prevost, "The Role of the Sandinista Revolution in the Process of Democratization in Nicaragua," *Democratization* 2, 2 (Summer, 1995): 85–108.
26. Luis Serra, "Democracy in Times of War and Socialist Crisis: Reflections Stemming from the Sandinista Revolution," *Latin American Perspectives* 77, 20 (Spring, 1993): 21–44; Richard Harris, "The Nicaraguan Revolution: A Post-mortem," *Latin American Research Review* 28, 3 (1995): 197–213.
27. Doug Brown, "Sandinismo and the Problem of Democratic Hegemony," *Latin American Perspectives* 17, 2 (Spring, 1990): 39–61.
28. William Robinson and Kent Norsworthy, *David and Goliath. The U.S. War on Nicaragua* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987); Holly Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua* (Boston, 1988); Burns, *At War in Nicaragua*.
29. William M. Leogrande, "Making the Economy Scream: U.S. Economic Sanctions against Sandinista Nicaragua," *Third World Quarterly* 17, 2 (1996): 329–48; Ivan

Molloy, "The Empire Strikes Back: The Sandinista Defeat in Context," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 46, 1 (1992): 109–26; Michael Conroy, "The Political Economy of the 1990 Nicaraguan Elections," *International Journal of Political Economy* 20, 3 (Fall, 1990): 5–33.

30. Conroy, *ibid.*, 25–27; Harry E. Vanden and Gary Prevost, *The Undermining of the Sandinista Revolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 45–73.

31. Roger B. Beck, *The History of South Africa* (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2000), 1–8.

32. Nigel Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Segregation, and Apartheid*. 3rd edition. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2000); Dale T. McKinley, *The ANC and the Liberation Struggle: A Critical Political Biography* (London: Pluto Press, 1997); Mona N. Younis, *Liberation and Democratization. The South African and Palestinian National Movements* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

33. Francis Meli, *South Africa Belongs to Us. A History of the ANC* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 210–13.

34. Worden, *Making*, 152–64; Hein Marais, *South Africa: Limits to Change. The Political Economy of Transition* (Capetown: Zed Books, 1998), chapter 2.

35. McKinley, *The ANC*, 105–07; Mareis, *Limits to Change*, 88–90.

36. McKinley, *The ANC*, 108–09; Nigel Gibson, "Transition from Apartheid," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* xxxvi, 1 (2001): 75–77.

37. James Jude Hentz, "The Two Faces of Privatization: Political and Economic Logics in Transitional South Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 38, 2 (2000), 203–23.

38. McKinley, *Making*, 107; Marais, *South Africa*, 89.

39. Pdraig Carmody, "Between Globalization and (Post) Apartheid: The Political Economy of Restructuring in South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28, 2 (June, 2002): 255–75; Herbert Adam and Kigila Moodley, "The Purchased Revolution in South Africa: Lessons for Democratic Transformation," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 3, 4 (Winter, 1997): 113–127; Fantu Cheru, "Overcoming Apartheid's legacy: The Ascendancy of Neo-liberalism in South Africa's Anti-poverty Strategy," *Third World Quarterly* 22, 4 (2001): 507–08.

40. Marais, *South Africa*, 146–47; Gibson, "Transition," 75–76.

41. Rodney Davenport and Christopher Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 235–37.

42. Carmody, "Between Globalization and (Post) Apartheid," 257–60; Hentz, "Two Faces," 203–05.

43. Olayiwola Abegunrin, "Post Apartheid South Africa: An Analysis of Regional Perspectives," *Journal of the Third World Spectrum* 6, 2 (Fall, 1999): 19–41.

44. Marais, *South Africa*, 260–70.

45. Sheri Berman, *The Social Democratic Moment*, chapters 8 and 9.

Chronology

1875

May 22–25: Founding congress of the German Socialist Workers' Party (later renamed the Social Democratic Party of Germany–SPD) in Gotha.

1878

July 30: SPD wins 437,158 votes and nine seats in the *Reichstag*.
October 19: The *Reichstag* passes Chancellor Bismarck's "Anti-Socialist Law" effectively banning most SPD activities. Social Democratic activists go underground or into exile.

1890

January 25: The *Reichstag* allows the Anti-Socialist Law to lapse.
February 20: With 1,427,000 votes (19.7 percent) and 35 seats, the SPD becomes the strongest Party in the *Reichstag*.

1891

October 14–20: Erfurt Party Congress passes new program.

1912

January 12: SPD wins 4.25 million votes (34.8 percent) and 110 seats in the *Reichstag*. One year later the party membership totals well over one million.

1914

August 4: The SPD joins the other *Reichstag* parties to approve war credits.

1917

January 7: Social Democratic antiwar opposition meets and is condemned by the SPD leadership as a “special organization.”

April 6–8: The antiwar opposition forms the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD) at a congress in Gotha.

1918

January: Massive strikes in the armaments industries.

March 3: Peace Treaty of Brest–Litovsk with Soviet Russia.

September 29: Germany’s Supreme Command recognizes defeat and calls for an armistice and parliamentary government.

October 4: Prince Max von Baden forms a new government that includes representatives of the SPD. Reforms transform the semi-autocratic state into a constitutional monarchy.

November 3–9: Sailors revolt in Kiel. Workers’ and soldiers’ councils seize control of the city and the revolt sweeps the country.

November 8: USPD leader Kurt Eisner proclaims a republic in Bavaria. Prince Max calls on Kaiser Wilhelm II to abdicate.

November 9: Prince Max transfers the Chancellorship to SPD leader Friedrich Ebert. Social Democrat Philip Scheidemann proclaims Germany to be a republic.

November 10: Wilhelm II flees to the Netherlands. SPD and USPD form a Provisional Government known as the “Council of People’s Representatives.” Ebert secretly forms cooperative arrangements with General Groener of the military Supreme Command.

November 11: Armistice signed.

November 12: The Provisional Government announces its intention of implementing the socialist program.

November 15: Representatives of the trade unions and big business come to an agreement in which the latter recognizes the unions’ collective bargaining rights and accepts many of their core demands.

December 15–20: *Reich* Congress of Councils meets in Berlin. It calls for elections to a National Assembly and for immediate socialization measures.

December 29: USPD quits the Provisional Government.

December 30: Founding Congress of the German Communist Party (KPD).

1919

- January 4–13: Uprising of Communist and other radical left-wing forces crushed in Berlin by army and *Freikorps* units summoned by Ebert's government.
- January 15: Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht murdered by *Freikorps* troops.
- January 19: Elections to the National Assembly: SPD wins 37.9 percent of the vote. USPD wins 7.6 percent.
- February 11: National Assembly elects Friedrich Ebert President.
- February 13: Philip Scheidemann named Chancellor of a coalition government consisting of the SPD, DDP, and Catholic Center Parties (the "Weimar Coalition").
- April 7–May 2: Bavarian Soviet Republic crushed by *Freikorps*.
- June 21: Scheidemann resigns. Gustav Bauer (SPD) forms a new cabinet with DDP and Center.
- June 28: Bauer's government signs Versailles Peace Treaty.
- August 11: National Assembly passes Weimar Constitution.

1920

- February 24: Founding of the German Workers Party, renamed the National Socialist German Workers' Party in August. Adolf Hitler announces the party program.
- March 13–17: Kapp *Putsch*. SPD and the trade union call for a general strike to defeat Kapp.
- March 17: Bauer resigns. Hermann Müller (SPD) forms another coalition with DDP and Center.
- March–April: *Freikorps/Reichswehr* units crush "Red Army" in the Ruhr.
- June 6: Weimar Coalition defeated in *Reichstag* elections. (SPD support drops from 37.9 to 21.6 percent. USPD support rises from 7.6 to 18 percent.)
- October 12–17: At an extraordinary congress a majority of USPD delegates vote to accept the Communist International's twenty-one conditions for admittance. As a result the party splits with the majority joining the KPD in December.

1921

- January 24–25: Paris conference sets German reparations at 269 billion gold marks payable over forty-two years.
- March 23: Communist uprisings fail in Saxony and Hamburg.
- August 18: 550 Marks = 1 dollar. Depreciation of the Mark begins to accelerate.

- August 26: Center Party leader Matthias Erzberger, who had supported the Versailles Treaty and, as Finance Minister, carried out hotly contested reforms, is assassinated by right-wing extremists.
- September 18–24: The SPD adopts a new party program at its Görlitz Congress.
- October 16: Nazi Party establishes its *Sturmabteilung* (SA), a paramilitary fighting force.

1922

- April 16: Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau concludes the Rapallo Treaty with the Soviet Union reestablishing diplomatic and economic ties between the two countries.
- June 24: Rathenau assassinated by anti-Semitic reactionary terrorists.
- July 18: Government led by Josef Wirth passes Law for the Protection of the Republic.
- September 24: The SPD reunites with the rump USPD.
- December 26: Allied Reparations Commission threatens sanctions against Germany for failing to meet its obligations.

1923

- January 11: French and Belgian troops occupy the Ruhr.
- January 13: Government of Chancellor Cuno (nonparty) announces policy of passive resistance to French/Belgian occupation. SPD and trade unions join in support.
- May 24: 54,300 Marks = 1 dollar.
- August 11: Cuno resigns. SPD joins the DDP, the Center, and the DVP to form a “Great Coalition” cabinet led by Gustav Stresemann (DVP).
- September 26: Passive resistance ends. Martial Law declared in Bavaria and a state of emergency in Germany.
- October 12: 4 billion Marks = 1 dollar.
- October 22: Communist rising in Hamburg fails. Stresemann government sends troops to occupy Saxony.
- November 9: Nazi “Beer Hall Putsch” in Bavaria fails. Hitler arrested two days later.
- November 15: *Rentenmark* introduced, stabilizes currency.
- November 23: SPD quits “Great Coalition” in protest against its leniency toward right-wing militants. Wilhelm Marx (Center) becomes Chancellor.

1924

- April 1: Hitler sentenced to five years for treason. Released nine months later.

- September 1: The Dawes Plan, designed to reschedule Germany's reparations payments, goes into effect.
- December 7: *Reichstag* elections reveal falling support for the radical right and left. A period of relative stability begins.

1925

- February 24: Nazi Party is refounded.
- February 28: *Reich* President Ebert dies.
- April 26: Field Marshal von Hindenburg elected President.
- September 13–18: SPD adopts new program at its Heidelberg Congress.
- December 1: Locarno Treaty signed by Germany, France, Great Britain, Belgium, and Italy. It recognized Germany's western, but not its eastern, borders.

1926

- January 20: Hans Luther (nonparty) becomes Chancellor of a minority cabinet
- May 12: Luther quits after dispute about his support for allowing the government's ships and embassies to fly the old monarchy's black, white, and red flag.
- June 20: National referendum to expropriate the princely families fails.
- September 8: Germany enters the League of Nations.

1927

- July 7: *Reichstag* passes legislation establishing labor exchanges and unemployment insurance

1928

- May 20: *Reichstag* elections: SPD wins 29.8 percent of the vote and 153 seats. Nazis win 2.6 percent (12 seats) and the KPD 10.6 percent (54 seats).
- June 28: Hermann Müller (SPD) forms a new Great Coalition government with the DDP, the Center, the DVP, and the BVP.
- August 10: To hold the coalition together, the Müller cabinet agrees to right-wing demand to construct a new pocket battleship, against which the SPD had campaigned.
- October: Lockout in the Ruhr iron and steel industries.
- November 16: *Reichstag* overrides SPD efforts to halt the construction of a new pocket battleship.

1929

- May 1: SPD government in Berlin uses massive force to suppress Communist demonstrations.

- June 7: Young Plan drawn up to bring about final settlement of German reparations payments.
- October 24: “Black Thursday.” New York Stock Exchange collapses signaling onset of the Great Depression.
- December 22: Nationalist referendum to defeat the Young Plan fails.

1930

- January 23: Nazi leader Wilhelm Frick becomes Interior Minister in Thuringia.
- March 27: Hermann Müller’s cabinet falls after it failed to come to an agreement on the financing of unemployment benefits.
- March 30: Reactionary monarchist and Catholic Center party leader, Heinrich Brüning, becomes Chancellor. In July Brüning invokes Article 48 of the constitution to dissolve the *Reichstag*. These actions mark onset of the presidential regime.
- September 14: *Reichstag* elections: NSDAP wins major victory winning 18 percent of the votes and 107 seats. SPD adopts policy of “toleration” toward Brüning’s minority government.

1931

- January: Unemployment reaches 5 million.
- March 28: Reich government declares state of emergency.
- May 11: Austrian *Kreditanstalt* collapses.
- July 13: The Dresdener Bank collapses. Government shuts down all banks and stock exchanges until 5 August.
- October 11: The NSDAP, the German National People’s Party (DNVP), the *Stahlhelm*, and other right-wing groups meet in Harzburg to form a “national front” against Bolshevism.
- December 16: The SPD, ADGB, *Reichsbanner*, and Workers’ Sports Associations form the “Iron Front” to defend the republic against fascism.

1932

- January: Unemployment rises to over 6 million.
- April 10: Hindenburg reelected President with SPD support.
- April 13: Nazi paramilitary organizations, the SA and SS, banned (until 16 June)
- May 30: Hindenburg, following the advice of General von Schleicher, replaces Brüning with even more reactionary Center party leader, Franz von Papen. Papen then names a cabinet consisting of right-wing aristocrats and industrialists, the “cabinet of barons.”

- June 4: Hindenburg dissolves the *Reichstag*.
- June 16–July 9: Lausanne Conference brings an end to German reparations payments.
- July 20: Von Papen deposes the SPD-led Prussian government and rules as *Reich* Commissioner. The Iron Front elects not to fight.
- July 31: *Reichstag* elections: Nazis win 37.8 percent of the vote and 230 seats but Hitler's demand for the Chancellorship blocks attempts to form a coalition government.
- September 12: Von Papen dissolves the Reichstag.
- November 6: *Reichstag* elections: Nazi support slips to 33 percent and 196 seats. The KPD increased its support to 16.9 percent and 100 seats, while the SPD registered 20.4 percent for 121 seats.
- November 17: Von Papen resigns. Von Schleicher replaces him as Chancellor on 3 December.

1933

- January 28: Von Schleicher resigns as Chancellor
- January 30: Hitler appointed Chancellor, von Papen Vice Chancellor.
- February 2: Hitler dissolves the *Reichstag* and calls for new elections on 5 March. The ensuing election campaign unfolds in an atmosphere of terror and repression carried out by the NSDAP and state organs under its control.
- February 28: In the wake of the *Reichstag* fire, Hitler issues an emergency decree "for the Protection of People and the State." Basic constitutional rights are suspended.
- March 5: *Reichstag* elections: Nazis win 43.9 percent for 288 seats. The SPD win 18.3 percent for 120 seats and the KPD attract 12.3 percent for 81 seats.
- March: With the jails bursting with political prisoners, SA units set up their own facilities to incarcerate, torture, and even kill their opponents. The first large, permanent "concentration camp" facilities were also set up, such as Oranienburg near Berlin and Dachau outside of Munich.
- March 23: A coalition of Nazis and the bourgeois parties pass an "Enabling Law" granting Hitler full power for four years. With the KPD delegates under arrest or in hiding, only the SPD delegation voted against this measure.
- May 2: Nazis occupy trade union offices around the country, seize the unions' property, and arrest many leaders.
- June 22: SPD banned.

Works Cited

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The private papers of most of the ten Social Democrats examined in this work have largely been lost and the materials that remain are widely scattered. Only four produced memoirs, but all left a substantial public record through their recorded speeches and a variety of different types of publications. I have relied heavily on this published material. The bibliography that follows includes the archival, periodical, published primary and secondary works used in this study.

Archival Sources

Leo Baeck Institute, New York

Nachlass Oscar Meyer

Archiv der sozialen Demokratie, Bonn

Kleine Erwerbungen

Nachlass Carl Severing

Nachlass Hermann Müller

International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam

Nachlass Karl Kautsky

Periodicals

Arbeiterwohlfahrt

Breslauer Volkswacht

AfA-Bundeszeitung

Die Frankfurter Zeitung

Das freie Wort

Die Freiheit
Die Genossin
Die Gesellschaft
Deutsche Industriebeamtenzeitung
Der neue Merkur
Deutsche Republik
Deutsche Rundschau
Deutsche Worte
Frauenwelt
Der Freie Angestellte
Der Kampf
Kaufmännische Rundschau
Die Neue Zeit
Neue Blätter für den Sozialismus
Der Sozialist
Sozialistische Monatshefte
Vorwärts
Die Welt am Montag

General

Includes autobiographies, published party and legislative proceedings, and secondary works.

Abegunrin, Olayiwola. "Post Apartheid South Africa: An Analysis of Regional Perspectives." *Journal of the Third World Spectrum* 6, 2 (Fall, 1999): 19–41.

Abelshauer, Werner. "Die Weimarer Republik—ein Wohlfahrtsstaat?" In *Die Weimarer Republik als Wohlfahrtsstaat: Zum Verhältnis von Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik in der Industriegesellschaft*, edited by Werner Abelshauer. Stuttgart: Steiner-Verlag, 1987.

Abraham, David. *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic*. New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1986.

Adam, Herbert, and Kigilia Moodley. "The Purchased Revolution in South Africa: Lessons for Democratic Transformation." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 3, 4 (Winter, 1997): 113–27.

Adler Victor, ed. *Briefwechsel mit August Bebel und Karl Kautsky*. Vienna: Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1954.

Adolph, Hans J. L. *Otto Wels und die Politik der deutschen Sozialdemokratie, 1894–1939*. Berlin: de Gruyter 1971.

Albrecht, Richard. *Der militante Demokrat. Carlo Mierendorff, 1897–1943, eine Biographie*. Berlin and Bonn: J. W. H. Dietz Nachf., 1987.

Albrecht, Thomas. *Für eine wehrhafte Demokratie. Albert Grzesinski und die preußische Politik in der Weimarer Republik*. Bonn: J. W. H. Dietz Nachf., 1999.

Alexander, Thomas. *Carl Severing—ein Demokrat und Sozialist in Weimar*, 2 vols. Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1996.

———. *Carl Severing: Sozialdemokrat aus Westfalen mit preußischen Tugenden*. Bielefeld: Westfalen-Verlag, 1992.

- Amlung, Ulrich, et al. "‘von jetzt an get es nur noch aufwärts: entweder an die Macht oder an den Galgen,’ Carlo Mierendorff (1897–1943): Schriftsteller, Politiker, Widerstandskämpfer. Marburg: Schüren, 1997.
- Angress, Werner. "Weimar Coalition and Ruhr Insurrection, March–April 1920: A Study in Government Policy." *The Journal of Modern History* XXIX, 1 (March, 1957): 1–20.
- Ayres, Robert L. "Electoral Constraints and the ‘Chilean Way’ to Socialism." *Studies in Comparative International Development* VIII (Summer, 1973): 128–61.
- Balderston, Theo. *Economics and Politics in the Weimar Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Bavag, Riccardo. *Von Links gegen Weimar. Linkes antiparlamentarisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik*. Bonn: J. W. H. Dietz Nachf., 2005.
- Beck, Dorothea. "Theodor Haubach, Julius Leber, Carlo Mierendorff, Kurt Schumacher: Zum Selbstverständnis der ‘militanten Sozialisten’ in der Weimarer Republik." *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 26 (1986): 87–123.
- Beck, Roger. *The History of South Africa*. Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2000.
- Beier, Gerhard. *Das Lehrstück vom 1. und 2. Mai 1933*. Cologne: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1975.
- Benz, Wolfgang, and Hermann Graml, eds. *Biographisches Lexikon zur Weimarer Republik*. Munich: Beck, 1988.
- Berger, Stefan. *Social Democracy and the Working Class in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany*. London: Longman, 2000.
- Berman, Sheri. *The Social Democratic Moment. Ideas and Politics in the Making of Interwar Europe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Berndt, Roswitha. "Rudolf Breitscheid." In *Lebensbilder europäischer Sozialdemokraten der 20. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Otfried Dankelmann. Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1995.
- Bernstein, Eduard. *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie*. Bonn: Dietz, 1971.
- Biewer, Ludwig. "Der Preußenschlag vom 20. Juli 1932." *Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte* 119 (1983): 159–72.
- Blasius, Dirk. *Weimars Ende: Bürgerkrieg und Politik, 1930–1933*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2005.
- Blum, Mark. *The Austro-Marxists, 1890–1918: A Psychobiographical Study*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1985.
- Blumenberg, Werner. *Kämpfer für die Freiheit*. Berlin and Hannover: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1959.
- Böhm-Bawerk, *Karl Marx and the Close of his System*. Edited and introduced by Paul M. Sweezy. New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1949.
- Borchardt, Knut. *Wachstum, Krisen, Handlungsspielräume der Wirtschaftspolitik*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1982.
- Borge, Tomas. "This Revolution was made to Create a New Society." In *Nicaragua: The Sandinista People's Revolution. Speeches by Sandinista Leaders*. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1985.
- Bottomore, Tom, and Patrick Goode, eds. *Austro-Marxism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Bracher, Karl Dietrich. *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik*. Stuttgart and Düsseldorf: Droste, 1955.

- Bracher, Karl Dietrich, Erich Matthias, and Rudolf Morsey, eds. *Quellen zur Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der politischen Parteien, Band, III, Staat und NSDAP, 1930–1932, Quellen zur Ära Brüning*. Introduced by Gerhard Schulz. Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1977.
- Braun, Otto. *Von Weimar zu Hitler*. Zürich: Europa Verlag, 1940.
- Braunthal, Julius. *History of the International, I, 1864–1914*. New York: Nelson, 1967.
- Breitman, Richard. *German Socialism and Weimar Social Democracy*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981.
- Bridenthal, Renate and Claudia Koonz. "Beyond Kinder, Küche, und Kirche: Weimar Women in Politics and Work." In *Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and Critical Essays*, edited by Bernice A. Carroll. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976.
- Brown, Doug. "Sandinismo and the Problem of Democratic Hegemony." *Latin American Perspectives* 17, 2 (Spring, 1990): 39–61.
- Brüning, Heinrich. *Memoiren, 1918–1934*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1970.
- Brunner, Margot. *100 Jahre Toni Sender: Sozialistin, Demokratin, Rebellin, Internationalistin, Metalllerin, Journalistin, Politikerin*. Wiesbaden: Referat Frauenbeauftragte der Landeshauptstadt Wiesbaden, 1996.
- Burns, E. Bradford. *At War in Nicaragua: The Reagan Doctrine and the Politics of Nostalgia*. New York: Harper Collins, 1987.
- , ed. *Latin America: Conflict and Creation. A Critical Reader*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993.
- Carmody, Pdraig. "Between Globalization and (Post) Apartheid: The Political Economy of Restructuring in South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28, 2 (June, 2002): 255–75.
- Ceplair, Larry. *Under the Shadow of War: Fascism, Anti-fascism, and Marxists, 1918–1919*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.
- Chakotin, Serge. *The Rape of the Masses. The Psychology of Totalitarian Political Propaganda*, translated by E. W. Dicks. London: Labor Book Service, 1940.
- Chakotin (Tschachotin) S. and C. Mierendorff. *Grundlagen und Formen politischer Propaganda*. Magdeburg: Grundlagen und Formen politischer Propaganda, 1932.
- Cheru, Fantu. "Overcoming Apartheid's Legacy: The Ascendancy of Neo-liberalism in South Africa's Anti-poverty Strategy." *Third World Quarterly* 22, 4 (2001): 505–27.
- Cockcroft, James D., ed. *Salvador Allende Reader: Chile's Voice of Democracy*. Introduced by James D. Cockcroft. Assisted by Jane Carolina Canning. Melbourne and New York: Ocean Press, 2000.
- Conroy, Michael. "The Political Economy of the 1990 Nicaraguan Elections." *International Journal of Political Economy* 20, 3 (Fall, 1990): 5–33.
- Crew, David. *Germans on Welfare: From Weimar to Hitler*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press USA, 1998.
- Dankelmann, Ottfried, ed. *Lebensbilder europäischer Sozialdemokraten der 20. Jahrhunderts*. Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1995.
- Darity, William A. and Bobbie L. Horn. "Rudolf Hilferding: The Dominion of Capitalism and the Dominion of Gold." *American Economic Review* 75, 2 (1985): 363–68.
- Davenport, Rodney, and Christopher Saunders. *South Africa: A Modern History*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000.
- Dertinger, Antje. "Marie Juchacz (1879–1956). Ein gutes Herz is nicht genug. SPD und Wohlfahrtspflege: Sozialpolitik als frauenspezifisches Arbeitsfeld." In *Die bessere Hälfte kämpft um ihr Recht: Der Anspruch der Frauen auf Erwerb und andere Selbstverständlichkeiten*, edited by Antje Dertinger. Cologne: Bund-Verlag, 1980.

- . *Dazwischen liegt nur den Todt. Leben und Sterben der Sozialistin Antonie Pfülf*. Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1984.
- . "Toni Pfülf (1877–1933). Geschichte einer Recherche." In *Vor dem Vergessen bewahren. Lebenswege Weimarer Sozialdemokraten*, edited by Peter Lösche, Michael Scholing, and Franz Walter. Berlin: Colloquium-Verlag, 1988.
- Deutscher, Isaac. *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays*. Oxford: Hill and Wang, 1968.
- Dowe, Dieter, ed. *Protokolle der Sitzungen des Parteiausschusses der SPD, 1912–1921*. Bonn: Dietz, 1980.
- Dowe, Dieter, and Klotzbach, Kurt, eds. *Programmatische Dokumente der Deutschen Sozialdemokratie*. Bonn: Dietz, 2004.
- Eifert, Christiane. *Frauenpolitik und Wohlfahrtspflege: Zur Geschichte der sozialdemokratischen "Arbeitswohlfahrt"*. Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus-Verlag, 1993.
- Eley, Geoff. *Forging Democracy. A History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Engels, Friedrich. "A Critique of the Draft Social Democratic Program of 1891." In *Marx-Engels Collected Works. Vol. 27*. Moscow and London, 1975–2005.
- Epstein, Klaus. "The End of the German Parties in 1933." *Journal of Central European Affairs* 23 (1963): 52–76.
- Euchner, Walter. "Rudolf Hilferding (1877–1941). Kühne Dialektik und verzweifeltes Zaudern." In *Vor dem Vergessen bewahren*, edited by Peter Lösche, Michael Scholing, and Franz Walter. Berlin: Colloquium-Verlag, 1988.
- Falter, Jürgen. *Hitler's Wähler*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991.
- Felder, Josef. "Mein Weg—Buchdrucker, Journalist, SPD-Politiker." In *Abgeordneter des deutschen Bundestages—Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen, Bd. 1*. Boppard: Boldt, 1982.
- Feuchtwanger, E. J. *From Weimar to Hitler: Germany, 1918–1933*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2nd ed., 1995.
- Fischer, Conan. *The German Communists and the Rise of Nazism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991.
- Fischer, Klaus. *Nazi Germany: A New History*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1995.
- Fowkes, Ben. *Communism in Germany under the Weimar Republic*. London: St. Martin's Press, 1984.
- Frevort, Ute. *Women in German History. From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation*. Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 1989.
- Freyberg, Jutta von, et al. *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie. Von 1863 bis zur Gegenwart*. Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1989.
- Fricke, Dieter. "Friedrich Stampfer und der 'demokratische Sozialismus.'" *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 6, 4 (1958): 749–74.
- Gay, Peter. *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1952.
- Geary, Dick. "Employers, Workers, and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic." In *Weimar: Why did German Democracy Fail*, edited by Ian Kershaw. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990.
- Gibson, Nigel. "Transition from Apartheid." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* xxxvi, 1 (2001): 65–85.
- Gottschalch, Wilfried. *Strukturveränderungen der Gesellschaft und politisches Handeln in der Lehre von Rudolf Hilferding*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1962.

- Grab, Walter. "Leistung und Funktion jüdischer Intellektuellen in Deutschland (1840–1933)." *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 38, 3 (1986): 193–207.
- Grebing, Helga. "Jüdische Intellektuelle in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen." *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 37 (1997): 19–38.
- Grebing, Helga and Kinner, Klaus, eds. *Arbeiterbewegung und Faschismus: Faschismus-Interpretationen in der europäischen Arbeiterbewegung*. Essen: Klartext, 1990.
- Gruber, Helmut, and Graves, Pamela, eds. *Women and Socialism, Socialism and Women: Europe Between the Two World Wars*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1998.
- Haffner, Sebastian. *Die deutsche Revolution, 1918–1919*. Munich: Rowohlt, 1979.
- Hardach, Karl. *The Political Economy of Germany in the Twentieth Century*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980.
- Harris, Richard. "The Revolutionary Transformation of Nicaragua." *Latin American Perspectives* 52, 14 (Winter, 1987): 3–18.
- . "The Nicaraguan Revolution: A Postmortem." *Latin American Research Review* 28, 3 (1995): 197–213.
- Harsch, Donna. *German Social Democracy and the Rise of Nazism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.
- Haupt, Heinz-Gerhard. "Rudolf Hilferding." In *Deutsche Historiker, Bd. VIII*, edited by Hans-Ulrich Wehler. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982.
- Heer, Hannes. *Burgfrieden oder Klassenkampf. Zur Politik der sozialdemokratischen Gewerkschaften, 1930–1933*. Neuwied and Berlin: Luchterhand, 1971.
- Hennig, Eike. "Von der Analyse der NS-Erfolge zur Bekämpfung der NSDAP: Carlo Mierendorffs 'Kampf um die Massenseele.'" In *Arbeiterbewegung und Faschismus*, edited by Helga Grebing and Klaus Kinner. Fulda: Klartext, 1990.
- Hentz, James Jude. "The Two Faces of Privatization: Political and Economic Logics in Transitional South Africa." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 38, 2 (2000): 203–23.
- Hild-Berg, Annette. *Toni Sender (1888–1964): Ein Leben im Namen der Freiheit und der sozialen Gerechtigkeit*. With a forward by Susanne Miller. Cologne: Bund-Verlag GmbH, 1994.
- Hildebrandt, Irma. Nachruf auf eine Unbeugsame. Toni Pfülf 1877–1933." In *Bin halt ein zähes Luder, 15 Münchner Frauenporträts*, edited by Irma Hildebrandt. Munich: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1991.
- Hoegner, Wilhelm. *Der schwierige Aussenseiter. Erinnerungen eines Abgeordneten, Emigranten, und Ministerpräsidenten*. Munich: Isar Verlag, 1959.
- . *Flucht vor Hitler*. Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1977.
- Holtfrerich, Carl-Ludwig. "Economic Policy Options and the End of the Weimar Republic." In *Weimar: Why did German Democracy Fail?*, edited by Ian Kershaw. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990.
- Hong, Young-Sun. *Welfare, Modernity, and the Weimar State, 1919–1933*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Horn, Gerd-Rainer. *European Socialists Respond to Fascism: Ideology, Activism and Contingency*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Huber, Antje, ed. *Verdient die Nachtigall Lob wenn sie singt?* Stuttgart and Herford: Seewald, 1984.
- Hunt, Richard. *German Social Democracy*. Chicago: Quadrangle, 1964.
- James, Harold. "Rudolf Hilferding and the Political Economy of the Second International." *Historical Journal* 24 (1981): 847–69.
- . *The German Slump: Politics and Economics, 1924–1936*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

- Jaschke, Hans-Gerd, "Zur politischen Orientierung von Frauen und Frauenverbänden in der Weimarer Republik." In *Politische Teilkulturen zwischen Integration und Polarisierung*, edited by Detlef Lehnert and Klaus Megerle. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990.
- Jones, Larry Eugene. *German Liberalism and the Dissolution of the Weimar Party System, 1918–1933*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- Johnson, Dale L., ed. *The Chilean Road to Socialism*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1973.
- Juchacz, Marie. "Kindheit, Jugend, und erste politische Tätigkeit." In *Marie Juchacz: Gründerin der Arbeiterwohlfaht, Leben und Werk*, edited by Arbeiterwohlfaht Bundesverband. Bonn: Arbeiterwohlfaht, 1979.
- . *Sie lebten für eine bessere Welt. Lebensbilder führender Frauen des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*. Hannover: Dietz, 1971.
- Kaes, Anton; Jay, Martin, and Dimendberg, Edward, eds. *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- Keil, Wilhelm, *Erlebnisse eines Sozialdemokraten, 2 vols.* Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt., 1948.
- Kershaw, Ian, ed. *Weimar: Why did German Democracy Fail?* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990.
- Klein, Horst. "Zu den Gesellschaftsideen Rudolf Hilferdings." *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 33, 1 (1991): 25–36.
- Knatz, Christian. "En Sieg über Auführer und Reformers; Der Mitteldeutsche Aufstand von 1921 als verpaßte Chance der preußischen Schutzpolizei." *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 46, 1 (1998): 28–39.
- Kolb, Eberhard. *The Weimar Republic*. Translated by P. S. Falla. London: Routledge, 1988.
- . *Was Hitler's Seizure of Power on January 30, 1933 Inevitable?* Washington DC: German Historical Institute, 1997.
- Könke, Günter. *Organisierter Kapitalismus, Sozialdemokratie, und Staat: Eine Studie zur Ideologie der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterbewegungen in der Weimarer Republik*. Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 1987.
- Koonz, Claudia. "Conflicting Ideologies. Political Ideology and Women Legislators in Weimar Germany." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1 (1976): 663–83.
- Kornbluh, Peter. *The Pinochet File: A declassified dossier on atrocity and accountability*. New York: New Press, 2003.
- Korthaase, Werner. "Siegfried Aufhäuser (1884–1969): Der Organisator der Kopfarbeiter." In *Vor dem Vergessen bewahren: Lebenswege Weimarer Sozialdemokraten*, edited by Peter Lösche, Michael Scholing, and Franz Walter. Berlin: Colloquium-Verlag, 1988.
- Krahmer, Oskar and Gerdi Müller, eds. *Der rote Emil. Ein bayerischer Sozialist erzählt*. Munich: O. Krahmer, 1983.
- Krause, Hartfrid, USPD: *Zur Geschichte der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands*. Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1975.
- Kurata, Minoru. "Die Entstehung vom Hilferdings Finanzkapital," *Review of the Liberal Arts* 62 (1981, Japan): 55–98.
- . "Rudolf Hilferding, Wiener Zeit: Eine Biographie (2)." *Economic Review* 29, 2 (1978): 25–35.
- Lademacher, Horst. "Carl Severing." In *Politik und Landschaft*, edited by Walter Frost. Cologne and Bonn: Grote, 1969.
- Latin American Studies Association. *The Electoral Process in Nicaragua: Domestic and International Influences. Report of the Latin American Studies Association Delegation to Observe the Nicaraguan General Election of November 4, 1984*. Austin, TX: LASA, 1984.

- Leber, Julius. *Ein Mann geht seinen Weg*. Frankfurt am Main: Mosaik-Verlag, 1952.
- Lehnert, Detlef. *Sozialdemokratie zwischen Protestbewegung und Regierungspartei, 1848–1983*. Frankfurt am Main: Leske und Budrich, 1983.
- . “Rudolf Breitscheid (1874–1944). Vom linksbürgerlichen Publizisten zum sozialdemokratischen Parlamentarier.” In *Vor dem Vergessen bewahren. Lebenswege Weimarer Sozialdemokraten*, edited by Peter Lösche, Michael Scholing, and Franz Walter. Berlin: Colloquium-Verlag, 1988.
- Lehnert, Detlef and Megerle, Klaus, eds. *Politische Teilkulturen zwischen Integration und Polarisierung: zur politischen Kultur in der Weimarer Republik*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990.
- Leogrande, “Making the Economy Scream: U.S. Economic Sanctions against Sandinista Nicaragua.” *Third World Quarterly* 17. 2 (1996): 329–348.
- Löbe, Paul. *Der Weg war lang. Lebenserinnerungen von Paul Löbe*. Berlin: Arani-Verlag-Gesellschaft, 1954.
- Loewenberg, Gerhard. *Parliament in the German Political System*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966.
- Lösche, Peter, and Franz Walter. “Auf dem Weg zur Volkspartei? Die Weimarer Sozialdemokratie.” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 29 (1989): 75–136.
- Lösche, Peter, and Franz Walter. “Zur Organisationskultur der sozialdemokratischen Partei in der Weimarer Republik.” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 15 (1989): 511–36.
- Lösche, Peter, Michael Scholing, and Franz Walter, eds. *Vor dem Vergessen bewahren. Lebenswege Weimarer Sozialdemokraten*. Berlin: Colloquium-Verlag, 1988.
- Loveman, Brian. *The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Luthardt, Wolfgang, ed. *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterbewegung und Weimarer Republik, I*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978.
- Luxemburg, Rosa. “Sozialreform under Revolution.” In *Politische Schriften, I*, edited and introduced by O. K. Flechtheim. Frankfurt am Main: Europ. Verlagsanstalt, 1966.
- Marais, Hein. *South Africa: Limits to Change. The Political Economy of Transition*. Capetown: Zed Books, 1998.
- Marx, Karl. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. New York: International Publishers, 1963.
- Maser, Werner. *Friedrich Ebert: Der erste deutsche Reichspräsident*. Munich: Droemer Knauer, 1987.
- Matthias, Erich. “Kautsky und der Kautskyanismus.” In *Marxismusstudien*, edited by Iring Fetscher. Tübingen: Mohr, 1957.
- , ed. *Mit dem Gesicht nach Deutschland: Eine Dokumentation über die sozialdemokratische Emigration aus dem Nachlaß Friedrich Stampfer, ergänzt durch andere Überlieferungen*. Düsseldorf: Droste, 1968.
- Matthias, Erich and Rudolf Morsej, eds. *Das Ende der Parteien, 1933, Darstellungen und Dokumente*. Düsseldorf: Athenäum Verlag, 1979.
- Matthias, Erich and Susanne Miller, ed. *Das Kriegstagebuch des Reichstagsabgeordneter Eduard David, 1914–1918*. Düsseldorf: Droste, 1966.
- McKinley, Dale T. *The ANC and the Liberation Struggle: A Critical Political Biography*. London: Pluto Press, 1997.
- Meli, Francis. *South Africa Belongs to Us. A History of the ANC*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.
- Menzel, Hans. *Carl Severing*. Berlin: Historisch-Politisch Verlag, 1932.
- Merker, Paul. *Sozialdemokratismus: Stampfer, Schumacher und andere Gestrige*. East Berlin: Dietz, 1952.

- Michel, Wilhelm. "Die geistige Krise in der Sozialdemokratie." *Der neue Merkur* 7 (Sept. 1924): 953–63.
- Miller, Susanne. *Die Bürde der Macht. Die Sozialdemokratie 1918–1920*. Düsseldorf: Droste, 1978.
- . "Marie Juchacz als Frauensekretärin der SPD." In *Marie Juchacz: Gründerin der Arbeiterwohlfahrt. Leben und Werk*, edited by the Arbeiterwohlfahrt Bundesverband. Bonn: Arbeiterwohlfahrt, 1979.
- . *Persönlichkeit und Arbeit von Otto Wels*. Potsdam: Otto-Wels-Bildungswerk, Historischen Schriftenreihe, 1992.
- . "Toni Sender (1888–1964): Vielseitige Erfahrungen und praktischer Idealismus." In *Vor dem Vergessen bewahren. Lebenswege Weimarer Sozialdemokraten*, edited by Peter Lösche, Michael Scholing and Franz Walter. Berlin: Coloquium-Verlag, 1988.
- Miller, Susanne and Potthoff, Heinrich. *Kleine Geschichte der SPD. Darstellung und Dokumentation 1848–1990*. Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1991.
- Molloy, Ivan. "The Empire Strikes Back: The Sandinista Defeat in Context." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 46, 1 (1992): 109–26.
- Mommsen, Hans. *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*. Translated by Elborg Forster and Larry Eugene Jones. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Morgan, David W. *The Socialist Left and the German Revolution: A History of the German Independent Social Democratic Party, 1917–1922*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975.
- Morris, David J. *We must make Haste—Slowly. The Process of Revolution in Chile*. New York: Random House, 1973.
- Müller, Hermann. *Die November Revolution*. Berlin: Der Bücherkreis, 1931.
- Nenning, Günther. "Biographie Carl Grünbergs." *Indexband zum Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung*. Graz: Limmat-Verlag, 1973.
- Niemann, Heinz. "Rudolf Breitscheid und der sozialdemokratische Antifaschismus." In *Nachdenken über Anti-faschismus*, edited by Manfred Weißbecker und Jochen Traut. Jena: Jenaer Forum für Bildung und Wissenschaft, 1994.
- Nettl, Peter. "The German Social Democratic Party, 1890–1914, as a Political Model." *Past and Present* 30 (1965): 69–95.
- Oppenheim, Lois Hecht. *Politics in Chile: Democracy, Authoritarianism, and the Search for Development*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999.
- Orlow, Dietrich. *Weimar Prussia, 1925–1933. The Illusion of Strength*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 1991.
- Osterwald, Christoph. "Die politische Entwicklung Rudolf Breitscheids bis zu seinem Eintritt in die Sozialdemokratie im Jahre 1912." *Jenauer Beiträge zur Parteiengeschichte* 36 (1974): 87–132.
- Pahlberg-Landwehr, Joachim. *Die freien Angestelltengewerkschaften zwischen Arbeiterbewegung und bürgerlicher Konkurrenz: eine historisch-soziologische Studie über den AfA-Bund 1921–1933*. Paderborn: Paderborn Universität Diss., 1993.
- Petzold, Joachim. "Der Staatsstreich vom 20. Juli 1932 in Preußen." *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 4, 6 (1956): 1146–186.
- Peukert, Detlev. *The Weimar Republic. The Crisis of Classical Modernity*. Translated by Richard Deveson. New York: Hill & Wang Publishers, 1989.
- Pistorius, Peter. *Rudolf Breitscheid 1874–1944. Ein biographischer Beitrag zur Parteiengeschichte*. Nuremberg, 1970.
- Pore, Renate. *A Conflict of Interest: Women in German Social Democracy, 1919–1933*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1981.

- Prager, Eugen. *Geschichte der USPD*. Glashütten im Taunus: Dietz, 1970.
- Prevost, Gary, and Harry E. Vanden. *Democracy and Socialism in Sandinista Nicaragua*. Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993.
- . "The Role of the Sandinista Revolution in the Process of Democratization in Nicaragua." *Democratization* 2, 2 (Summer, 1995): 85–108.
- . *The Undermining of the Sandinista Revolution*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997.
- Prinz, Michael. *Vom neuen Mittelstand zum Volksgenossen. Die Entwicklung des sozialen Status der Angestellten von der Weimarer Republik bis zum Ende der NS-Zeit*. Munich: Oldenbourg, 1986.
- Quataert, Jean. *Reluctant Feminists*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.
- Protokolle der Parteitage der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, 1917–1922*. 5 vols. Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann, 1975.
- Pyta, Wolfram. *Gegen Hitler und für die Republik. Die Auseinandersetzung der deutschen Sozialdemokratie mit der NSDAP in der Weimarer Republik*. Düsseldorf: Droste, 1989.
- Renner, Karl. *An der Wende zweier Zeiten*. Vienna: Danubia-Verlag, 1946.
- Remirez, Sergio. "What the Sandinistas want." *Caribbean Review* 8, 3 (1979): 25–27, 49–52.
- Reuth, Ralf Georg. *Goebbels*. San Diego, New York, London: Harvest Books, 1993.
- Reitz, Jakob. *Carlo Mierendorff, 1897–1943. Stationen seines Lebens und Wirkens*. Darmstadt: Justus-von-Liebig-Verlag, 1983.
- Ritter, Franz. *Theorie und Praxis des demokratischen Sozialismus in der Weimarer Republik*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus-Verlag, 1981.
- Robinson, William, and Kent Norsworthy. *David and Goliath. The U.S. War on Nicaragua*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987.
- Röder, Werner, and Herbert A. Strauss, eds. *Biographisches Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration nach 1933, Bd. 1*. Munich: Saur, 1983.
- Roehl, Fritz-michael. *Marie Juchacz und die Arbeiterwohlfahrt*. Hannover: Dietz, 1961.
- Rohe, Karl. *Das Reichsbanner Schwarz Rot Gold. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Struktur der politischen Kampfverbände zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik*. Düsseldorf: Droste, 1966.
- Rosner, Peter. "A note on the theories of the business cycle by Hilferding and Hayek." *History of Political Economy* 2, 2 (1988): 309–19.
- Ruge, Wolfgang. *Wer war Heinrich Brüning?* Bonn: Pahl-Rugenstein, 2003.
- Saldern, Adelheid von. "Modernization as Challenge. Perceptions and Reactions of German Social Democratic Women." In *Women and Socialism, Socialism and Women. Europe Between the Two World Wars*, edited by Helmut Gruber and Pamela Graves. New York and Oxford: Haymarket Books, 1998.
- Sandkühler, Hans-Jörg, and Rafael de la Vega, eds. *Austromarxismus: Texte zu "Ideologie und Klassenkampf" von Otto Bauer, Max Adler, Karl Renner, Sigmund Kunfi, Bela Fogarasi, und Julius Lengyl*. Vienna: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1970.
- Sandri, Renato. "Chile: An Analysis of an Experiment and a Defeat." *Science and Society* 40, 2 (1976): 194–220.
- Schaefer, Rainer. *Die SPD in der Ära Brüning: Tolerierung oder Mobilisierung? Handlungsspielräume und Strategien sozialdemokratischer Politik, 1930–1932*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1990.
- Schauff, Johannes ed. *Neues Wahlrecht. Beiträge zur Wahlreform*. Berlin: G. Stille, 1929.
- Scheck, Raffael. *Mothers of the Nation: Right-Wing Women in Weimar Germany*. Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers Ltd., 2004.
- Schneider, Michael. *Arbeitsbeschaffung. Die Vorstellungen von Freien Gewerkschaften und SPD zur Bekämpfung der Wirtschaftskrise*. In *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterbewegung und*

- Weimarer Republik. Materialien zur gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung, 1927–1933*, edited by Wolfgang Luthardt. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1978.
- . *Kleine Geschichte der Gewerkschaften. Ihre Entwicklung in Deutschland von den Anfängen bis heute*. Bonn: Dietz, 2000.
- Schönhoven, Klaus and Hans-Jochen Vogel, eds. *Frühe Warnungen vor dem Nationalsozialismus. Ein historisches Lesebuch*. Bonn: Dietz, 1998.
- Schorske, Carl E. *German Social Democracy, 1905–1917*. New York: Harvard University Press, 1955.
- Schröder, Michael. *Toni Pfilz*. Munich: Bayerisches Seminar für Politik (Selbstdruck), 1984.
- Schulze, Hagen, ed. *Anpassung oder Widerstand? Aus den Akten des Parteivorstands der deutschen Sozialdemokratie 1932/33*. Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1975.
- . *Otto Braun oder Preußens demokratische Sendung*. Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1977.
- Sender, Toni. *The Autobiography of a German Rebel*. New York: Vanguard Press, 1939.
- Server, Otto. *Matadore der Politik*. Berlin: Universitas, 1932.
- Serra, Luis. "Democracy in Times of War and Socialist Crisis: Reflections Stemming from the Sandinista Revolution." *Latin American Perspectives* 20, 2 (Spring, 1993): 21–44.
- Severing, Carl. *Mein Lebensweg, 2 vols.* Cologne: Greven, 1950.
- Singer, Ladislaus. "Carl Severing. Eine Schlüsselfigur der Weimarer Republik." In *Marxisten im Widerstreit*, edited by Ladislaus Singer. Stuttgart: Seewald, 1979.
- Sklar, Holly. *Washington's War on Nicaragua*. Boston: South End Press, 1988.
- Skrzypczak, Henryk. "Anspiel. Vorabdruck aus: Mission ohne Mandat. Der Fall Friedrich Stampfer." *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz* 32, 1 (1996) 47–75.
- . "Kanzlerwechsel und Einheitsfront. Abwehrreaktionen der Arbeiterbewegung auf die Machtübergabe an Franz von Papen." *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 18, 4 (April, 1982): 482–99.
- . "'Nichtangriffspakt.' Zu Friedrich Stampfer's Einheitsfront-Interventionen im Spannungsfeld von Papen zu Hitler." In *Soziale Demokratie und sozialistische Theorie. Festschrift für Hans-Josef Steinberg*, edited by Inge Marßolek and Tell Schelz-Brandenburg. Bremen: Ed. Temmen, 1995.
- Smaldone, William. *Rudolf Hilferding: The Tragedy of a German Social Democrat*. Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998.
- . "Rudolf Hilferding and the Theoretical Foundations of German Social Democracy, 1902–1933." *Central European History* 21, 3 (September, 1988): 267–99.
- . "Socialist Paths in a Capitalist Conundrum: Reconsidering the German Catastrophe of 1933." *Journal of World History* 18, 3 (September 2007): 297–323.
- Smith, Peter. *Democracy in Latin America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Sneeringer, Julia. *Winning Women's Votes: Propaganda and Politics in Weimar Germany*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.
- Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands. *Protokoll der Sozialdemokratische Parteitag in Würzburg, 1917. Bericht der 7. Frauenkonferenz*. Berlin, 1917. Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann. Reprint, 1973.
- . *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag 1919 in Weimar. Protokoll . . . Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 1919*. Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann. Reprint, 1973.
- . *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag 1920 in Kassel. Protokoll . . . Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 1920*. Glashütten im Taunus, Auvermann. Reprint, 1973.
- . *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag 1921 in Görlitz. Protokoll . . . Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 1921*. Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann. Reprint, 1973.

- . *Sozialdemokratische Parteitage in Augsburg, Gera und Nürnberg, 1922. Protokoll . . .* Glashütten im Taunus, Auvermann. Reprint, 1973.
- . *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag 1924 in Berlin. Protokoll . . .* Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann. Reprint 1974.
- . *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag 1925 in Heidelberg. Protokoll . . .* Glashütten im Taunus, Auvermann. Reprint, 1974.
- . *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag 1927 in Kiel. Protokoll . . .* Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann. Reprint 1974.
- . *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag 1929 in Magdeburg. Protokoll . . .* Glashütten im Taunus, Auvermann. Reprint, 1974.
- . *Sozialdemokratischer Parteitag 1931 in Leipzig. Protokoll . . .* Glashütten im Taunus: Auvermann. Reprint, 1974.
- Stamper, Friedrich. *Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse. Aufzeichnungen aus meinem Leben*. Cologne: Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, 1957.
- Steenland, Kyle. "The Coup in Chile." *Latin American Perspectives* 1, 2 (Summer, 1974): 9–29.
- Stein, Alexander. *Rudolf Hilferding und die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung, Gedenklblätter*. Hamburg: Hamburger Buchdruckerei und Verlagsanstalt Auerdruck, 1946.
- Steinberg, Hans Josef. *Sozialismus und deutsche Sozialdemokratie*. Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1979.
- Stephan, Cora. "Geld und Staatstheorie in Hilferdings Finanzkapital." In *Beiträge zur Marx'schen Theorie*, 2, edited by Günther Busch. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972.
- , ed. *Zwischen den Stühlen oder über die Unvereinbarkeit von Theorie und Praxis. Schriften Rudolf Hilferding*. Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1982.
- Stübling, R. "Toni Sender—Gewerkschaftlerin und Sozialistin." In *Gewerkschafter, Sozialdemokraten, Friedensfreunde in Frankfurt am Main, 1900–1933*, edited by Fritz König and Rainer Stübling. Frankfurt am Main: Dipa-Verlag, 1985.
- Tormin, Walter. *Zwischen Räte diktatur und Sozialer Demokratie. Die Geschichte der Rätebewegung in der deutschen Revolution 1918–1919*. Düsseldorf: Droste, 1954.
- Trümpler, Eckard. "Vom bürgerlichen Demokraten zum Mitbegründer der antifaschistischen Volksfront, Rudolf Breitscheid." *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 18 (1976): 513–25.
- Verhandlungen des Reichstages: Stenographische Berichte der Sitzungen, 1920–1933*. Berlin: Verlag der Buchdrucker. der Norddeutscher Allgemeiner Zeitung, 1920–1933.
- Volland, Eva Maria. "Antonie ("Toni") Pfülf- . . . die Interessen der Frauen zu vertreten." In *Von der Klassenbewegung zur Volkspartei. Wegmarken der bayerischen Sozialdemokratie 1892–1992*, edited by Hartmut Mehringer. Munich: Saur, 1992.
- Vormschlag, Elisabeth. *Inhalte, Leitbilder und Funktionen politischer Frauenzeitschriften*. Göttingen: Göttingen Universität Diss., 1970.
- Wagner, F. Peter. *Rudolf Hilferding: Theorie und Politics of Democratic Socialism*. Atlantic Highlands: Prometheus Books, 1996.
- Wehler, Hans-Ulrich. "Rudolf Hilferding: Theoretiker des Finanzkapitals." In *Geschichte und politisches Handeln. Studien zu europäischen Denken der Neuzeit*, edited by Peter Alter, et al. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1985.
- Weisbrod, Bernd. "Die Befreiung von den 'Tariffesseln': Deflationspolitik als Krisenstrategie der Unternehmer n der Ära Brüning." *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 11, 3 (1985): 295–325.

- Weitz, Eric D. *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- Werner, Emil. *Die Freiheit hat ihren Preis*. Munich: Georg-von-Vollmar-Akademie, 1979.
- White, Dan. *Lost Comrades: Socialists of the Front Generation, 1918–1945*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Wickert, Christl. "Sozialistin, Parlamentarierin, Judin. Die Beispiele Käthe Frankenthal, Berta Jourdan, Adele Schreiber-Krieger, Toni Sender und Hedwig Wachenheim." In *Juden und deutsche Arbeiterbewegung bis 1933. Soziale Utopien und religiöse-kulturelle Traditionen*, edited by Ludger Heid and Anrold Paneker. Tübingen: Mohr, 1992.
- . *Unsere Erwählten. Sozialdemokratische Frauen im Deutschen Reichstag und im Preußischen Landtag 1919–1933*, 2 vols. Göttingen: Sovec VG, 1986.
- Winkler, Heinrich August. "Eine wirklich nie dagewesene Situation: Rudolf Hilferding in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik." In *Von der Arbeiterbewegung zum modernen Sozialstaat. Festschrift für Gerhard A. Ritter zum 65. Geburtstag*, edited by Jürgen Kocka, et al. Munich: Saur, 1994.
- . *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik, 1918–1924*. Berlin/Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1985.
- . *Der Schein der Normalität. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik, 1924–1930*. Second edition. Berlin/Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1988.
- . *Der Weg in die Katastrophe. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1930–1933*. Berlin/Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1987.
- Wirth, Joseph, ed. *Der Aufbruch*. Republikanische Flugschriften. Berlin: Verlag der Republikanischen Union, 1926.
- Wolpin, Miles D. "Systemic Constraints and Chilean Socialism in Comparative Perspective." *Politics and Society* 3, 3 (1973): 347–75.
- Worden, Nigel. *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Segregation, and Apartheid*. Third edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Limited, 2000.
- Woytinsky, W. S. *Stormy Passage: A Personal History through Two Russian Revolutions to Democracy and Freedom, 1905–1960*. New York: Vanguard Press, Inc., 1961.
- Wright, Bruce. *The Theory and Practice of the Nicaraguan Revolution*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1995.
- Younis, Mona N. *Liberation and Democratization. The South African and Palestinian National Movements*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- Zuckmayer, Carl. *Carlo Mierendorff. Porträt eines deutschen Sozialisten*. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1947.
- . *Scholar zwischen Gestern und Morgen. Ein Vortrag, gehalten in der Universität Heidelberg anlässlich seiner Ernennung zum Ehrenbürger am 23. November 1967*. Heidelberg: Brausdruck, 1967.

Index

- Abegg, Wilhelm, 194
absolutism, 52
Action Council (*Vollzugsrat*), 234, 235
ADGB. *See* Association of Free Trade Unions
Adler, Max, 75, 76–77
Adler, Victor, 75, 77, 220n6
AfA-Bund: AfA reorganization, 28, 33;
 Aüfhäuser and, 25, 28–36, 38–39, 42;
 dissolution of, 42; economic agenda of,
 39; membership of, 24
African National Congress (ANC), 265–73;
 abolition of apartheid, 267–68;
 coalitions, 266, 267; election of 1994,
 254, 267; Freedom Charter, 266, 267;
 free trade and privatization in, 268, 269;
 integration as goal of, 266, 267, 271;
 Keynesian economics of, 267, 268; NP
 and, 266, 268; parliamentary rule, 266,
 271; structural failure of, 270, 271
Albrecht, Richard, 123
Alexander, Thomas, 187
Allende, Salvador, 257–58, 259, 260, 261,
 271
Anaconda company, 259
ANC. *See* African National Congress
annexation to Germany, 210
anti-Semitism: Aüfhäuser and, 26; in
 Austria-Hungary, 75–76; Mierendorff
 on, 125; militant violence and, 8;
 Nazism and, 41, 64, 132
anti-war faction, 2, 83, 125, 130, 166–67,
 230
apartheid, South Africa, 265, 266, 267–68,
 269, 272
Arbeiterwohlfahrt (Workers' Welfare), 110,
 111, 115
Arco-Valley, Anton Graf, 150
armed forces. *See* *Reichswehr*
Arminia fraternity, 50–51
Article 48 of Constitution, 91, 197
Article 109 of Constitution, 148
associate member, 229
Association Law, 52
Association of Employee Unions (GdH),
 30
Association of Free Trade Unions (ADGB):
 AfA-Bund membership in, 24, 33;
 Aüfhäuser and, 39; Brüning and, 38;
 formation of Iron Front and, 245;
 general strike opposed by, 40; KPD
 and, 40; Nazis and, 42; Schleicher and,
 41
Association of German Salespeople
 (VdDK), 26–27
Association of Social Democratic
 Academics, 127
Association of Socialist Students, 125

- Auer, Erhard, 148, 150
 Aüfhäuser, Anna (Stein), 26
 Aüfhäuser, Heinrich, 25
 Aüfhäuser, Hermann, 25
 Aüfhäuser, Siegfried, 23, 23–43;
 background of, 25–26; on Brüning, 36;
 on capitalism, 26, 27, 30, 35–36, 37, 40;
 death of, 46n60; election of 1921, 34;
 election of 1932, 40; election of 1933,
 42; in exile, 46n60; on fascism, 37–38;
 as founder of DV, 27; on general
 strikes, 40, 41, 43; on Iron Front, x,
 24, 39, 40, 41; Kautsky and, 27; on
 power of unions, 33; *Reichstag* seat,
 34–35, 36; on restructuring of
 economy, 39; returns to Germany,
 46n60; on socialism, 32;
 underestimation of Nazism, 38; on
 worker unity, 30, 32, 33–34; writings
 of, 26, 42. *See also* Social Democratic
 Party
 Austro-Hungarian army, 212
 Austro-Marxist school, 77, 90, 95
 authoritarianism, 38, 48, 192, 243
- Baden, Max von, 1, 187, 189, 232, 233
 banking system, 73, 80–81, 94, 171
 Barth, Theodor, 27, 52, 53, 165
 battleships. *See* pocket battleships
 Bauer, Otto, 7, 75, 76–77
 Bavaria, 7, 148, 150, 151, 236, 237
 Bavarian People's Party (BVP), 14
 Bebel, August, 186, 210, 226, 227
 Beer Hall Putsch, 243–44
 Bellamy, Edward, 209
 bench workers, 187
Bergisch-Märkische Zeitung, 195
 Berlach, Hellmut von, 30
 Berlin Craftsman Chamber, 227
 Berlin Letters, 211
 Bernstein, Edward: anti-war faction and, 2;
 Hilferding and, 86; revisionism and, 78;
 Severing and, 186, 188, 210; on war, 81
 Best, Werner, 133
Betriebsrätezeitschrift/Shop Stewards'
Magazine, 168
Der Betriebsrat/Factory Council, 31
 Bielefeld City Council, 190
 Bismarck, Otto von, 226
 blue-collar workers, 24, 27, 29, 30, 31–32
 Böhm-Bawerk, Eugen, 76, 90
 Bohm-Schuch, Clara, 106
 Bolivia, 272
 Bolshevism, 2, 3, 58, 172, 190, 212–13
 Bottomore, Tom, 76
 bourgeois democracy, 61
 bourgeoisie, 79, 170
 bourgeois parties: election of 1932, 135;
 Nazis and, 14, 133; Severing and, 187,
 188; SPD and, 7, 10–11, 213, 239–40;
 USPD and, 9, 164; worker associations,
 31
 bourgeois womens' organizations, 103,
 104, 107, 147
 Boxheim Affair, 133, 199
 Bracht, Dr., 180
 Branting, Karl, 53
 Braun, Otto: emergency decrees of, 199;
 Mierendorff and, 128; resignation of,
 180, 200, 201; Severing and, 193, 195,
 197–98, 204n42; on socialists' dilemma,
 x–xi; Wels and, 229
 Brauns, Heinrich, 35
 Breitscheid, Rudolf, 47, 47–66;
 background of, 50–51; on Bolshevik
 Revolution, 58; on bourgeoisie state,
 57; on civil war conditions, 136; death
 of, 69n61; on dictatorship of the
 proletariat, 49, 58; on foreign policy,
 61, 62; as founder of DV, 52–53; on
 free trade, 51; on general strikes, 54; on
 Hindenburg, ix; on Hitler, ix–x, 48,
 49, 65–66; on Iron Front, 49, 65; on
 Junkers, 52; on liberalism, 50–51, 53;
 military service of, 55; on Nazism,
 63–64; Pfülf and, 157; propaganda
 policies and, 134; *Reichstag* seat, 59; on
 socialism, 49, 53; Stampfer and, 54; on
 Tsarism, 52, 58; on Versailles Treaty,
 59, 60; on workers' councils, 57–58;
 writings of, 54–55, 56, 57. *See also*
 Social Democratic Party
 Breitscheid, Tony (Drevermann), 51, 53,
 55, 66, 69n61

- Breitscheid, Wilhelm, 50
 Breitscheid, Wilhelmine, 50
 Breitweiser, Ludwig, 121, 122
 Brest-Litovsk Treaty, 236
 Britain, 272
 Brüning, Heinrich: as anti-republican, 36;
 as Chancellor, 62, 63; dissolution of
Reichstag, 14; election of 1930, 197;
 emergency decrees of, 14, 91, 199;
 Hilferding and, 13–14, 92, 93;
 Hindenburg and, 14, 62, 197, 200;
 minority cabinet of, 37, 91–92; policies
 of, 64; Seydewitz and, 38; on Wels,
 226. *See also* toleration policy
 Brunn, Austria, 209
 Bülow, Bernhard von, 52
Bund der technischen Angestellte und Beamten
 (Federation of Technical Employees
 and Officials or Butab), 31
Bund der technisch-industriellen Beamten
 (Federation of Technical and Industrial
 Employees or Butib), 28, 31
Bürgerschule, 182
 Butab, 31
 Butib, 28, 31
 BVP (Bavarian People's Party), 14
- cabinet of the barons, 247
Capital (Marx), 75, 81, 209
 capitalism: Aüfhäuseron, 26, 27, 30,
 35–36, 37, 40; Breitscheid on, 53, 55;
 class struggle and, 32, 83–84; control
 of production and, 9; corporate
 planning in, 88–89; finance capital,
 10, 72–74, 80–85, 87, 88, 90–91, 93;
 impact on family structure, 154; less
 developed nations and, 81; militarism
 and, 81; monopolies and, 81, 84;
 organized capitalism, 72–74, 84–85,
 87, 88, 90–91; orthodox Marxism
 and, 210; overseas markets, 81;
 rebellion against, 37; rise of
 bourgeoisie and, 79; Stampfer on,
 213; transnational, 272–73; universal
 suffrage and, 79–80. *See also* United
 States
 capital punishment, Pfülf on, 148–49
- Cartel of Free Employee Federations
 (AfA), 29, 30
 Catholic Church, 11, 35, 92, 146, 151, 262
 causal relationships, 82
 Center Party: anti-socialist views and, 132;
 Catholic Church and, 92; election of
 1919, 5; election of 1930, 14; Göring
 on, 49; Great Coalition and, 13, 36;
 NSDAP and, 114; in provisional
 coalition government, 190; in Prussia,
 92; Severing and, 185; SPD and, 9, 12,
 15, 135, 149; white-collar workers and,
 35
 Central Executive Committee of Workers,
 30
 Central Intelligence Agency, 259
 Central Office of Employee Councils, 30
 Chakotin, Serge, 133–36, 245
 Chile, 254, 258–62, 272, 273. *See also*
 Allende, Salvador; Popular Unity (UP),
 Chile
 Chintschuk, Ambassador, 218
 Christian Democratic Party (PDC), Chile,
 259, 260, 261
 Christian socialism, 76
 chronology of events, 277–85
 civil peace, 188
 civil war: Breitscheid on, 136; Hilferding
 on, 91; Nazi incitement of youth to,
 113, 131; SPD avoidance of, 40, 182,
 219, 247, 256, 271; Wels on, 136
 classical liberalism, premise of, 50
 class struggle: AfA and, 33; capitalism and,
 32; economic development and, 147;
 Hitler and, 49; rhetoric of, 61;
 Stampfer on, 213–14; Wels on, 231,
 240–41
 coal miners, 190–91
 Cold War, 255, 269, 272
 collective bargaining, 4, 26, 36, 85, 189
 Comintern, 8, 15, 58, 85, 86, 167
 communal property, 76
 communism vs. fascism, 63
 Communist International. *See* Comintern
Communist Manifesto (Marx), 186
 Communist Party (KPD): ADGB and, 40;
 Aüfhäuserand, 39–40; Breitscheid on, 48,

- 58, 64–65; Comintern and, 15; election of 1930, 14–15, 91, 197; election of 1932, 94, 138, 247, 256; formation of, 5; May Day and, 196–97; membership of, 8; Nazism and, 48, 208, 248; non-aggression pact, 40; pocket battleship and, 242; protests of, 199–200; Prussia and, 200; Red Soldiers League, 196–97; republic of councils and, 212; Sender on, 173; Severing and, 191, 195; SPD and, x, 15, 40, 44, 49, 64–65, 181, 216–18, 239; Stampfer and, 40, 213–14; USPD and, 8, 86; violence of, 136
- community of solidarity, 238–39
- The Comrade/*Die Genossin*, 108, 168
- Congress of German Trade Unions, Hamburg, 79, 89
- Constitution: Article 48, 91, 197; Article 109, 148; drafting of, 5; fundamental equality, 148; Hitler's appointment and, 48; as liberal vs. socialist theory, 6; Mierendorff on, 136; Pfülf and, 148, 149–50, 154; *Reichstag* provision for, 6; social guarantees in, 3, 105–6; SPD interests and, 212; workers' councils, 31. *See also* emergency decrees
- constitutional state, 96
- Contras, 264
- core constituencies, 273
- corporate planning, 88–89
- corporate state, 40
- COSATU (South African Trade Union Confederation), 266, 268
- Costa Rica, 264
- Courier*, 126
- court Jews (*Hofjuden*), 26
- Crispien, Artur, ix, 208
- Cuba, 262
- Die Dachstube*/The Garret, 122
- David, Eduard, 230
- Dawes Plan (1924), 61, 172, 216
- DDP. *See* German Democratic Party
- death penalty, 27, 133, 148–49, 153
- death squads, 8, 128
- democracy: Breitscheid on, 57; economic, 12, 87–88, 89; fascism compared to, 63; growth of socialism and, 57, 61; Hilferding on, 73–74, 87–88, 89, 93; Mierendorff on, 133, 137; socialism and, 57, 61, 84; Soviet system's suppression of, 63
- Democratic Union (DV), 27–28, 52–53
- Demokratische Vereinigung*. *See* Democratic Union
- Deutsche Republik*, 138
- Deutschnationaler Handlungsgehilfenverband* (National German Association of Clerks, DHV), 26
- dictatorship, 49, 58, 61, 62, 63, 244, 263
- dictatorship of the proletariat, 3, 49, 58, 81, 237
- directory, 243
- Dissmann, Robert, 166–67
- Dittmann, Wilhelm, 60
- divorce, 154
- DMV. *See* German Metal Workers Union
- DNVP. *See* German National People's Party
- Dresden Party Congress of 1903 (SPD), 186
- Drevermann, Tony. *See* Breitscheid, Tony (Drevermann)
- Düringer, Dr., 148–49
- Dürkopp, Nikolaus, 183, 185
- DV (Democratic Union), 27–28, 52–53
- DVP. *See* German People's Party
- Ebert, Friedrich: Bolshevism and, 3; on Breitscheid, 55; handling of Berlin unrest, 5, 56, 235; Juchacz and, 104, 105; Kaiser's abdication and, 1, 233; Pfülf and, 147; provisional coalition government, 1, 2–3, 232–33, 234; as *Reich* President, 236; Severing and, 188; Stampfer and, 212; Wels and, 229, 234, 239; women's suffrage and, 106; WWI supported by, 2
- economic democracy, 12, 87–88, 89
- economic development, 10
- economic issues: ADGB views on, 39; *AfA-Bund*'s views on, 39; banking system, 73, 80–81, 94, 171; cartel ministry, 73; crisis of 1930, 36; disasters, 255; “Golden Years”, 11;

- Hilferding's vision of, 39, 85;
hyperinflation, 89–90; monopolies, 81, 84; price mechanisms, 90; *Reichsbank* credits, 94; self-healing proposal, 93, 94; supply-side approach, 90, 256. *See also* capitalism; Great Depression; Keynesian economics
- economic rationalization, 172
- economic socialism, 33
- Edschmid, Kasimir, 124
- education of working class, 89
- Eichhorn, Emil, 235
- Einstein, Albert, 125
- Eisner, Kurt, 1, 147, 150
- elections, Chile: of 1970, 257–58, 259; of 1973, 260
- elections, Germany: majority system, 130; of 1901, 227–28; of 1907, 52, 185; of 1912, 1, 27–28, 53, 187; of 1916, 55; of 1918, 55; of 1919, 5, 14, 105, 148, 190, 236; of 1920, 7, 148, 150, 167–68, 240; of 1921, 34; of 1924, 11, 148, 150; of 1928, 12, 131, 215; of 1930, 14–15, 36–37, 63, 91–92, 128, 131, 172, 197, 243, 256; of 1932, 24–25, 40, 94, 134–36, 137–38, 174, 200, 247, 256; of 1933, 42, 114, 156–57, 248; politics of, 79–80; Prussia's three-class system, 188. *See also* voters and voting
- elections, Nicaragua: of 1984, 263; of 1990, 264
- elections, South Africa: of 1994, 254, 267
- elites: banking and industry as, 81; imperialism and, 265; propertied classes as, 78, 81, 89, 189; in South Africa, 268; state power and, 7, 89
- emergency decrees: of Braun, 199; of Brüning, 14, 91, 199; of Hitler, 139; override of, 14; of Papen, 180; parliamentary rule and, 14, 91, 255; Severing on, 194, 198; Wels on, 244
- employee committees, 29
- Enabling Act, 49, 66, 95, 114, 156, 248–49
- Engels, Friedrich, 79, 254
- Entente* powers, 59, 60, 237
- equality. *See* socialist women's movement
- Equality/*Die Gleichheit*, 108
- Erfurt Program* of 1891 (SPD), 1, 9, 10, 53, 79, 210, 213, 228
- Erzberger, Matthias, 8
- ethnic-nationalist students (*völkisch*), 125
- Evangelical Social Congress, 50
- extra-parliamentary means: Breitscheid on, 49–50, 62; Hilferding on, 86, 88, 92, 94; Mierendorff and, 138; Severing and, 186; SPD and, x, 132, 134, 137, 139, 257. *See also* Iron Front; strikes
- Die Fackel*/The Torch, 231, 244
- Factory Council/*Der Betriebsrat*, 31
- false consciousness, 38
- families, 105, 110, 147, 154, 168
- fascism: Aüfhäuseron, 37–38; Breitscheid on, 63; communism vs., 63; Juchacz on, 113; middle class and, 38; Mierendorff on, 130–33; nationalism and, 37; propaganda of, 132; social reactionary allies of, 245; use of rallying point, 63–64. *See also* National Socialists (Nazis)
- fashion, 170
- Federation of Technical and Industrial Employees (*Bund der technisch-industriellen Beamten* or Butib), 28, 31
- Federation of Technical Employees and Officials (*Bund der technischen Angestellte und Beamten* or Butab), 31
- Felder, Josef, 158
- feminist perspective. *See* Sender, Toni
- femmemorde* (right-wing death squads), 8, 128
- Finance Capital* (Hilferding), 72, 77, 80–82, 83–84, 88
- First Congress of Workers and Soldiers Council, Berlin, 190
- Fischer, Theobald, 51
- foreign competition, 81
- foreign policy, 61, 62, 137
- France, 93, 166, 194, 216
- Frank, Ludwig, 54, 186–87
- Frauenwelt*/Women's World, 107–8, 110, 164, 168, 174

- Freedom/*Die Freiheit*, 4, 85
 The Free People/*Das Freie Volk*, 53
 free trade, 51, 267–68
 Frei, Eduardo, 259
Das Freie Volk/The Free People, 53
Die Freiheit/Freedom, 4, 85
Freikorps, 3, 5, 7, 124, 191–92, 236
 French Socialist Party (SFIO), 166
 Friedrich List Society, 93
 Friedrich-Wilhelm Gymnasium, Cologne, 50
 front generation, 120
- Gareis, Karl, 8
 The Garret/*Die Dachstube*, 122
 Gay, Peter, 254
 GdH (Association of Employee Unions), 30
Gemeinwirtschaft, 39
 gender roles: conservative social views on, 111, 154; Pfülf on, 152, 153, 155; Sender on, 168; social policy and, 147; in voting, 106
 General Free Federation of Salaried Employees. *See Afa-Bund*
 general strikes. *See strikes*
Die Genossin/The Comrade, 108, 168
 Gerlach, Helmuth von, 52, 53, 56
 German-American Council for the Liberation of Germany from Nazism, 176–77n37
 German Colonial Society, 50
 German Democratic Party (DDP): election of 1919, 5, 14; election of 1930, 14; Great Coalition and, 36; merger with USDP, 167; in provisional coalition government, 9, 190; SPD and, 9, 12; women issues and, 154
 German Metal Workers Union (DMV): Dissmann and, 166, 168; Severing and, 183, 184–85, 186, 187, 188
 German National People's Party (DNVP): election of 1919, 5; election of 1930, 14–15; Harzburg Front and, 37–38, 64; in Prussia, 193; Sender and, 174; SPD and, 91
 German People's Party (DVP): economic views of, 90; election of 1919, 5; election of 1930, 14; Great Coalition and, 11, 12, 13, 36, 216, 240; Sender on, 170; SPD and, 11, 12, 15, 91, 242; unemployment insurance and, 242–43
 German Revolution (1918–1919), 31
 German Workers' Educational Association, 183, 184
Die Gesellschaft/Society, 72, 87, 93, 95, 128, 131
 Gessler, Minister, 128
Die Gleichheit/Equality, 108
 The Gnome/*Der Gnom* (Mierendorff), 122
 Goebbels, Josef, 17, 247
 Gohlke, Elizabeth, 102, 103
 Gohlke, Otto, 102
 Gohlke, Theodor, 102
 Göring, Hermann, 49
Görlitz Program (SPD), 9–10, 213, 241
 Grassman, Peter, 31
 Great Coalition: Center Party and, 13, 36; collapse of, 13, 197; DDP and, 36; DVP and, 12, 13, 36, 216, 240; Hilferding on, 13–14; Müller and, 13, 86, 89–90, 196, 215–16; SPD and, 12, 34, 36, 62, 197, 241–42; Wels on, 240
 Great Depression: as environment for Nazism, 172; Hilferding on, 37, 72–73, 91; SPD and, 255, 256; Stampfer and, 216; toleration policy and, 16; unemployment prior to, 13; unrest due to, 200
 Groener, Wilhelm, 3, 242
 Grünberg, Carl, 76, 89
 Grzesinski, Albert, 196–97, 201
- Haase, Hugo, 4, 55, 188, 230
 Halperin, Josef, 126, 127, 138, 139
Handelsvertragsverein (free trade organization), 51, 53
Hannoverschen Courier, 195
 Hanover Party Congress of 1899 (SPD), 186
 Harsch, Donna, 17, 136
 Harzburg Front, 37–38, 64
 Haubach, Theodor, 120, 121
 Hayek, Friedrich von, 90
 Heidelberg Party Congress of 1925 (SPD), 10, 241

- Heidelberg Program* (SPD), 10–11, 88
- Heiliger Leopold café, Vienna, 75
- Helfferich, Karl, 215
- Herero Rebellion, 51, 228
- Hertz, Paul, 127–28, 134
- Hessischer Volksfreund*, 127
- Heymann, Gustava, 148
- Hilferding, Anna, 75
- Hilferding, Emil, 75
- Hilferding, Margarete, 77
- Hilferding, Rudolf, 71, 71–96; anti-war faction and, 2, 83; background of, 75, 76–78; Bernstein and, 86; Breitscheid and, 54; Brüning and, 13–14, 92, 93; death of, 69n61, 100n67; on democracy, 73–74, 87–88, 89, 93; on dictatorship of the proletariat, 81; economic vision of, 39, 85; in exile, 66, 95, 100n67; on extra-parliamentary means, 86, 88, 92, 94; on general strikes, 79–80, 95; *Heidelberg Program* and, 10; on Hindenburg, x, 14; on Iron Front, 94; Kautsky and, 75, 77, 78–79; Marxism and, 74, 80, 82; military service of, 83; on need for Great Coalition, 13–14; propaganda policies and, 134; *Reichstag* seat, 86–87; on threat of Nazism, 17; toleration policy and, 92–93, 95; Wels and, 245; writings of, 3, 72, 76–77, 79–81, 83–84, 86, 89. *See also* Social Democratic Party
- Hindenburg, Paul von: Brüning and, 14, 62, 197, 200; conservative elites and, 274n7; election of 1932, 174; Hitler's appointment by, 65, 274n7; Iron Front support for, 24, 200; as member of *Stahlhelm*, 197; Prussian coup and, 180–81; *Reichsbanner* and, 24; social democracy opposed by, 14; SPD and, 24, 65, 92, 243
- Hirsch-Duncker Association of Trade Unions, 26
- Hitler, Adolf: Aüfhäuser's opposition to, 38; as Chancellor, 25, 48, 65, 138, 274n7; class struggle and, 48; coalition government appointment of, ix, xi; election of 1932, 24; emergency decrees of, 139; Enabling Law speech by Wels and, 249; Hugenberg and, 38, 48–49; Severing's attempt to deport, 201; SPD's opposition to, 16–17, 38, 157
- Hoegner, Wilhelm, 150, 157
- Hoffmann, Carl, 187
- Hoffmann, Johannes, 148, 150
- Hofjuden* (court Jews), 26
- Holzapfel, Emil, 159n9
- Honduras, 264
- Hörsing, Otto, 134
- Hue, Otto, 186
- Hugenberg, Alfred, 38, 48–49, 138
- Hunt, Richard, 238
- Ibsen, Henrik, 165
- imperialism, 29, 81–82, 88, 238, 265
- Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD): Aüfhäuserjoins, 25, 30; Bolshevik Revolution and, 58; bourgeois parties and, 9, 164; Breitscheid and, 55–57, 59; calls for dictatorship of the proletariat, 3, 237; calls for socialization of industry, 3; Comintern and, 8, 58, 85, 86, 167; defection from SPD to, 231; Ebert and, 5, 56, 235; Eisner and, 1; election of 1919, 5, 190; election of 1920, 7, 240; formation of, 2; Hilferding joins, 85, 86; KPD and, 8, 86; Leipzig Congress, 57; membership of, 7; merger with DDP, 167; provisional coalition government and, 2–3; radical element in, 190; right-wing opposition to, 31; Sender and, 164, 167; Severing and, 188; SPD and, 3–4, 9, 10, 34, 56, 60, 86, 168, 233–34, 235, 238, 240; Versailles Treaty and, 237; Wels and, 237; women and, 148; workers' councils and, 233–34. *See also* Spartacus League
- individual development (*persönlichkeitsrecht*), 53
- industry: Aüfhäuseron, 30; banking system and, 80–81; monopolies, 81; socialization of, 4, 7, 30, 213, 237; SPD and nationalization of, 27

- intellectuals, role of, 125
- International Monetary Fund (IMF), 267
- Iron Front: Aüfhäuseron, x, 24, 39, 40, 41; Berlin rally of, 156; Breitscheid on, 49, 65; civil war and, 136; formation of, 16, 39, 245; Hilferding on, 94; Hindenburg and, 24, 200; ineffectiveness of, 25, 200, 245, 247; Mierendorff and, 133–36; Papen and, 245–46; Pfülf and, 156; propaganda of, 133–36, 245; Sender and, 164, 171, 173; Stampfer and, 217
- Jahrbuch für Politik und Arbeiterbewegung* (Stampfer), 54
- J. Einhorn & Company, 26
- Jena Party Congress of 1911 (SPD), 80, 228
- Jews, 26, 76, 172. *See also* anti-Semitism; *specific individuals*
- Jew's Mirror/*Judenspiegel*, 174
- Juchacz, Marie, 101, 101–15; background of, 102–3; congress speech, 112; Ebert and, 104, 105; election of 1919, 105; in exile, 114–15; on Hindenburg, 113; Lohmann and, 109; on misogynist attitudes, 170; returns to Germany, 115; Sender and, 168; welfare work and, 103–4; on womens' responsibilities, 105; Workers' Welfare organization founded by, 110; writings of, 105, 112. *See also* Social Democratic Party
- Judenspiegel*. *See* Jew's Mirror
- Junkers*, 52, 172, 244
- Kapp, Wolfgang, 7, 191–92, 239
- Kapp *Putsch*, 7, 8, 33, 34, 239
- Karl Marx and the Close of his System* (Böhm-Bawerk), 77
- Kassel Party Congress of 1920 (SPD), 151, 240
- Kaufmännische Rundschau*/Merchant's Review, 26
- Kautsky, Karl: anti-war faction and, 2; Aüfhäuserand, 27; Frank on, 186–87; *Heidelberg Program* and, 10; Hilferding and, 75, 77, 78–79; Mierendorff and, 127; Stampfer and, 209, 210, 220n6
- Kennecott company, 259
- Keynesian economics, 267, 268, 270–71. *See also* economic issues
- Kiel Party Congress of 1927 (SPD), 35, 110, 196, 241
- Kiel sailors' revolt, 1, 232
- Kinz, Franziska, 138
- Klerk, F.W. De, 266
- Kolb, Eberhard, 6
- Kollantai, Alexandra, 54
- Korthaase, Werner, 42
- KPD. *See* Communist Party
- Kreisau Circle, 120
- Küntslers, Franz, 241
- labor movement, x–xi, 28–29, 31, 73–74, 86, 87. *See also specific groups*; trade unions
- laissez-faire, 50
- Länder*, 199
- Landtage*, 109, 135, 200
- Lassalle, Ferdinand, 201
- Latin America, as U.S. backyard, 261
- Law for the Protection of the Republic (1922), 8, 197
- League of German Employee Unions (Gedag), 30
- League of Nations, 10, 61
- League of Socialist Women, 147–48
- Leber, Julius, 16
- Lederer, Emil, 124, 126
- left liberals, 27, 53, 188, 189, 228, 241. *See also specific individuals; specific political parties*
- Legien, Carl, 29, 33, 186
- Lehnert, Detlev, 65
- Leipart, Theodor, 40, 41
- Leipzig Congress (USPD), 57
- Leipzig Party Congress of 1931 (SPD), 38, 63
- Leipzig's People's Paper/*Leipziger Volkszeitung*, LVZ, 54, 210, 220n6
- Lenard, Philippe, 125–26
- less developed nations, 81
- Leuschner, Wilhelm, 128, 133
- Levi, Paul, 171
- Ley, Robert, 246

- liberalism, 37, 50, 53, 76, 272. *See also* left liberals; Progressive Party
- liberation theology, 262
- Liebknecht, Karl: anti-war faction and, 2; Breitscheid and, 54, 55; murder of, 5; Pfülf and, 147; provisional coalition government, 234; Severing and, 188; Wels and, 228
- Liebknecht, Wilhelm, 226
- Linder, Alois, 150
- Löbe, Paul, 127, 157, 158
- Locarno Pact (1925), 61, 63
- Lohmann, Richard, 108, 109, 110, 170
- Looking Backward* (Bellamy), 209
- Lothringer Herbst*/Autumn in Lorraine (Mierendorff), 122
- Ludwig-Georg-Gymnasium, 121
- Lüttwitz, General, 7, 239
- Luxemburg, Rosa: anti-war faction and, 2; Breitscheid and, 54; in left wing, 228; murder of, 5; Pfülf and, 147; preference for revolution over reform, 78; writings of, 210
- Mach, Ernst, 76
- Magdeburg Party Congress of 1910 (SPD), 187
- Man, Hendrik de, 127
- Mandela, Nelson, 266, 267
- martial law, 133, 191, 246
- Marx, Karl, 75, 81, 186, 208, 209, 254
- Marxism: Böhm-Bawerk on, 77; centrist faction of SPD and, 78–79; class struggle and, 83; Grünberg and, 76, 77; Hilferding and, 74, 80, 82; limitations of, 90, 95; Nazi propaganda and, 172; orthodox, 10, 210; revisionists' views on, 78; Sandinista Party and, 262; Severing on, 186; social democracy's reformist wing and, 146–47; as social science, 76; the state and, 80
- Marx-Studien*, 77
- mass strikes. *See* strikes
- May Day, 1929, 196–97
- Mehring, Franz, 58, 210
- Mein Kampf* (Hitler), 65
- Menger, Anton, 209
- Menger, Karl, 209
- Menzel, Hans, 182
- Merchant's Review/*Kaufmännische Rundschau*, 26
- Michel, Wilhelm, 127
- middle class: authoritarianism and, 38, 192, 243; Kautsky's view on, 27; labor affiliations of, 31; in late nineteenth century, 78; liberal support for working class among, 209–10; *mittelstand*, 17; Nazi propaganda and, 17, 131, 172; response to Ruhr strike, 192; SPD and, 61. *See also* white-collar workers
- Mierendorff, Carlo, 119, 119–39; on anti-Semitism, 125; background of, 120–23; Boxheim Affair and, 133; concentration camp internment of, 120; on Constitution, 136; death of, 120; on democracy, 133, 137; education, 124–25; election of 1930, 128; in exile, 120, 139; Iron Front and, 133–36; Kautsky and, 127; Lenard and, 125–26; military service of, 121–22; on new revisionism, 134; propaganda and, 124–25, 128, 131, 132, 133–36; on proportional representation, 129–30, 137; on republic's failure, 136–39; Severing and, 128; on threat of Nazism, 130–33, 138–39; on Versailles Treaty, 133; on war, 121–22; Wels and, 245; writings of, 122–24, 125, 126, 127, 128, 131; youth issues and, 123, 130, 135. *See also* Social Democratic Party
- Mierendorff, Charlotte, 120
- Mierendorff, Georg, 120
- Mierendorff, Wilhelm, 121
- Mieses, Ludwig von, 90
- militarism, 81, 128, 129, 230–31, 232
- misogynist attitudes, 170
- mittelstand* (old middle class), 17
- monarchy: collapse of, 4, 30, 85, 189; constitutional, 232; institutions of, 129; SPD's parliamentary rule and, 189
- monopolies, 81, 84
- moral idealism, 125
- Mühsam, Erich, 147

- Müller, Hermann: collapse of
 administration, 243; Great Coalition
 and, 13, 86, 89–90, 196, 215–16; as
 party co-chair, 60, 236, 238; pocket
 battleship and, 13, 242; toleration
 policy and, 92; Wels and, 230, 234
Münchener Neuesten Nachrichten, 161n51
- National Assembly: Aüfhäuser's opposition
 to, 30; Breitscheid on, 57; formation
 of, 3, 4; Severing's seat in, 190; socialist
 minority in, 86, 236; women delegates
 to, 148; workers' councils and, 33
- National German Association of Clerks
 (*Deutschnationaler
 Handlungsgehilfenverband*, DHV), 26
- nationalism: fascism and, 37; as motivator,
 210; Nazism and, 41, 64, 131, 133;
 radical, 60
- National Liberal Party, 27, 51, 52, 53, 187
- National Party (NP), South Africa, 265,
 266, 268, 271, 272
- National Socialists (Nazis) (NSDAP):
 accommodation of, 41; ADGB and, 42;
 advocacy of socialism, 64; anti-
 Semitism of, 41, 64, 132; appeal of, 41,
 64; bourgeois parties and, 14, 133;
 Brüning and, 199, 201; Center Party
 and, 114; in coalition government, ix;
 constituency of, 37; election of 1930,
 14–15, 36–37, 63, 91, 131, 197, 256;
 election of 1932, 24–25, 40, 94,
 135–36, 137–38, 200, 247, 256;
 election of 1933, 114; Harzburg Front
 and, 37–38; as nation destroyers, 113;
 Papen and, 217; people's community
 and, 114, 144, 255; propaganda of, 17,
 131, 132, 137, 172; protests of,
 199–200; in Prussia, 200; SA para-
 military, 16, 181, 196, 199, 246, 248;
Schupo and, 198; Sender and, 172, 173,
 174; Severing and, 198; SPD and, 114,
 131, 198, 247; trade unions and, 25,
 157, 247; underestimation of, 38,
 247–50; violence of, 64, 113, 136, 181,
 209; as *völkisch*, 130; Wels on, 243–44
- Naumann, Friedrich, 51, 52, 53, 121
- Nazis. *See* National Socialists (Nazis)
- Nazi SA, 16, 181, 196, 199, 246, 248
- neo-liberal ideology, 267, 268, 272
- Neue Blätter für Sozialismus*, 128
- Neuer Vorwärts*, 223n47
- Die Neue Zeit*/The New Age, 54, 75, 77
- neutrality of state apparatus, 256, 258
- The New Age/*Die Neue Zeit*, 54, 75, 77
- new woman, 170
- Nicaragua, 254, 258, 262–65, 270, 271,
 273. *See also specific political parties*
- Nixon Administration, 259
- Noack, August, 121
- non-aggression pact, 40
- Non-Aligned Movement, 262
- Noske, Gustav, 239
- Nuremberg Party Congress of 1922
 (SPD), 9–10
- Office for Women's Concerns (SPD), 102
- opportunist ideology, 84–85
- organized capitalism. *See* capitalism
- Ossietzky, Carl, 128
- Pan-Germanism, 76
- Panzerkreuzer-A* (battleship), 13, 62, 128,
 132, 171, 242
- Papen, Franz von: as Chancellor, 200–201;
 dissolution of *Reichstag*, 14, 40, 132;
 emergency decrees of, 180; Iron Front's
 reaction to, 245–46; Leipart and, 41;
 lifts ban on right-wing paramilitary
 groups, 181, 246; Nazi-friendly
 government of, 217; Prussian coup and,
 16, 181; as *Reichskommissar*, 180;
 Severing and, 180–81
- parliamentary rule: bourgeoisie and, 79; in
 Chile, 257–58, 271; emergency decrees
 and, 14, 91, 255; as gradual means to
 socialism, 78, 80–82, 86, 88, 181, 258,
 271; Juchacz on, 105; limitations of,
 62, 201, 265, 269, 270, 271; in
 Nicaragua, 258, 265, 271; opposition
 sabotage through, 255, 271; propertied
 elites and, 78, 81, 89, 189; *Reichstag*
 parties and, 65; Schleicher's opposition
 to, 41; Sender and, 171; in South

- Africa, 266, 271; Stampfer on, 212, 217; as structural obstacle to socialism, 271; Wels and, 229–31, 238, 239, 244, 248. *See also* civil war; extra-parliamentary means; *specific political parties*
- Patriotic Service Law (1916), 29
- Pavlov, Ivan, 133
- PDC (Christian Democratic Party), Chile, 259, 260, 261
- peace without annexations, 55, 166, 188, 231
- peasants: German, 10, 11–12, 39, 131, 213, 255; Sandinista Party and, 262, 263–64
- People's and Soldiers' Council (VSR) (*Völkis- und Soldatenrat*), 189
- people's community, 114, 144, 255
- The People's Guardian/*Die Völkswacht*, 183, 184, 187, 188
- People's Marine Division (*Völkis- marinedivision*, VMD), 235
- people's movement, 137
- people's police, 193–94
- Pföhl, Antonie "Toni", 143, 143–58; anti-war faction and, 147; Auer and, 148, 150; Breitscheids and, 157; on capital punishment, 148–49; Catholic Church and, 146, 151; congress speech, 151; death of, 144, 158, 161n51; Düringer and, 148–49; education, 145, 159n6; election of 1919, 148; election of 1920, 148, 150; election of 1924, 148, 150; election of 1933, 156–57; on financing of war, 147; on Hitler's "peace resolution", 157; income sources, 151, 160n29; obituary, 161n51; Rosenstraufl Affair and, 150, 151; on separation of church and state, 149; speaks up at meetings, 146, 154–55, 159n9; as teacher, 145–46, 151; on Versailles Treaty, 149; welfare work and, 147; on women's equality, 148–49, 151–55; writings of, 147. *See also* Social Democratic Party
- Pföhl, Emil, 145, 146, 159n5
- Pföhl, Emma, 144, 145, 161n51
- Pföhl, Justine, 145, 146, 161n51
- Philippovich, Eugen von, 209
- pocket battleship (*Panzerkreuzer-A*), 13, 62, 128, 132, 171, 242
- policy of fulfillment, 60
- political science, 124
- poor children's school, 182
- Popular Unity (UP), Chile, 257–62, 270, 273
- post-war psychosis, 37
- Praetorian Guards, 155, 194
- presidential power, 6, 91, 255
- Preuss, Hugo, 5
- Progressive Party, 51, 52, 53, 187, 229
- proletariat. *See* working class
- propaganda: of Iron Front, 133–36, 245; Mierendorff on, 124–25, 128, 131, 132, 133–36; of Nazism, 17, 131, 132, 137, 172; psychological studies and, 135; of SPD, 131, 132, 133–36, 245
- propertied elites. *See* elites
- proportional representation (PR), 129–30, 137
- provisional coalition government, 1–6, 189, 190, 232–33, 234, 236–37
- Prussia: Breitscheid and, 56; Center Party in, 92; collapse of, 201; coup in, 16, 41, 180–81, 246; DNVP and, 193; election of 1932, 200; KPD and, 200; NSDAP and, 200; Papen and, 16; Severing and, 181–82, 190, 193–95, 197–200, 204n42; SPD and, 11, 40, 136; *Stahlhelm* and, 182, 200; three-class electoral system, 188
- public works programs, 94, 217, 245
- pure opposition, 194–95, 211
- Quataert, Jean, 104
- Räterepublik* (republic of councils), 212
- Rätesystem*, 190
- Rathenau, Walther, 8, 86, 125, 194
- Rathgen, Karl, 50, 51
- Reagan, Ronald, 264
- realistic pacifism, 88
- Red Army (workers), 7, 192, 237
- Red Flag (*Rote Fahne*), 235

- Red Soldiers League (*Roter Frontkämpferbund*, RFB), 196–97
- Reichsbank*, 94, 171
- Reichsbanner* : Aüfhäuseron, x; formation of Iron Front and, 16, 245; Hindenburg and, 24; ineffectiveness of, 182; Mierendorff and, 127, 134; Severing and, 198–99, 200; Stampfer and, 219
- Reichstag*: Aüfhäuser's seat in, 34–35, 36; Breitscheid's seat in, 59; Brüning and, 14, 36, 91; burning of, 208; downfall of, ix–x, 201; Hilferding's seat in, 86–87; imperial manipulation of, 57; Juchacz's seat in, 105; lack of majority government, 13–14; member incomes, 151, 160n29; Mierendorff and, 120, 127–28; Nazi seats in, 136; Papen's dissolution of, 14, 40, 132; parliamentary parties and, 65; Pfülf's seat in, 148, 157; Sender's role in, 169–70; Severing's seat in, 185, 190, 196; Wels' seat in, 229; womens' seats in, 108–9. *See also* Constitution; National Assembly
- Reichswehr*: attempts to reform, 61, 128, 129, 191–92, 193–94, 196; *Freikorps*, 3, 5, 7, 191–92, 236; as independent organization, 198–99; murders KPD leaders, 5; Nazis in, 17; quells Berlin unrest, 5, 180; Ruhr strike and, 7, 192, 193; soldiers' response to formation of republic, 233–35; strength of, 182; violence of, 193, 237
- Reitz, Jakob, 129
- Renner, Karl, 75, 76–77
- reparation payments, 8, 93
- Republican Guard (*Republikanische Soldatenwehr*), 234, 235
- republic of councils (*Räterepublik*), 212
- Republikanische Soldatenwehr* (Republican Guard), 235
- revisionism, 78, 80–82, 134
- Revolutionary Shop Stewards, 3–4, 5, 233
- RFB (Red Soldiers League, *Roter Frontkämpferbund*), 196–97
- Rhineland, 190, 194, 216
- right-wing death squads (*femmemorde*), 8, 128
- Röhl, Elisabeth, 151, 152–53
- Roman Catholic Church. *See* Catholic Church
- Rosenfeld, Kurt, 171, 241
- Rosenstraufl Affair, 150, 151
- Rote Fahne* (Red Flag), 235
- Roter Frontkämpferbund* (Red Soldiers League, RFB), 196–97
- Ruhr, 13, 190–92, 193, 194, 195, 216
- Russia, 52, 58, 63, 85, 267
- Russian-Bolshevik psychosis, 58
- salaried workers. *See* white-collar workers
- Samoza, Anastasio, 262
- Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN), Nicaragua, 262–65, 270–71, 273
- Sandino, Augusto Cesar, 262
- SAPD (Socialist Workers Party), 16, 244
- Scandinavia, 270–71
- Scheidemann, Philipp, 8, 229, 232, 233, 236
- Schlageter, Leo, 195
- Schleicher, Kurt von, 41, 48, 247
- Schönlank, Bruno, 210
- Schroeder, Louise, 157, 158
- Schumacher, Kurt, 120
- Schupo* (security police), 193–94, 198, 199
- Security Police (Sipo), 194
- Sender, Moritz, 164–65
- Sender, Toni, 163, 163–75; anti-war faction and, 166–67; background of, 144–45, 164–66; coalition opposed by, 35; defense policy and, 170–71; education, 165; election of 1920, 167–68; in exile, 66, 175, 176–77n37; as financial expert, 169, 171; on gender roles, 168; on general strikes, 173; on Iron Front, 164, 171, 173; Juchacz and, 168; Nazis and, 172, 173, 174; on Papen, 173; on toleration policy, 172–73; Wels and, 173; women's issues and, 168–69; on workers' councils, 167; writings of, 108, 164, 168, 169, 171, 176–77n37. *See also* Social Democratic Party
- Server, Otto, 52
- Severing, Bernhard, 182

- Severing, Carl, 179, 179–201; attempts to deport Hitler, 201; background of, 182–83; Bernstein and, 186, 188, 210; bourgeoisie parties and, 187, 188; Braun and, 193, 195, 197–98, 204n42; death of, 205n69; defeat of Young Plan and, 196; education, 182–83; election of 1907, 185; election of 1912, 187; on emergency decrees, 194, 198; on *Freikorps*, 191; legacy of, 182; on Marxism, 186; Mierendorff and, 128; Papen's removal of, 180–81; on proletarian dictatorship, 190; as Prussian leader, 181–82, 190, 193–95, 197–200, 204n42; *Reichsbanner* and, 198–99, 200; *Reichstag* seat, 185, 190, 196; strikes and, 183, 185, 188, 190–93; during Third Reich, 205n69; toleration policy and, 201; as trade union leader, 184–85, 187; on voting abstentions, 184; VSR and, 189–90; Watter and, 191, 192; welfare programs and, 200; writings of, 186, 195. *See also* German Metal Workers Union; Social Democratic Party
- Severing, Emma Wilhelmine (Twelker), 184
- Severing, Johanna, 182
- Seydewitz, Max, 38
- SFIO (French Socialist Party), 166
- Shop Stewards' Magazine/*Betriebsrätezeitschrift*, 168
- Sipo (Security Police), 194
- Skrzypczak, Henryk, 218
- Sneeringer, Julia, 111
- social democracy: collapse of, 17–18, 253–54, 255; compared to ANC goals, 269; electoral pluralities in, 273; Engels and, 254; fear of civil war and, 256, 271; international comparisons, 269–73; lack of popular consensus, 255; power structures in society, 254; in Scandinavia, 270–71; Stampfer on future of, 214; structural factors in failure of, 270–73; Wels and unity of, 242–43; women's votes and, 106. *See also* Chile; Nicaragua; South Africa
- social democracy, Scandinavia, 270–71
- social democracy, Western Europe, 270
- Social Democratic Party (SPD): anti-war faction, 2, 83, 125, 130, 166–67, 230; *Aüfhäuserand*, 35–36, 92; avoidance of civil war, 40, 182, 219, 247, 256, 271; Bernstein on, 3–4; under Bismarck, 226; bourgeoisie parties and, 7, 10–11, 213, 239–40; Breitscheid and, 27–28, 53, 54, 62; calls for socialization of industry, 4, 7, 30, 213, 237; Center Party and, 9, 12, 15, 135, 149; centrist wing, 54, 78–79; DDP and, 9, 12; declining support for, 246–47; defense policy, 132, 170–71; DNVP and, 91; DVP and, 11, 12, 15, 91, 242; election of 1912, 1; election of 1919, 5, 190, 236; election of 1920, 7, 240; election of 1924, 11; election of 1928, 12; election of 1930, 14, 37, 91–92, 131; election of 1932, 24–25, 94, 134–36, 138, 200, 247; election of 1933, 248; extra-parliamentary means and, x, 132, 134, 137, 139, 257; formation of, 78; general strikes and, 16, 40, 54, 156, 181, 211; Great Coalition and, 12, 34, 36, 62, 197, 241–42; Great Depression and, 255, 256; Hilferding and, 77, 80, 82, 83, 85, 86–87, 89–96, 241; Hindenburg and, 24, 65, 92, 243; Hitler and, 16–17, 38, 157; Juchacz and, 102, 104, 107, 109; Kautsky on, 3–4; KPD and, x, 15, 40, 44, 49, 64–65, 95, 181, 216, 216–18, 239; lessons learned, 256–57, 270, 273; membership of, 2, 11, 215, 238; Mierendorff and, 124, 125, 126, 127–34, 137–39; Müller and, 130; NSDAP and, 114, 131, 198, 247; opportunist ideology in, 84–85; Papen and, 94, 156, 219; Pfülf and, 146, 147–49, 151–58; pocket battleship and, 13, 62, 128, 132, 171, 242; propaganda of, 131, 132, 133–36, 245; in provisional coalition government, 2–6, 190, 233–34, 236–37; in Prussia, 11, 40, 136; publications of, 107–8, 111,

- 128; pure opposition, 194–95, 211; radical wing, 228; revisionist wing, 52, 228, 230; Schleicher and, 95; Sender and, 92, 164, 166, 167, 168, 170–75; Severing and, 181, 183, 185, 188–94, 200–201, 205n69; Stampfer and, 212, 213–19, 221n27; toleration policy of, 15–16, 37, 38, 64–65, 92–93, 95, 132, 156, 172–73, 198, 201, 244; trade unions and, 7, 16, 33, 239; unemployment insurance and, 13, 242–43; urban vs. rural interests, 11; USPD and, 9, 10, 34, 56, 60, 86, 164, 168, 233–34, 235, 238, 240; Versailles Treaty and, 212; welfare work, 103, 110–11, 115, 169; Wels and, 226–50; white-collar workers and, 38–39; women and, 11, 12, 102, 106, 107, 109, 110–11, 148, 164, 169, 273; workers' councils and, 188–89; WWI and divisions among, 2, 82–83, 211, 230–31; youth and, 244. *See also* Iron Front; *specific leaders*; *specific party congresses*; *specific programs*
- Social Democratic Party (SP⁺), Austria, 75, 76, 78
- social fascists, 15, 216
- socialism: Aüfhäuseron, 32, 33–34; Breitscheid on, 49, 53; democracy and, 57, 61, 84; economic, 33; electoral politics as means to, 79–80; Hilferding's economic approach to, 72–73, 88; Nazi advocacy of, 64; parliamentary rule as means to, 78, 80–82, 86, 88, 181, 258, 270–73, 271; Stampfer on, 217; women's issues and, 104, 107, 168
- socialist cultural work, 108
- Socialist Foreign Policy (*Sozialistische Auslandspolitik*), 54, 55, 56
- socialist movement, European, 78, 82–86. *See also specific groups*
- Socialist Student League, 75, 77
- socialist student movement, 209
- socialist women's movement: early illegal activity of, 145–46; equality and, 10, 12, 111; family hardships, 105; gender roles and, 111–12, 147, 152–55, 168; growth of, 110–11, 114; misogynist attitudes, 170, 273; social policy, 104, 105, 107, 110, 111–12; workplace discrimination, 149. *See also* Juchacz, Marie; Pfülf, Antonie “Toni”
- Socialist Workers Party (SAPD), 16, 244
- Socialization Commission, 85
- socialization of industry, 3, 4, 7, 213, 237
- social justice, 32–33, 52, 210–11, 253
- social policy (*sozialpolitik*), 105, 111
- Social Policy Association (*Verein für Sozialpolitik*), 50, 209
- social property, 2
- social reactionaries, 245
- Society/*Die Gesellschaft*, 72, 87, 93, 95, 128, 131
- soldiers' councils, 1, 2, 3–4, 30, 233–34
- South Africa, 265–73. *See also specific political parties*
- South African Communist Party (SACP), 266, 268
- Der Sozialist*, 56, 57
- Sozialistische Auslandspolitik* (Socialist Foreign Policy), 54, 55, 56
- Sozialistische Monatshefte*, 128, 186
- sozialpolitik* (social policy), 105, 111
- Spartacus League (*Spartakusbund*), 2, 3–5, 58, 124, 233, 235. *See also* Communist Party; Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany
- SPD. *See* Social Democratic Party
- SP⁺. *See* Social Democratic Party, Austria
- Sportspalast* rally, Berlin, 208
- Staatspartei* or State Party (formerly DDP), 14, 15, 57
- Stadthagen, Arthur, 228
- Stahlhelm*, 16, 37–38, 182, 196, 197, 200
- Stampfer, Friedrich, 157, 207, 207–19; background of, 209–10; basis for socialist views, 210–11; Bernstein and, 210; Breitscheid and, 54; on class struggle, 213–14; on coalitions, 213; education, 209; in exile, 208, 223n47; flexibility of, 209, 218–19; on general strikes, 211, 219; Iron Front and, 217; Kautsky and, 209, 210, 220n6; military service of, 212; non-aggression pact

- and, 40; on orthodox Marxism, 210; parliamentary rule and, 212, 217; on peace of understanding, 211–12; personal *Anschluss*, 210; returns to Germany, 223n47; on Trotsky's asylum request, 215; on Versailles Treaty, 212; on war credits, 211; Wels and, 214, 221n23; writings of, 54, 208, 210, 211, 212, 214, 218, 220n6, 223n47. *See also* Social Democratic Party
- the state. *See specific governments*
- state assemblies (*Landtage*), 135, 200
- Stegerwald, Adam, 29
- The Stormer/*Der Stürmer*, 155
- Streicher, Julius, 155
- Stresemann, Gustav, 61, 62, 86, 89, 240, 241
- strikes: Aüfhäuseron, 41, 43; in Bielefeld, 183, 185, 188; Hilferding on, 79–80, 95; Kapp *Putsch* defeat and, 239; KPD's call for, 48; outside union control, 190; as regulative idea, 80; of Ruhr coal miners, 13, 190–92, 193, 195; Sender on, 171; Severing's mediation of, 183, 185, 188, 190–93; SPD and, 16, 40, 54, 156, 181, 211; Stampfer on, 211, 219; trade unions on, 54, 79; Wels on, 40, 228, 229, 230, 239
- Der Stürmer*/The Stormer, 155
- suffrage, 79–80, 104, 106, 211
- Supreme Court, 133, 194, 245–46
- Sweden, 270–71
- tariff barriers, 81
- teaching profession, 145–46, 151
- temperance movement, 148
- toleration policy: Great Depression and, 16; Hilferding on, 92–93, 95; opposition to, 92–94, 164, 172–73; Sender on, 172–73; Severing on, 201; of SPD, 15–16, 37, 38, 64–65, 92–93, 95, 132, 156, 172–73, 198, 201, 244; Wels on, 38, 244
- Tomic, Radomiro, 259
- The Torch/*Die Fackel*, 231
- trade unions: arbitration boards, 29; Aüfhäuseron, 33; bench workers, 187; bourgeois workers in, 31; class struggle under capitalism and, 32; as coalition partners, x, 7; collective bargaining, 4, 26, 36, 85, 189; economic stimulus proposals of, 16; formation of Iron Front and, 16; general strikes and, 7, 54, 79, 187, 192; Hilferding and, 73–74, 89; Hindenburg and, 24; nationalist, 26; Nazis and, 25, 157, 247; public works programs, 245; SPD and, 7, 16, 33, 239; unemployment insurance, 242–43; worker rights legislation, 189; workers' councils, 31; workers' decision-making power, 87–88; workers' self-defense units, 192; yellow unions, 4, 30. *See also* blue-collar workers; white-collar workers
- Transport Workers Union, 126
- Treviranus, G.R., 210
- The Tribunal: A Radical Hessian Magazine/*Das Tribunal: Hessische Radikale Blätter*, 123, 124
- Trotsky, Leon, 215
- Tsarism, 2, 52, 58
- UDF (United Democratic Front), South Africa, 266
- unemployment, high levels, x–xi, 13
- Unemployment Insurance Law (1927), 35
- unemployment insurance policies, 12, 13, 91, 216, 242–43
- union agents, 184–85, 232
- unions. *See specific unions*; trade unions
- United Democratic Front (UDF), South Africa, 266
- United States: apartheid and, 268; banking crisis, 256; credit crisis, 93, 261; as hegemonic capitalist power, 255, 269, 272; interference in Chile, 257, 259, 261–62; interference in Germany, 93, 256, 261, 271–72; interference in Nicaragua, 263–65, 271; Latin America as backyard of, 261; protection of corporate interests, 261; racist government supported by, 269; Samoza dictatorship supported by, 262, 264; transnational capitalism, 272–73; Western Europe and, 270–71

- universal suffrage, 79–80, 104, 106, 211
 University of Frankfurt am Main, 124
 University of Freiburg, 124
 University of Heidelberg, 124
 University of Marburg, 50
 University of Munich, 50
 University of Vienna, 75, 209
 Usinger, Fritz, 122, 127
 USPD. *See* Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany
- Vagts, Alfred, 127
 VdDK (Association of German Salespeople), 26–27
 Venezuela, 272
Verein der deutschen Kaufleute (Association of German Salespeople), 26–27
Verein für Sozialpolitik (Social Policy Association), 209
 Versailles Treaty: Breitscheid on, 59, 60; burdens of, 239; calls for revision of, 10; Mierendorff on, 133; Nazi propaganda and, 172; Pfülf on, 149; public opinion, 8; Severing on, 196; SPD and, 212; Stampfer on, 212; USPD and, 237; Wels on, 236
 violence: anti-Semitism and, 8; impact on legitimacy of republic, 200; of KPD, 136; of Nazis, 64, 113, 136, 181, 209; Pfülf on, 153; post-Kapp *Putsch*, 8; of *Reichswehr*, 193, 237; of RFB, 196–97
 VMD (People's Marine Division, *Volksmarinedivision*), 235
 Vogel, Hans, ix, x, 134, 157
Volkshauptschule, Milbertshofen, 145
Das Volksrecht (USPD), 167
Volks- und Soldatenrat (People's and Soldiers' Council, VSR), 189
Die Volkswacht/The People's Guardian, 183, 184, 187, 188
Vollzugsrat (Action Council), 234, 235
Vorwärts: Hilferding and, 77; Mierendorff and, 127; Nazi banning of, 161n51, 208; Stampfer and, 208, 210, 211, 212, 214, 218; Wels and, 228, 234; on women's legislative role, 112; on World War I events, 83
 voters and voting, 12, 106, 129–30, 184.
See also elections; universal suffrage
 VSR (People's and Soldiers' Council), 189
- Wandervogel* movement, 121
 War Department Advisory Board, 29
 war socialism, 188
 wartime aid, 103–4
 Watter, General, 191, 192
 Weber, Alfred, 124
 Weber, Max, 124, 125
 Weimar Constitution. *See* Constitution
 Weimar Party Congress of 1919 (SPD), 151, 236
 Weimar Republic, 74, 85, 233. *See also* Social Democratic Party; *specific leaders*
 welfare work, 103–4, 110–11, 115, 147, 169, 200
 Wels, Bertha Antonie “Toni” (Reske), 226–27
 Wels, Johann, 226
 Wels, Johanne, 226
 Wels, Otto, ix, 225, 225–50; background of, 226–27; on Bernstein, 227; calls for Kaiser's abdication, 233; Chakhotin and, 245; on civil war conditions, 136; on class struggle, 231, 240–41; as Commandant of Berlin, 234–35; death of, 249; Ebert and, 229, 234, 239; economic views of, 39; in exile, 249; on facism and communism, 243–44; on general strikes, 40, 228, 229, 230, 239; Hilferding and, 245; *Marshall* imprisonment of, 235; Mierendorff and, 245; military service of, 227; Nazism and, 243–44, 247–50; on Papen, 246, 247; on parliamentary rule, 229–31, 238, 239, 244, 248; as party co-chair, 236, 238; propaganda policies and, 135; pro-tolerance views of, 38, 244; provisional coalition government and, 233–34; *Reichstag* seat, 229; Stampfer and, 214, 221n23; on support for WWI, 230–31; on threats of Enabling Law, 248–49; on Versailles Treaty, 236; *Vorwärts* and, 228, 234. *See also* Social Democratic Party

- Weltbühne*/World Stage (Ossietzky), 128
 Western Europe, 270
 Westphalia, 190
 white-collar workers, 24, 27, 28–29,
 31–32, 35. *See also specific unions*
 Wilhelm II, Kaiser, 1, 121, 233
Winterhilfswerk, 200
 Wirth, Joseph, 8–9, 60
 Wissell, Rudolf, 55
 Witt, Nikolaus, 54
 Wittelsbach dynasty collapse, 1
 Womens' and Girls' Educational
 Association, 103
 women's issues. *See* Juchacz, Marie;
 socialist women's movement
 Women's World/*Frauenwelt*, 107–8, 110,
 164, 168, 174
 workers' councils (*Arbeiterräte*):
 constitutional and, 6; constitution and,
 31; first Congress of, 1, 2, 4; Hilferding
 on, 85; level of worker support for,
 3–4, 57–58; as means to socialism,
 57–58; National Assembly and, 33;
 Sender and, 167; Severing and, 191;
 SPD monitoring of, 188–89; trade
 unions and, 31; USPD and, 233–34
 Workers' Educational Society, Berlin, 227
 Workers' Welfare (*Arbeiterwohlfahrt*), 110,
 111, 115
 working class: bourgeoisie vs., 170; in
 class-bound society, 187–88; class
 struggle vs. capitalism, 83–84;
 education of, 89; electoral politics and,
 79–80; Engels on, 254; finance capital
 and, 10, 80–82; gains under Weimar
 Republic, 85–86; self-defense units,
 192; worker rights legislation, 189. *See*
also blue-collar workers; white-collar
 workers; workers' councils
 Working Group for Uniform Employee
 Rights, 28
 World Bank, 267
 World Stage/*Weltbühne* (Ossietzky), 128
 World War I: anti-war faction, 2, 54–55,
 83, 125, 130, 166–67, 230;
 Aüfhäuseron, 28–30; as betrayal of
 socialist internationalism, 2; civil peace
 and, 188; Hilferding on, 72–73, 91;
 labor movements and, 28–29, 31; peace
 without annexations, 55, 166, 188,
 231; Pfülf's opposition to, 147; post-
 war challenges, 6–7; Sender's
 opposition to, 166; Severing on,
 187–88; SPD divisions and, 82–83,
 211, 230–31; Stampfer on, 211; welfare
 work during, 103–4; Wels' support for,
 230
 Woytinsky, Vladimir, 90, 94
 Würzburg Party Congress of 1917 (SPD),
 104
Year Book (SPD), 54, 128
 yellow unions, 4, 30
 Young Plan (1929), 172, 196
 youth, 113, 123, 130, 131, 135, 244
Zentrum. *See* Center Party
 Zetkin, Clara, 104, 108, 145, 166
 Zietz, Luise, 104
 Zionism, 76
 Zuckmayer, Carl, 120, 124, 126, 127
 Zürich, 183, 184

About the Author

William Smaldone received his Ph.D. in Modern European History from the State University of New York at Binghamton. He is the author of *Rudolf Hilferding: The Tragedy of a German Social Democrat* (1998) and is currently professor of history at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon.

